

Chapter 8

Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element





Parks, Recreation and Open Space

Overview ⁸⁰⁰

THIS ELEMENT ADDRESSES THE FUTURE OF PARKS, RECREATION, and open space in Washington, DC. It recognizes the important role parks play in recreation, aesthetics, health and wellness, neighborhood character, environmental quality, and resilience. The element also recognizes that parks have the potential to bring people together across social, economic, and racial divides. It includes policies on related topics, such as recreational facility development, the use of private open space, the creation of trails to better connect the District's open spaces and neighborhoods, and the support of resilience through the restoration of natural systems. Finally, this element includes policies and actions that support the delivery of equitable access, great spaces, and exceptional experiences. ^{800.1}

The critical parks, recreation, and open space issues facing Washington, DC are addressed in this element. These include:

- Coordinating and sharing stewardship between Washington, DC and the federal government on park and open space planning, design, and management to produce better outcomes for District residents;
- Providing additional recreational land and facilities in areas of the District that are currently underserved and in newly developing areas, and improving access;
- Maintaining, upgrading, and improving existing parks and recreation facilities as key features of vibrant neighborhoods in Washington, DC;
- Increasing funding for capital improvements and operations through partnerships and creative strategies;
- Fostering community health so that residents can seek healthier lifestyles regardless of income, ability, or employment;
- Leveraging open space to support resilience, including flood mitigation, well-connected habitats on land and water, an increased tree canopy, and strong ecosystems for wildlife; and
- Designing parks, trails, and recreational facilities to improve the safety of staff and visitors. ^{800.2}

Washington, DC, is one of the few cities in the United States that was originally planned and designed around the framework of a park system. The L'Enfant Plan featured broad swaths of open land to frame iconic buildings and landmarks. Wide park-like boulevards were incorporated to preserve key views and vistas. ^{800.3}

¹ Policies for the Park Service lands are contained in individual General Management Plans prepared by the NPS, and are also included in the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan. There have also been several joint District/Federal park planning initiatives launched since the 1960s.

Parks, Recreation, and Open Spaces in the District

Since the 2006 Comprehensive Plan, Washington, DC, has continued to enhance its parks, recreational, and open spaces. The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) now manages more than 900 acres of green space, 34 urban gardens and five partner urban farms, 375 parks, 12 dog parks, 95 playgrounds, 135 athletic fields, 336 courts, 76 recreation facilities, and 50 aquatic facilities and features. In 2018, Washington, DC, was ranked the third fittest city on the American Fitness Indexⁱ and was ranked the fourth best park city.ⁱⁱ ^{800.1a}

Parks, Open Spaces, and Natural Resources

The Sustainable DC Plan envisions a District that has high-quality, well-connected habitats on land and water, and that provides strong corridors and ecosystems for wildlife. Washington, DC, will conserve and manage these natural resources to enhance biodiversity, control stormwater, reduce the urban heat island effect, become more resilient to changing climate conditions, and build people's connections to, understanding of, and appreciation for nature. ^{800.2a}

The 1901 McMillan Plan continued this legacy, using open space to accomplish social as well as aesthetic goals. The McMillan Plan made a conscious effort to extend the park system beyond the monumental core, connect existing parks with scenic roadways, and provide for the recreation and health of a growing population. The National Mall and Rock Creek Park that we know today are among that plan's legacies. Many of the early plans prepared by the National Capital Parks and Planning Commission (NCPC) placed a similar emphasis on improving the District's open spaces and parkways. Many of the District's parks and recreational facilities established during this time were racially segregated and developed to different standards. ^{800.4}

These historic plans have resulted in more than 7,800 acres of permanent open space and parkland in Washington, DC, and one of the highest ratios of park acreage per resident in the country. Nonetheless, when Washington, DC achieved Home Rule and set about developing its first Comprehensive Plan, a Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element was not included. This responsibility was left to the federal government. Today, 74 percent of Washington, DC's parkland is still managed by the National Park Service (NPS) and is not under the District's jurisdiction.ⁱⁱⁱ The other 26 percent includes 10 percent managed by the District's Department of General Services (DGS) and DPR, and 16 percent managed by other entities, including DC Public Schools (DCPS). ^{800.5}

Including a chapter on parks, recreation, and open space in the District elements of the Comprehensive Plan is important for a number of reasons:

- First, the District itself owns approximately 950 acres of parkland, and there is a need for a coordinated set of policies for its management.
- Second, access to quality parks and open space is a top priority for District residents—regardless of who owns the land. The fact that most of the District's open space is federally controlled suggests that joint policy planning for these assets is essential.
- Third, Washington, DC is changing, which means recreational needs also are changing. Policies are needed to make sure that new park and recreational opportunities are provided and existing parks are improved to meet the needs of a changing and expanding population.
- Fourth, parks are essential to many of the goals expressed elsewhere in the Comprehensive Plan, including sustainability, resilience, improved public health, racial equity, and inclusion. ^{800.6}

Parks are part of the foundation of what makes Washington, DC, a great place to live. They are where friends are met, and where people walk, play, and exercise. They contribute to personal wellness and the quality of the environment. They keep neighborhoods vibrant, enhance property values, and foster civic bonds. The policies in this element are aimed at sustaining parks as great public spaces while providing more equitable access to parks across the District. Achieving these outcomes requires different strategies for different neighborhoods. When investing in parks, District government and other stakeholders should consider

a fair distribution, amount, and quality of parkland and facilities across the District—as well as other social factors, such as income and age, that may shape localized decisions in programming and design. ^{800.7}

The Comprehensive Plan is supplemented by a more detailed set of planning documents for parks and recreation that address these issues, including master plans and a collaboration with the federal government, titled CapitalSpace. These companion plans establish bold visions for advancing the District’s parks and recreation goals, starting with an overarching master plan for parks (see text box entitled Parks Master Plan). In addition, the Sustainable DC Plan, completed in 2012 and updated in 2018, provides further guidance. ^{800.8}

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Goal ⁸⁰¹

The overarching goal for parks, recreation, and open space is to preserve and enhance parks and open spaces within Washington, DC to meet active and passive recreational needs through universal access, promote health and wellness, improve environmental quality, enhance the identity and character of District neighborhoods, and provide visual beauty in all parts of Washington, DC. ^{801.1}

Policies and Actions

PROS-1 Park Planning and Land Management ⁸⁰²

This section of the element focuses on parks that are owned and operated by the District. Policies also express the District’s perspectives on the federally-owned parks that serve residents. ^{802.1}

The District manages 375 parks and open spaces, comprising approximately 950 acres. More than two-thirds of these properties are small open space triangles formed by the intersection of diagonal avenues and the District street grid. The remainder includes 17 regional parks, 86 neighborhood and community parks, 51 pocket parks, and eight natural areas. Figure 8.1 provides an overview of DPR-managed amenities. ^{802.2}

For planning purposes, park activities are usually divided into two categories: active recreation and passive recreation. Active recreation is associated with sports or play activities and requires facilities such as playgrounds, ball fields, tennis courts, and swimming pools. Passive recreation emphasizes the open space aspect of a park or waterway and includes activities like hiking, picnicking, and kayaking. In Washington, the presence of District-owned parks and national parks provides a unique blend of active and passive recreational opportunities. ^{802.3}

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The Parks Master Plan ⁸⁰³

In 2006, DPR drafted its first Comprehensive Master Plan since its establishment in 1942. Building on this earlier work, DPR and the DC Office of Planning completed the Parks and Recreation Master Plan in 2014 (the Parks Master Plan). ^{803.1}



The Parks Master Plan evaluates the existing park system, defines community priorities, and identifies a potential program of investments to make the park system more equitable and responsive to local needs. It is based on a detailed evaluation of conditions at all parks, recreation centers, and outdoor facilities; a comprehensive assessment of recreation programs; and an evaluation of service gaps based on public input, industry best practices, and objective standards. ^{803.2}

8

The District is now at a stage where a new District-wide parks planning effort is needed to identify and prioritize the next round of major capital investments. Population and development pressures, changing recreational trends, and the opportunity, through recently passed federal legislation, to explore cooperative local management of federal parkland, all present new opportunities and realities that the District faces in meeting the recreational needs of its residents. In addition, there is a need to create a District-wide plan for funding and maintaining existing, as well as new, recreation centers and park sites. For all of these reasons, DPR will begin a new parks master planning effort in 2020 that builds on the work of the 2014 plan as well as the 2010 CapitalSpace plan. ^{803.3}

The Parks Master Plan addresses seven key elements of the park system:

- Parkland;
- Recreation centers;
- Aquatics facilities;
- Outdoor facilities;
- Programs;
- Bikeways and trails; and
- Environmental lands and natural areas. ^{803.4}

For each element, the Parks Master Plan provides target benchmarks for service delivery. Specific outcomes of the Parks Master Plan include:

- Comprehensive information on the recreational needs of District residents;
- Projections of expected future needs, based on growth and demographics;
- Information on customer usage and satisfaction;
- Identification of current and potential shortfalls; and
- Strategies for overcoming shortfalls, including land acquisition and programming changes. ^{803.5}

CAPRA Accreditation

In 2014, DPR became accredited by the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA). This designation “recognizes and requires standards of excellence in the parks and recreation field.”

^{803.5a}

PROS-1.1 Developing a Park Classification System ⁸⁰⁴

Most large cities in the United States have adopted classification systems to guide the management of their parks and open spaces. In fact, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) defines park classification as the basic element of the planning function. Classification provides a basis for deciding which activities and facilities are appropriate within each park. It also provides a means of analyzing where service gaps exist and where acquisitions and capital improvements may be required. ^{804.1}

Until 2006, the District's parks were loosely classified as large parks, neighborhood parks, recreation center grounds, and triangles. These categories are not consistent with national standards, making it difficult to evaluate the adequacy of parks or to compare the District with peer cities. ^{804.2}

The 2006 Parks Master Plan recommended a new classification system to improve customer service and park management. Under this system, DPR would develop a park classification system with clear definitions of each classification based on a review of industry standards and best practices. This would allow the agency to develop more specific level of service standards based on each classification. ^{804.3}

Figure 8.2 summarizes a sample park classification system. Map 8.1 shows the location of District-owned parks. The small open spaces are not shown due to the map scale and their small size. ^{804.4}

An important consideration in classifying Washington, DC's parks is the role that federal lands play in the overall park system (noted in Policy PROS 1.1.2). In many parts of the District, federal land plays a crucial role in meeting park, recreation, and open space needs. Some of Washington, DC's parks are part of a contiguous system of parks and open spaces, with different areas under different ownership and management. Such systems need to be cohesively planned and managed, and not treated as individual isolated neighborhood or community parks. ^{804.8}

Policy PROS-1.1.1: Park Classification

Adopt and maintain a classification system to guide the future use of District parks. Figure 8.2 provides the framework for this system. Follow general management prescriptions for each type of park, as defined by the official Parks Master Plan. ^{804.9}



“Redesign the parks to include safe play areas, gardens and separate exercise areas as well as seating areas. Look in all areas of the city for this opportunity.”

SUGGESTION FROM A PARTICIPANT AT
A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN MEETING

Figure 8.1: DPR-Managed Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Amenities ^{804.5}

830 acres of green space
375 parks
200 outdoor basketball courts
160 tennis courts
119 athletic and ball fields
94 playgrounds
76 recreation centers
35 gyms
34 community gardens
31 aquatic pools
25 spray parks
23 fitness centers
13 dog parks
7 wellness centers
7 boxing rings
5 urban farms
1 outdoor amphitheater
1 skate park

(Source: DPR, 2017)

Figure 8.2

Sample Park Classification System 804.6

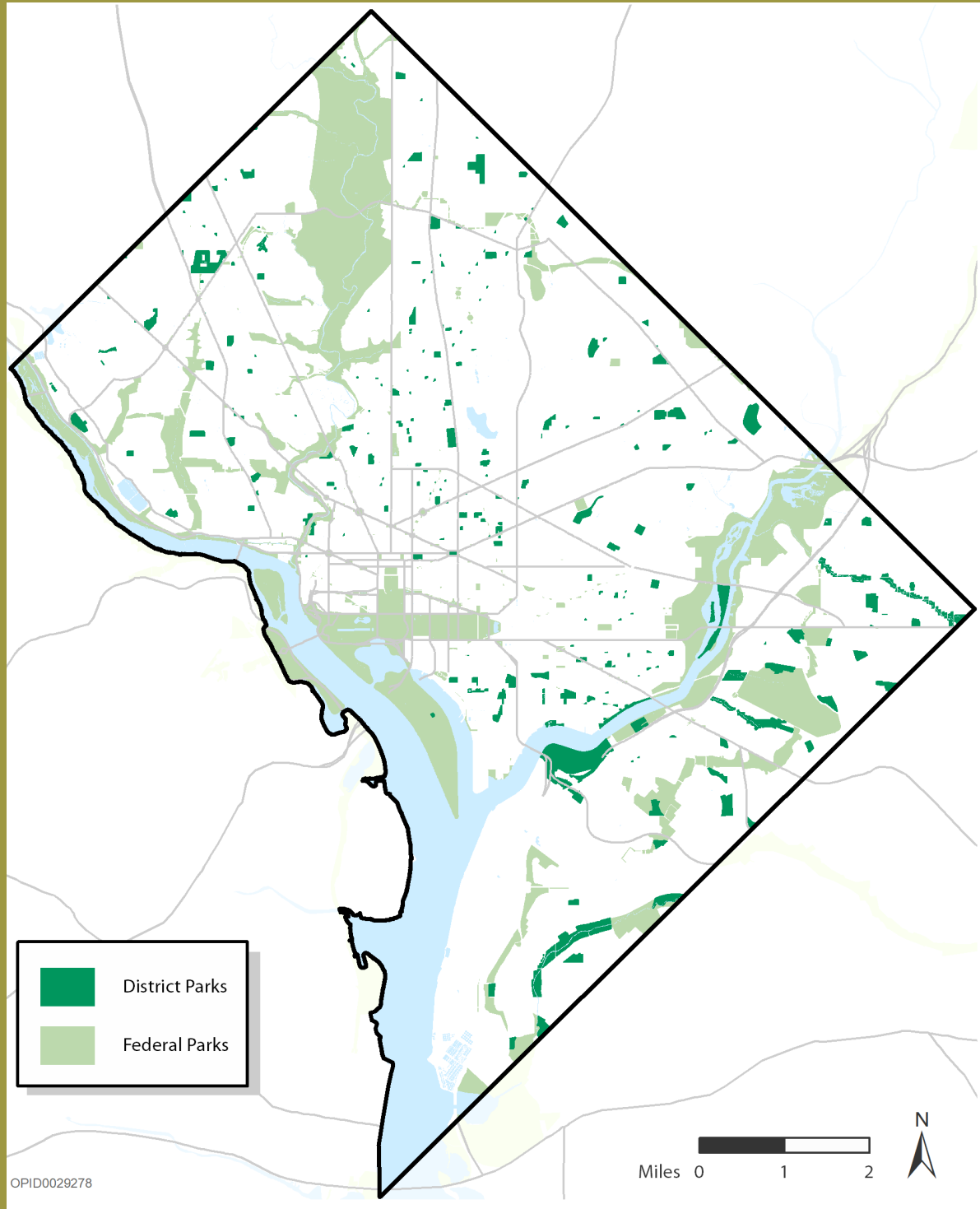
Park Type	Description	Typical Uses	Service Area*
Small Park	Pocket parks or triangles. Range from landscaped “islands” to places for socializing, playing chess, etc.	Benches, seating areas, public art, landscaping	¼-mile radius
Neighborhood	Provide informal, centrally located setting for neighborhood-based recreational amenities, possibly including recreation centers	Playgrounds, tot lots, basketball courts, open lawn areas for unstructured play, seating and picnic areas, community gardens, and interpretive or educational exhibits	½-mile radius
Community	Larger parks with more structured recreational opportunities, including recreation center buildings with a range of DPR programs	Active play-oriented outdoor facilities, such as ball fields, athletic courts, playgrounds, indoor and outdoor swim facilities, natural amenities such as trails, natural areas, and picnic grounds	One- to two-mile radius, with connections to bike and pedestrian trail networks
Regional	Large multiuse parks that draw users District-wide or from beyond adjacent neighborhoods	Very large areas of open space, recreation centers, lighted athletic fields, group picnic areas, hiking, multiple activity areas	District-wide
Natural Resource Areas	Parks established to conserve open space and sensitive natural resources or heritage assets. If adjoined by open, level areas, then recreational fields and play areas may be appropriate	Low-impact, passive activities, such as hiking and environmental education	N/A—not demand driven
Sports Complexes	Programmed athletic fields and multiuse indoor complexes, custom designed for specific programmed uses	Track and field, natatorium, softball, soccer, tennis, basketball, volleyball, racquetball, football, boxing, martial arts	District-wide
Special Use	Parks dedicated to a single use, such as a zoo or amphitheater. Accommodate highly organized activities and provide economic as well as social and physical benefits. May have highly specialized management requirements	Golf courses, aquatic or spray parks, sculpture parks, dog parks, arboretums, historic homes, amphitheaters, skate parks, climbing centers, therapeutic facilities	District-wide
School Parks	Public land on school property, developed with playgrounds and open fields, designed for student activities but also available for community use	Running tracks, playgrounds, athletic fields, basketball courts	½-mile to two-mile radius
Trails and Bikeways	Hard or soft paved paths providing linkages within or between parks, facilitating access and exploration	Paved or dirt trails, boardwalks, promenades	½ to ¼ mile to access point

* Some parks are nationally significant and serve an area larger than Washington, DC

Map 8.1

Location of District Parks

804.7



(Source: DC Office of Planning, 2018)

New Parkland

A 2014 DPR study estimated that 180 acres of new parkland will be needed to meet demands associated with increased population over the next 15-20 years.

804.15a

Policy PROS-1.1.2: Consideration of Federal Parkland

Work with federal agencies to evaluate the role that federal lands play in meeting the recreational needs of District residents, particularly for regional parks and sports complexes. Because these properties are used by residents, they should be considered when identifying underserved areas and assessing the need for local park improvements. 804.10

Policy PROS-1.1.3: Park Diversity

Provide a diverse range of recreational experiences in parks within Washington, DC, including a balance between passive and active recreational uses, and a mix of local-serving, region-serving, and national recreational uses. 804.11

Action PROS-1.1.A: Park Classification

Complete the classification of each of the District's 375 properties using Figure 8.1. Identify suggested (advisory only) classifications for federal parks as part of this process. 804.12

Action PROS-1.1.B: Parks Master Plan

Implement the Parks Master Plan for the District of Columbia Parks System. Update the plan at least once every five years or as needed to reflect changing conditions and needs. Use the Parks Master Plan as the basis for the annual Capital Improvement Program request for park and recreational facilities. 804.13

Action PROS-1.1.C: Master Plans for Individual Parks

Prepare master plans for large individual parks (such as regional parks) prior to major capital improvements as funding allows and use these plans to guide capital improvement and implementation processes. 804.14

Action PROS-1.1.D: Quality of Existing Park Spaces

Develop an enhanced maintenance and improvement schedule to upgrade the quality of passive and active parklands and outdoor facilities, to make the most of existing District parks. 804.15

PROS-1.2 Closing the Gaps 805

At first glance, Washington, DC appears to have a more than adequate supply of parkland. There are 12.6 acres of parks per 1,000 residents, compared to 7.9 acres per 1,000 in Baltimore, 6.9 acres per 1,000 in Philadelphia, and 7.7 acres per 1,000 in Boston.^{iv} However, most of the District's parkland consists of passive federally owned natural resource areas. Neighborhood and community parkland is much more limited and amounts to less than one acre per 1,000 residents in many parts of the District. By contrast, suburban communities typically set standards of four or five acres of active parkland per 1,000 residents. 805.1

Even neighborhoods with abundant parkland may lack access to recreational amenities and facilities. Other neighborhoods have parks that are too small to meet local needs, such as relief from the impacts of increasing temperatures. For example, a lack of open space and accompanying vegetation can result in heat islands that reduce local health quality. Many of these neighborhoods include areas where significant growth is taking place, and the increased volume strains the ability of the facilities to meet neighborhood needs. Improved access to parks is also needed through improvements to bus service, enhanced pedestrian and bicycle routes, and better security. Figure 8.3 presents recommended benchmarks for delivery of parks and recreation services. ^{805.2}

Recreational needs are also a function of demographics and density. The need for parks may be more critical in some areas of the District due to:

- Limited mobility due to low rates of auto ownership;
- Larger numbers of children, older adults, and/or populations with chronic disease;
- Larger numbers of apartment dwellers living in housing without usable open space;
- Denser development patterns without the aesthetic amenities, heat island mitigation, and stormwater management benefits afforded by open space; and
- Larger concentrations of youth who may benefit from programmed recreational activities. ^{805.3}

These factors suggest that special attention be given to increasing usable open space in the District's densest neighborhoods, even where parks already exist. Special attention must be given to improving access, park capacity, and acreage for communities where access or acreage is poor. ^{805.4}

Improved data collection will allow the District and its partners to plan for a healthier and more active community. More robust data will help improve facilities usage and participation measurement, master planning, capital investment, and programming decisions. The implementation of systems to track the work of DPR—such as maps to show progress in closing level of service gaps—and visitor data to observe trends in program participation are important for prioritizing projects and improving community outcomes. ^{805.5}

Policy PROS-1.2.1: Closing the Gaps

Achieve a better distribution of high-quality parks in all neighborhoods of Washington, DC. Provide access to the natural environment or quality green

space within a 10-minute walk of all residents. This will require a priority to improve or expand parks in:

- More densely populated neighborhoods with limited open space;
- Areas that are more than a half mile from a neighborhood or community park (or a federal park that serves an equivalent function);

Figure 8.3

Benchmarks for Delivery of Park and Recreation Services ^{805.6}

Variable	Benchmark
Access to “Meaningful” Public Open Space (improved parks larger than 1/3 acre)	Within one-half mile of all residents
Public Open Space Land Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 acres per 1,000 residents in each neighborhood cluster • 2 acres per 1,000 residents in greater Downtown DC (e.g., the Central Employment Area)
Access to Recreation Centers	Within one mile of all residents
Access to Aquatics Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indoor pool within two miles of all residents • Outdoor pool within 1.5 miles of all residents • Splash pad within one mile of all residents
Access to Outdoor Facilities	80 percent of all DC residents will rate their access to outdoor facilities as good or excellent
Program Options	25 percent of all DC residents will participate in a DPR program, and 90 percent will rate their experience as being good or excellent

- Areas where substantial new housing growth is expected, based on the forecasts of the Comprehensive Plan;
- Areas where the existing recreation centers and parks are in poor condition; and
- Areas where social and economic conditions compel a greater investment in parks to improve health, public safety, and community well-being. ^{805.7}

Policy PROS-1.2.2: Improving Accessibility

Improve accessibility to and within the major park and open space areas through pedestrian safety and street crossing improvements, wayfinding signage, bike lanes and storage areas, perimeter multiuse trails within select parks, and adjustments to bus routes where appropriate. All parks should be accessible by foot, and most should be accessible by bicycle. Seek to provide access within parks for all ages and abilities consistent with park use and recognize that paved trails are accessible to wheelchair users, whereas dirt, cinder, and wood chip trails can present challenges for these users. ^{805.8}

Policy PROS-1.2.3: Responding to Community Change

Update and improve existing parks in response to changing demographics, cultural norms, and community needs and preferences. Parks should reflect the identity and needs of the communities they serve. Further, the parks and recreation system should evolve to offer a variety of facilities located within a reasonable distance of each resident and provide a range of programs in spaces designed to flex as residents' needs and interests change. ^{805.9}

Action PROS-1.2.A: Bus Routing

Consult with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and the DC Circulator to identify locations where additional bus stops are needed to serve neighborhood and community parks, particularly those with recreation centers. ^{805.10}

Action PROS-1.2.B: Public Involvement

Consult with Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs) and local community groups on park planning and development to understand and better address resident priorities. ^{805.11}

Action PROS-1.2.C: Park Spaces on District Properties

Encourage shared-use agreements for green spaces owned by District government and DCPS so that these areas are available and accessible to residents for recreational purposes. ^{805.12}

Action PROS-1.2.D: Temporary Activation of Underutilized Spaces

Identify underutilized spaces that can be programmed on a seasonal and temporary basis to advance public life. Focus on commercial corridors where park space is scarce. Consult with ANCs, local community groups, and local businesses to identify locations where on-street parking spaces, empty lots, or parking lots could be seasonally repurposed for outdoor recreational use. ^{805.13}

Action PROS-1.2.E: Open Space Plan

Evaluate the need for a District-wide open space plan focusing on improving physical access to green space and the rivers. ^{805.14}

Action PROS-1.2.F: Promoting Access

Promote access to biking and swimming facilities and programs, with an emphasis on underserved and underrepresented groups. Explore opportunities for roving park programming to serve residents in their communities. ^{805.15}

PROS-1.3 Preserving the Value of Parkland ⁸⁰⁶

A park often reflects a neighborhood's vitality and character. However, too often, District parks have not been treated as the resource for revitalization and community empowerment that they should be. Some suffer from deferred maintenance, illegal dumping, and crime. Others face challenges accommodating competing needs within limited space. Previous plans have created hundreds of small pockets of green space, contributing to the uniqueness of the District's character. Yet these spaces often pose a challenge in terms of programming and maintenance. In addition, the parks are not managed by a single government but by multiple entities. Collaboration and coordination are both necessary and often complex. ^{806.1}

Washington, DC's parks should be viewed as limited and precious resources, no less valuable than the neighborhoods they serve. But the purpose of park management should not be solely to preserve open space. Parks meet the recreation, education, and social needs of District residents. The tree canopy and green infrastructure parks provide can improve community resilience and sustainability through such activities as stormwater management, energy conservation, and carbon sequestration. They can support urban agriculture in areas with limited access to fresh produce. They can generate and support economic and social benefits, such as youth employment, business attraction, cultural activities, and community gathering space. The District should strive to realize these multiple and diverse benefits in the design of its parks and other public spaces. ^{806.2}

Small open spaces (those less than one acre in size) are a significant untapped resource that can enhance the District's neighborhoods, connect residents to their community through green networks, provide additional green space, and create a sense of place. There are 1,149 of these spaces in the District. They are controlled by multiple entities of the District government: DPR, DGS, and the District

Department of Transportation (DDOT). Collectively, these spaces total over 148 acres. NPS manages additional small open spaces throughout the District. These combined small open spaces are triangle parks, circles, medians, paper streets, open spaces at interchanges, and narrow strips of green space running parallel to freeways. They are part of open space systems that contribute to the park-like character of the District and its neighborhoods, creating an urban environment that is distinct to Washington, DC. ^{806.3}

Policy PROS-1.3.1: Balancing Competing Needs

Manage the District's parklands to preserve and enhance their open space character while also accommodating a range of recreational, educational, and environmental functions. Park activities and facilities should be designed in a way that makes the best possible use of each space while minimizing conflicts between different recreational uses. ^{806.4}

Policy PROS-1.3.3: Preserving Small Open Spaces

Use park improvements to achieve environmental objectives, such as water quality improvement, air quality improvement, wildlife habitat restoration, and tree canopy conservation and improvement. ^{806.5}

Policy PROS-1.3.3: Preserving Small Open Spaces

Develop a coordinated approach for the improvement of small open spaces. Maintain the District's small open spaces as neighborhood amenities supporting a range of recreational, ecological, cultural, and commemorative uses. These active and passive uses should vary based on the setting of each space and should range from planted islands to more active spaces. The spaces should be designed in a way that mitigates stormwater runoff and air pollution from adjacent corridors. ^{806.6}

Policy PROS-1.3.4: Conversion of Parkland/Open Space

Preserve the basic function of District parks as public open spaces and prevent parkland conversion to other uses. On select park sites with active uses, complementary uses, such as concessions, may be considered as a way to generate the revenue needed to sustain and modernize recreation facilities and further activate such spaces. ^{806.7}

Policy PROS-1.3.5: Park Buildings

Require any new structure on District-owned parkland to be sited to minimize impacts on existing recreational activities and facilities, avoid encroachment onto athletic fields, and retain as much of the site as possible as usable open space. Public facilities that do not relate to recreational needs should be discouraged from locating on District-owned parkland, especially in areas with parkland deficiencies. ^{806.8}



**"Make bigger parks
truly useable, safe,
and attractive,
for residents."**

PARTICIPANT AT A
COMPREHENSIVE
PLAN WORKSHOP

Sustainable DC 2.0:

One of the District's most important resources is the health of its residents. The District consistently ranks at the top of lists of the country's healthiest and fittest cities. Yet significant disparities in health exist along the lines of race, income, and geography. For example, residents in Ward 8 are four times as likely to have diabetes compared to residents in other wards in the District, and Black residents are almost 2.5 times more likely to have heart disease than White residents. Depending on which Ward a person lives in, life expectancy can vary by up to 10 years. Further, many District residents suffer from the negative effects of air pollution, lack safe places to exercise, and are disproportionately at risk for chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. Climate impacts, like asthma and heat-related injuries, further compound these issues and often fall disproportionately and unfairly on low-income populations ^{806.10a}

Sustainable DC 2.0, Washington, DC's plan to make the District the healthiest, greenest, and most livable city in the United States, affirms that building a culture of health means thinking beyond hospitals and clinics as the main sources of personal well-being. The opportunity to make healthy choices starts in homes, schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, and communities. Access to high-quality parks and open spaces and completing at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week are key components to achieving personal wellness. ^{806.10b}

Policy PROS-1.3.6: Compatibility with Adjacent Development

Design and manage park activities and facilities, including recreation centers, in a way that is compatible with nearby residential and commercial uses. ^{806.9}

See also the Historic Preservation Element and the Urban Design Element for additional policies and actions related to historic natural areas and the squares, circles, and triangles associated with the L'Enfant Plan. See the Infrastructure Element for policies on the siting of communication towers (in parks and elsewhere).

Policy PROS-1.3.7: Health and Wellness

Use Washington, DC's parks, open space, and recreation spaces to help meet the District's health and wellness priorities, which are linked to physical activity, public safety, healthy food access, psychological health, air and water quality, and social equity. ^{806.10}

Policy PROS-1.3.8: Multipurpose Infrastructure

Design parks and recreational facilities with infrastructure to serve multiple purposes, including flood risk reduction, urban heat island mitigation, and stormwater management. ^{806.11}

Action PROS-1.3.A: Transfer of Small Open Spaces to DPR

Develop a strategy for small open spaces through a coordinated management approach among the various government agencies. The strategy should define the role of small open spaces in the larger park system, which will help agencies manage them more efficiently and promote system-wide investment of resources. Consider the transfer of maintenance responsibilities for small open spaces from DDOT and NPS to DPR to recognize their primary function as parkland stewards, where appropriate. ^{806.12}

See also the Environmental Protection Element for policies related to preventing development on land adjacent to parks, which would hinder access, destroy views, or otherwise compromise the value of parkland.

Action PROS-1.3.B: Site Plan Review

Plans for the redesign of individual parks or the development of park facilities shall be reviewed by appropriate District agencies so that they advance the District's goals for better public recreation facilities, environmental protection, open space

preservation, historic preservation, public safety, accessibility, and resilience.

806.13

Action PROS-1.3.C: District-wide Ecosystem

Support a District-wide ecosystem consortium that will work to increase wildlife habitat and connectivity, especially among parks. The consortium can collectively identify, map, and protect wildlife and natural resources so that wildlife has access to high-quality habitat throughout Washington, DC. 806.14

PROS-1.4 Meeting the Needs of a Growing District ⁸⁰⁷

The addition of thousands of new jobs and households over the next 20 years will increase demand for programmed parks, open space, and recreational activities. Existing parks will accommodate more users, particularly in neighborhoods where high-density infill development is planned. New parks will be needed to serve new and growing communities. Given the developed character of the District, finding land for such parks will be difficult and expensive. The District must seize opportunities for parkland dedication on its largest redevelopment sites and take steps now to promote park provision elsewhere as Washington, DC grows. ^{807.1}

A 2014 DPR study estimated that 180 new acres of parkland will be needed to meet demands associated with increased population over the next 15-20 years. Additional recreation facilities and programs also are needed to close gaps in underserved neighborhoods. Many residents are more than a half-mile from a usable park or open space or live in a neighborhood where park acreage is low. New parks planned at Buzzard Point, Near Southeast, Poplar Point, Hill East, and elsewhere along the Anacostia River will meet some of this demand. Additional parkland will be needed to serve growth and development in the north central, northeastern, and southeastern parts of the District, where a substantial amount of additional housing is planned in an area with a dearth of public parks. Substantial areas for new parks should also be designated in the reuse plans for any large federal sites that are transferred to the District or used for private development in the future. ^{807.2}

Creating new parks in built-up neighborhoods will be more challenging. There is competing pressure to use public land for other purposes, particularly revenue-generating uses like housing and office development, which tend to make potential new park sites more expensive. The District does not have a dedicated funding source for parkland acquisition (such as an impact fee) and capital improvement funds are typically used for new facilities rather than to acquire vacant land. Acquisition may occur through a variety of means, such as donations and grants, payment in lieu of taxes, tax increment financing, and public-private partnerships. Open space may also be set aside within new projects through development agreements and Planned Unit Development (PUD) amenity packages. Such open space should be usable, publicly accessible, and address open space needs of the area, including rooftops and

courtyards. Business improvement districts (BIDs) also have a potential role to play. In 2012, the North of Massachusetts Avenue (NoMa) BID formed the NoMa Parks Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to securing additional park space in the neighborhood. ^{807.3}

New and improved parks along the waterfront have contributed to the vitality of the District in three powerful ways: making the waterfront broadly accessible, adding economic value to new development as a neighborhood amenity through recreation and programming, and providing environmental resilience to mitigate flooding and the impacts of climate change. Canal Park, Yards Park, Diamond Teague Park, and the Wharf Park are linked to new developments and provide neighborhood amenities for existing and new waterfront residents, workers, and visitors. Additionally, long-standing federal park and open space assets—from Langston Golf Course to the National Arboretum, to Anacostia Park—are experiencing reinvestment, including plans for stronger connections to adjacent communities. ^{807.4}

The increase in the District’s population means that there is a greater demand for commemorative parks under federal jurisdiction, such as Franklin Park, to serve residents. Additionally, the federal government has struggled to provide adequate funding to plan, develop, and maintain the range of parks and open space that it operates. Federal partnerships with local agencies and organizations—such as DPR, BIDs, and nonprofit groups—are key to developing strategies that improve the character and function of these parks, provide new visitor amenities, and better support their neighborhoods while still preserving commemorative and historic resources within the parks. ^{807.5}

Policy PROS-1.4.1: Park Planning

Prioritize the creation of parks and recreation spaces through neighborhood planning and development review processes, particularly in areas where residents are not within a 10-minute walk of sufficient park space. ^{807.6}

Policy PROS-1.4.2: Park Acquisition

Acquire and improve additional parkland to meet the recreational needs of existing and future residents. This should occur both through the expansion of existing parks and the development of new parks. ^{807.7}

Policy PROS-1.4.3: Acquisition Methods

Use a variety of methods to acquire and improve parkland, including easements, donations, land purchases, strategic property transfers, long-term land leases, and park set-asides on new development sites. Recognize the impacts of new development on the need for additional park and recreational

facilities and mitigate impacts through dedication of parkland or in-lieu payments. ^{807.8}

Policy PROS-1.4.4: Parks on Large Sites

Include new neighborhood and/or community parks on large sites that are redeveloped for housing and other uses that generate a demand for recreational services. The potential for such parks to enhance the connectivity of parks and open spaces throughout the District should be an important planning and design consideration, particularly where multiple large adjacent sites are being redeveloped. ^{807.9}

Policy PROS-1.4.5: Parks on Surplus Land

Acquire and convert abandoned or tax delinquent land, surplus rail or road rights-of-way, and other land not in productive use into recreational use where feasible and appropriate, particularly in parts of Washington, DC, that lack adequate access to parkland. Balance the need for additional open space with other District priorities, such as affordable housing. ^{807.10}

Policy PROS-1.4.6: Park Amenities on NPS Land

Where consistent with other policies in the Comprehensive Plan and NPS plans, and supported by nearby neighborhoods and needs assessments, encourage federal government projects that would provide new recreational amenities—such as soccer fields, picnic areas, and trails—that increase equitable District resident access to national parkland. ^{807.11}

Policy PROS-1.4.7: Parks in Employment Growth Areas

Provide new parks and open spaces in areas of expected employment growth. Small pocket parks, plazas, and other open spaces should be created in the vicinity of the NoMa-Gallaudet U Metro station, Buzzard Point, the east end of downtown/Mount Vernon Triangle, and the Near Northeast neighborhood to provide visual relief and space for active and passive recreation. ^{807.12}

Action PROS-1.4.A: New Parkland Dedication or Park Impact Fee

Study a requirement for a dedication of new parkland—or a park impact fee in lieu of new parkland creation—for new development or redevelopment based on the size, use, and density of the new development. ^{807.13}

See also the Educational Facilities Element for policies on the use of school recreational facilities and lands.

PROS-2 Park and Recreational Facilities ⁸⁰⁸

While the previous section of this element focused on park planning, this section focuses specifically on park facilities. ^{808.1}

The District currently operates 76 recreation centers with a combined total of approximately one million square feet of floor space. It also operates over 50 aquatic facilities comprised of 11 indoor pools, 18 outdoor pools, four children’s pools, and 20 splash pads. The range of facilities have grown to include 34 community gardens, five skate parks, and over a dozen dog parks. There are more than 340 fields and courts, accommodating field sports, tennis, basketball, and other athletic activities. These facilities are used to provide recreational services to residents in all parts of the District. DPR activities range from aquatics, quilting, and environmental education to martial arts, personalized weight training, and even poetry slams. Many of the programs are targeted toward specific age groups, such as older adults and teens. Others are designed for persons with disabilities or for families. ^{808.2}

Demand for recreational programs—and the facilities to accommodate them—is expected to grow in the future as population grows. Demand will also be affected by cultural changes, new technology, sports and entertainment trends, and demographic shifts. The growth of the youth and older adult populations, in particular will influence recreational needs in the District over the next 20 years. The text box, *The District Speaks Out on Parks*, provides an indication of current recreational habits and trends in Washington, DC, based on a 2013 resident survey. ^{808.3}

PROS-2.1 Assessing Recreational Facilities ⁸⁰⁹

The 2014 Parks Master Plan identified three primary facility types in the District’s parks:

- Recreation centers, which provide space for the delivery of indoor recreation services and support space for outdoor activities;
- Aquatic facilities, including pools and splash pads; and
- Outdoor facilities, including courts, playgrounds, fields, and similar park features. ^{809.1}

The text and policies below provide general direction on how these facilities can be managed to meet future needs. In general, residents overwhelmingly favor enhancing existing assets to building new facilities. This focus should continue, particularly in areas experiencing subpar levels of service today. ^{809.2}

The District has one of the highest ratios of recreation centers to residents in the country. The District’s ratio is substantially higher than ratios for the largest East Coast cities and several major West Coast cities. However, this benchmark does not consider the condition or size of the center, or the accessibility of recreational services to residents. Most of the District’s recreation centers meet basic expectations, but some need modernization. DPR and DGS are actively working to improve the quality and size of outdated centers. ^{809.3}

The District Speaks Out on Parks

The Parks Master Plan process conducted in 2013-2014 engaged the community in a discussion about park needs in Washington, DC. Public input was solicited through stakeholder interviews, an advisory committee, staff workshops, focus groups, an online engagement tool, a recreation center survey, and a statistically valid mail-in survey. Major findings of the survey included:

- Seventy-one percent of the respondents had visited any DPR park in the last 12 months. Of this total, 77 percent rated the visited park as good or excellent. Another 20 percent rated the park as fair, and only 23 percent rated the park as poor
- Twenty-eight percent of the respondents indicated they visited an indoor recreation center at least once a week.
- Eighteen percent of the respondents had participated in a DPR recreation program in the last 12 months. Of this total, 82 percent rated the program as good or excellent.
- The most frequently mentioned reasons for not using parks and recreation centers more often were lack of time (47 percent), lack of program awareness (32 percent), and absence of desired amenities (12 percent).
- The facilities in greatest demand were trails (66 percent), small neighborhood parks (66 percent), indoor pools (59 percent), large community parks (57 percent), indoor exercise and fitness facilities (55 percent), picnic areas (54 percent), and outdoor pools (53 percent).
- The programs in greatest demand were community special events (59 percent), adult fitness and wellness (52 percent), water fitness (40 percent), adult leisure learning (40 percent), and nature programs (40 percent). ^{808.3a}

The needs assessment during the 2013-2014 master planning process determined that:

- The District's strengths include a relatively large number of recreation centers and amenities, including some with state-of-the-art spaces. However, some facilities are underused because they are outdated or not well maintained.
- There is a major need to improve and maintain existing facilities. Deferred maintenance is a problem at many recreation centers. Improvements need to be addressed in a prioritized, equitable, and efficient method.
- There is a perception of inequity in parks and recreation services. This is partially due to the gap between high-quality new or recently modernized facilities and those that are older. Some parts of the District have better access to facilities than others.
- The existing neighborhood-based model of providing services may not be sustainable and requires too many facilities to be built, operated, and staffed. Although consolidation would result in a smaller number of facilities, it may translate into higher levels of service, since these facilities could reach larger populations and be operated more efficiently. ^{808.4}

As Map 8.2 indicates, there are still many parts of the District that may require additional recreation center space. Service gaps appear in Near Southeast, the far western and far northern parts of the District, and downtown. ^{809.4}

DPR's design guidelines identify four recreation center prototypes: neighborhood, community, District, and specialty. They are distinguished by their size, amenities, and service area. Criteria are provided for the functional relationship of interior spaces for each center type. There are also guidelines to recognize the historic significance of older centers and protect their historical integrity. ^{809.5}

The District has one of the highest number of aquatics facilities per capita in the country. However, sometimes these facilities are not in locations that are easily accessed by residents in their service area or in the best condition, and sometimes they are not large enough to meet demand. To promote equitable access to and excellence in aquatics, continued investment in pools and other facilities is needed. Evaluations of potential new aquatic facilities, including those that can generate revenue and draw visitors from other jurisdictions, may be considered in the future. Other water-oriented activities, such as river canoeing, kayaking, and fishing, also will be supported through recreational programs. ^{809.6}

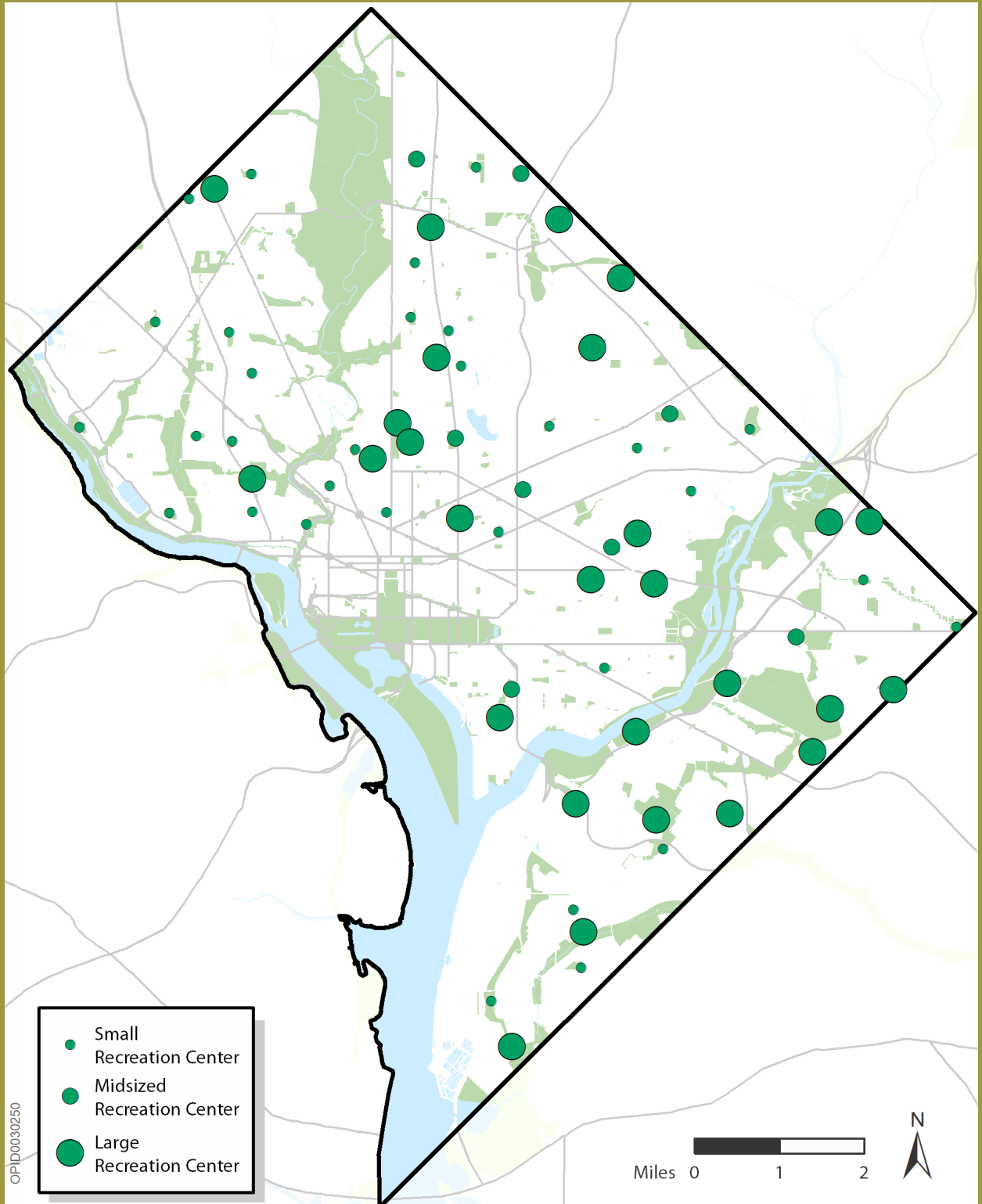
Probably the most familiar function of a neighborhood or community park is to provide space for active outdoor recreation. District parks support hundreds of facilities, including softball and baseball fields, football and soccer fields, basketball courts, tennis courts, dog parks, and skate parks. In addition, an unprecedented number of playgrounds were renovated in 2013 and 2014, drawing thousands of children and other users to new equipment across the District. The District continues to work toward securing more outdoor facilities and modernizing existing facilities so they can be operated and maintained more efficiently. In some instances, this may require partnering with agencies such as DCPS and DDOT to creatively accommodate facilities on school grounds or in transportation rights-of-way. Given the limitations of the District's compact geographic area and the varied amounts of space for outdoor facilities, recreation can become a component of new urban infrastructure projects in a number of settings. ^{809.7}

Policy PROS-2.1.1: Recreational Facility Development

Improve the physical and psychological health of District residents by providing a variety of recreational and athletic facilities, including playing fields, tennis courts, swimming pools, basketball courts, trails and paths, art studio and exhibition spaces, boating facilities, docks, and open areas for other sports activities. ^{809.8}

Map 8.2:

Recreation Center Buildings ^{809.9}



Policy PROS-2.1.2: Use of Service Standards

Develop recreational facilities in an orderly way by using service standards and design guidelines that help identify local needs. Further, consistently apply the new classification system for recreation centers included in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Direct investment in new facilities to the areas with the greatest unmet needs and areas where additional demand is expected in the future. ^{809.10}

Policy PROS-2.1.3: Quality and Compatible Design

All park improvements should be of high design and construction quality, sensitive to the natural environment, respectful of historic structures and important cultural landscapes, sensitive to the needs of people of all ages and abilities, and compatible with surrounding land uses. ^{809.11}

Policy PROS-2.1.4: Responding to Local Preferences

Provide amenities and facilities in District parks that are responsive to the preferences and needs of the neighborhoods around the parks. Park planning should recognize that there are different leisure time interests in different parts of Washington, DC. To better understand these differences, the community must be involved in key planning and design decisions. ^{809.12}

Policy PROS-2.1.5: Adapting to Changing Needs

Allow the development of flexible facilities that respond to changing preferences and community needs in appropriate District parks, including dog parks, skate parks, tot lots, and water spray parks. ^{809.13}

Policy PROS-2.1.6: Nature-Based Design

New recreational facilities should incorporate nature-based design principles that value residents' innate connection to nature and allow abundant opportunities to be outside and to enjoy the multisensory aspects of nature. Nature-based elements can include a visual connection with nature, the presence of water, the use of natural materials, and incorporation of dynamic and diffuse light. ^{809.14}

Policy PROS-2.1.7: Alternatives to New Facilities

Identify opportunities to meet outdoor recreational needs through existing public or private facilities, as an alternative to building new facilities. ^{809.15}

Policy PROS-2.1.8: Project Development Process

Maintain a well-defined and transparent project development process that includes public participation so that future park projects meet resident needs and achieve context-sensitive design solutions. Recreational needs should be confirmed through area plans, neighborhood plans, and plans for individual parks. ^{809.16}

Policy PROS-2.1.9: Use of Emerging Technologies

Support the use of emerging technologies, such as tech lounges and e-sports, to create interactive gathering spaces for residents, particularly youth and older adults. ^{809.17}

Action PROS-2.1.A: Capital Improvements

Regularly identify and update the cost of improvements needed to meet service delivery standards, including those for recreation centers, aquatic facilities, and outdoor facilities. Provide systematic and continuing funds for park improvements through the annual Capital Improvement Program, with investments prioritized for the facilities and communities that are most in need. ^{809.18}

Action PROS-2.1.B: Needs Assessments and Demographic Analysis

Conduct periodic needs assessments, surveys, and demographic studies to better understand the current preferences and future needs of District residents regarding parks and recreation. ^{809.19}

Action PROS 2.1.C: Parks Restroom Inventory

Conduct an assessment of the existing parks restroom inventory, considering park size and usage to determine the needs for additional public restrooms. ^{809.20}

See also the Community Services and Facilities Element for policies on the co-location of recreational uses with other public facilities

Action PROS-2.1.D: Level-of-Service and Classification Systems

Evaluate existing level-of-service standards by type of facility and amenity, and where deemed necessary, develop facility-specific classification systems. ^{809.21}

Action PROS-2.1.E: Improvement of Outdoor Recreational Facilities

Systematically evaluate existing outdoor recreational facilities based on the Parks Master Plan design guidelines. Implement plans to eliminate deficiencies and close gaps through capital improvements. Typical capital projects might include turf restoration, addition of lighting and seating at sports fields, playground renovation, and resurfacing of basketball and tennis courts. ^{809.22}

PROS-2.2 Providing Quality Service to All Residents ⁸¹⁰

Maintaining a quality park system requires a high level of facility maintenance, modernization, and repair. A 2009 assessment of 72 DPR facilities found that 10 were in poor condition, 11 were in fair condition,



A steady, reliable stream of funds will be essential to keep our parks safe and attractive, and to respond to future needs.

8

and 51 were in good condition. A supplemental assessment of 56 recreation centers was done by DGS in 2013. It found 11 facilities in poor condition, 17 in fair condition, and 28 in good condition. ^{810.1}

On a per capita basis, the District spends less on park operations and maintenance than peer cities like Minneapolis, Portland, and San Francisco. Since 2003, however, the District's annual expenditures on park capital improvements have been higher than expenditures in these cities. New facilities are replacing aging buildings and providing attractive new community centers. With more capital construction planned in the coming years, the District will need to dedicate additional funds to cover the higher expenses of operating and maintaining these facilities. ^{810.2}

Similar efforts will be needed to address a wide variety of park planning issues, including the personal safety of park visitors, provisions for youth and residents with disabilities, staffing needs, and the coordination of service delivery with other agencies. A steady, reliable stream of funds will be essential to keep our parks safe and attractive, and to respond to future needs. ^{810.3}

Programming is one of the core elements of recreational service delivery. DPR delivers over 400 programs a year at its facilities. Recent data indicates that fewer than 20 percent of DC residents participate in these programs. Detailed data on demographics, resident preferences, and user satisfaction can help create more responsive programming. There are also opportunities for better marketing and programming for targeted audiences like youth and older adults. In some cases, service delivery by other agencies or nonprofits may be the most effective option. ^{810.4}

Looking ahead, new funding sources—such as public-private partnerships, grants, and concessions—may be necessary. A commitment to future funding should recognize the many tangible and intangible benefits that the District's parks provide to neighborhoods. ^{810.5}

Policy PROS-2.2.1: Maintenance and Renovation

Provide for the continuing maintenance, renovation, and upgrading of the District's parks and recreational facilities to prevent their deterioration so that they continue to meet community needs. Prioritize the asset management of existing facilities during the capital improvement process.

^{810.6}

Policy PROS-2.2.2: Park Safety and Security

Design parks, trails, and recreational facilities to improve the safety of visitors and staff. Avoid creating hidden and difficult-to-access areas, where security problems or vandalism could result. Lighting, fencing, building materials, and other design components should be selected to enhance

the safety of park users. Park lighting should be compatible with adjacent residential neighborhoods. ^{810.7}

Policy PROS-2.2.3: Program Diversity

Provide diverse recreational activities to promote healthy living for persons of all ages and cultural backgrounds. Such activities must be distributed equitably in all parts of the District. Coordinate activities and offerings with other service providers, including DCPS and community-based organizations such as wellness centers for older persons, to maximize the effectiveness of service delivery and minimize redundancy. ^{810.8}

Policy PROS-2.2.4: Data-Driven Programming

Collect and analyze data on recreational program participation and use this data to shape decisions on future programs and operations. Programs should reflect local and national trends in recreation and regular surveys of District residents, with a focus on meeting the needs of underserved populations. ^{810.9}

Policy PROS-2.2.5: Youth Recreational Services

Provide recreational services that are particularly responsive to the special needs of the District's youth, using recreation and athletics to promote self-esteem, responsibility, and leadership skills among youth. ^{810.10}

Policy PROS-2.2.6: Special Needs

Increase efforts to meet the needs of underserved population groups, particularly older residents and persons with disabilities. Provide barrier free access by modifying existing facilities to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities and modifying existing indoor and outdoor facilities and parks to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities. Explore the use of alternative participation styles and formats in the program curriculum so that activities can be easily adjusted to allow persons with disabilities and residents needing additional accommodations to participate. ^{810.11}

Policy PROS-2.2.7: Physical Activity in Everyday Spaces

Prioritize community-driven strategies to support physical activity in non-traditional, everyday spaces across the District. Childhood play is essential to physical, cognitive, creative, social, and emotional development. However, many children face barriers to play, such as a perceived or actual lack of safe spaces. District government and its partners should provide additional opportunities for play in everyday locations where kids and families already spend time, including bus stops, grocery stores, and sidewalks. ^{810.12}

Policy PROS-2.2.8: New Funding Sources

Seek out and pursue new forms of local, federal, nonprofit, and private financial support to acquire, develop, and operate the District's park and recreational facilities. Streamline the process for accepting private donations of parks-related goods, services, and facilities. ^{810.13}



Encourage volunteer assistance and stewardship in the maintenance of the District's parks. Local community organizations should be encouraged to donate goods, services, and time to help in the oversight and upkeep of such spaces.

For more information, see PROS-4.1 on public-private partnerships.

Policy PROS-2.2.9: Park Stewardship

Encourage volunteer assistance and stewardship in the maintenance of the District's parks, particularly the triangle parks along major thoroughfares. Local community organizations should be encouraged to donate goods, services, and time to help in the oversight and upkeep of such spaces. Stewardship should be viewed as a way to increase environmental awareness, reduce maintenance costs, and build civic pride in parks. ^{810.14}

Policy PROS-2.2.10: Fiscal Impact of Park Improvements

Evaluate proposed park facilities to determine their ability to generate revenue and help recover operational and maintenance costs. When developing new facilities, assess the projected operation and maintenance costs prior to requesting capital funding approval. ^{810.15}

Action PROS-2.2.A: Facility Assessments

Conduct regular facility condition and utilization studies and use this data to determine if there is a need for improvement, reconstruction, closure, or expansion. A comprehensive facility condition assessment should be performed for each recreation center at least once every five years. ^{810.16}

Action PROS-2.2.B: Maintenance Standards

Create official maintenance standards based on industry best practices, such as Sustainable SITES Initiative (SITES) or an equivalent system, to improve the effectiveness of current maintenance and service levels for recreational buildings, facilities, and landscaping. Both maintenance contractors and the District should adhere to these standards. ^{810.17}

Action PROS-2.2.C: Adopt-a-Park

Continue to encourage community groups, businesses, and others to participate in the District's Adopt-a-Park/Adopt-a-Playground program and publicize the program through signs, advertisements, websites, and other media. Support Friends of Parks groups in stewarding, advocating, and hosting fundraising events for park sites to help maintain grounds and buildings and assist in the planning process. ^{810.18}

Action PROS-2.2.D: Data Tracking

Establish a system to maintain and regularly update data and maps on parks, recreational facilities, and programming offered by DPR and affiliated providers to measure improvements in levels of service and document achievements. ^{810.19}

Action PROS-2.2.E: Marketing and Branding

Develop a marketing plan to increase public awareness of programs and to more firmly establish an identity for Washington, DC, parks. ^{810.20}

See also policies in the Environmental Protection Element about green maintenance and green building practices, including requirements that future recreation centers meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver standards.

Action PROS-2.2.F: Integration of Federal and District Athletic Fields

Better integrate federal and District athletic fields under the jurisdictions of NPS, DPR, and DCPS. ^{810.21}

Action PROS-2.2.G: Design Standards

Create District-wide parks and recreation facility design standards for outdoor facilities. Design parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities to reflect the preferences and culture of the local population, to accommodate a range of age groups and abilities, and to improve the safety of visitors and staff. When renovating playgrounds and parks, design new infrastructure for active recreation, including workout equipment, for all ages and abilities. ^{810.22}

Action PROS-2.2.H: Hospital and Clinic Partnerships

Explore partnerships with hospitals and clinics to increase the number of doctors prescribing parks and recreational activities to patients of every age. ^{810.23}

Action PROS-2.2.I: Performance Monitoring

Provide the necessary hardware and software to track customer use and evaluations, determine gaps in programming and facilities, and identify opportunities to improve the overall performance of the parks and recreation system. ^{810.24}

Action PROS-2.2.J: Recreation Program Action Plan

Develop a recreation program action plan that elevates, standardizes, and expands the quality of DPR program offerings. The plan should help DPR to prioritize program investments while promoting broader goals of health, fitness, artistic expression, and community building. ^{810.25}

Action PROS-2.2.K: Public-Private Partnerships

When using a public-private partnership model to fund park acquisitions or improvements, incorporate programming and maintenance plans. ^{810.26}

Action PROS-2.2.L: New Kiosk Development

Amend the zoning regulations to allow temporary and permanent kiosks at residentially zoned parks, where appropriate. Kiosks would be owned by the District and revenue from the kiosks would be used to support park maintenance and operations. ^{810.27}



Langston Golf Course is part of an open space network that spans both banks of the Anacostia River

PROS-3 Open Space Networks ⁸¹¹

Washington, DC, is characterized by four outstanding and distinct networks of open space:

- The Monumental Core, including the National Mall and adjacent areas in East and West Potomac Parks;
- Rock Creek Park and the linear parks along its tributary streams, extending from the Potomac River to the Maryland border;
- The Civil War Defenses of Washington, otherwise known as the Fort Circle Parks, forming a ring of open space approximately five miles out from the center of the District; and
- The Anacostia and Potomac parklands, including linear parks along tributary streams. ^{811.1}

Each of these areas is profiled in more detail below. Together, they comprise 6,700 acres of parkland, or about 18 percent of the District's land area. Because almost all of this land is under the control of NPS, the policies presented here are intended to express the District's aspirations for the land's long-term management. They are statements of the District's values and priorities, to be consulted by our federal partners as they plan and manage these important properties. ^{811.2}

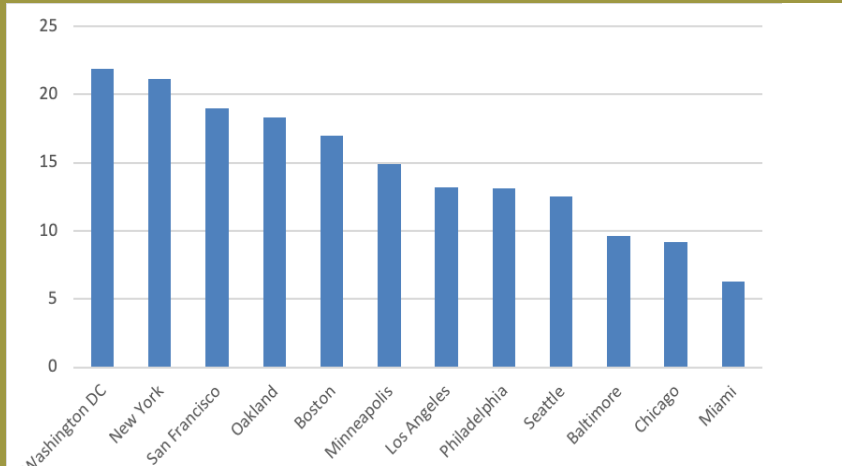
In addition to the four open space networks described above, there are other important chains of interconnected open space across the District. Among the most significant is the corridor of District, federal, and institutional lands extending from McMillan Reservoir on the south to Fort Totten on the north. ^{811.3}

This section of the Comprehensive Plan includes a special focus on park and open space planning for Washington, DC's waterfronts. The need to improve connectivity between open spaces through trails and greenways also is addressed. Policies on these topics are supplemented in Section PROS-4.0 with information on functional open spaces that may augment this network and further contribute to community needs, environmental quality, and economic value. ^{811.4}

Figure 8.4 compares the total parkland acreage within Washington, DC, to other high-density U.S. cities, using data from a recent analysis by the Trust for Public Land. ^{811.5}

Figure 8.4:

Parkland Open Space, Washington, DC Compared to Other Cities ^{811.6}



Source: Trust for Public Land, 2016

PROS-3.1 Sustaining and Enhancing the Federal Open Space Systems ⁸¹²

Although Washington, DC, does not have jurisdiction over the National Mall and the adjoining open spaces in East and West Potomac Parks, these are arguably the most visible and high-profile parklands in the District. They project the image of Washington, DC, to the world and attract millions of visitors each year. The future of the landscaped glades between the U.S. Capitol and the Potomac River is the focus of national debate, as the need for new monuments and memorials is balanced against the need to retain the Mall's historic form, sight lines, and open quality. Under statehood, the National Mall and environs would be preserved as the core of the federal district. In addition, the prospect of sea level rise threatens the continued viability of recreational uses at East Potomac Park and Hains Point. The Mall serves local, national, and international communities. It is integral to Washington, DC's history. The National Mall should remain an inclusive space that allows users to recognize history while balancing the need to draw

visitors to the District. The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) has prepared several important plans on these issues, including the Legacy Plan and the Memorials and Museums Master Plan. Both plans seek to preserve the historic proportions of the Mall, recognize its multiple functions as a passive and active open space, and expand the open space network to new areas along South Capitol Street and the Anacostia River. ^{812.1}

Several planning initiatives for the National Mall have been completed. In 2000, NPS completed a Comprehensive Design Plan for the White House and President's Park. The approved plan provides the management framework and flexibility needed to manage and preserve the site for the presidency and the public. In 2001, NCPC released the Memorials and Museums Master Plan, which identifies 100 potential locations for memorials and museums, and provides general guidelines for their development. In addition, in 2004, the nonprofit organization National Mall Coalition launched the National Mall Third Century Initiative (3C Initiative). The mission of the 3C Initiative is to renew the vitality of the Mall through creative public use, wise stewardship for the next century, and appropriate expansion. The U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) is also involved in planning and design decisions on the Mall. ^{812.2}

Rock Creek Park is the largest contiguous open space within the District, encompassing over 2,000 acres along the Rock Creek Valley and its tributary streams. The park's scenic landscapes provide a respite from the cityscape of Washington, DC. Each year, more than two million people visit the park to hike, picnic, play, and enjoy its rugged beauty. More than 12 million people a year use the park roads for commuting or scenic driving. In 2005, NPS completed a General Management Plan (GMP) for the largest unit of Rock Creek Park, providing guidance on how to best protect natural resources and manage visitor services. The goals of the GMP are to preserve and perpetuate the ecology of the Rock Creek Valley, protect archaeological and historic resources, provide for education and exploration, and create opportunities for recreation that are compatible with the park's natural and cultural setting. The GMP itself includes management prescriptions that will guide future land use decisions and issues regarding road closures and traffic management. ^{812.3}

At the start of the Civil War in 1861, a series of fortifications was built around Washington, DC, to protect the nation's capital from a Confederate invasion. Among the fortifications were Fort Stevens, site of an 1864 battle; Fort Reno, highest point in the District; and Fort Dupont, the largest park Ward 7 or 8. After the Civil War, most of the 68 forts and 93 batteries were dismantled, and the land was returned to its pre-war owners. Before they disappeared completely, a number of fort sites were purchased by the federal government and developed as parkland. An envisioned Fort Circle greenbelt featured prominently in the McMillan Plan of 1901, and with the advent of the

automobile, the greenbelt was proposed as a 23-mile circumferential parkway around the growing District (the Fort Drive). ^{812.4}

NPS prepared a GMP for the Fort Circle Parks in 2003. The GMP's primary objectives include protection of ecological and historical values and accommodation of local recreational interests. The GMP seeks to remedy issues such as the deteriorated state of the parks' historical earthworks, concerns about visitor safety, and the lack of visitor services and interpretive facilities. Among the planned improvements are a new hiking trail linking the forts through existing parkland, new recreational features, coordinated signage, and new public access points. ^{812.5}

The Potomac and Anacostia rivers and their associated tributaries, such as Watts Branch and Pope Branch, provide an important link in the District's open space network. They provide protection for sensitive natural habitat, scenic beauty, and water-oriented recreation for District residents and visitors. Washington, DC's waterfront open spaces encompass an area larger than all of Rock Creek Park. ^{812.6}

Investments in infrastructure have started to provide a connected waterfront, so that the Anacostia River no longer divides neighborhoods, although further connections, many in planning, are needed. State-of-the-art multimodal projects are enhancing mobility and public access to and along the waterfront, such as the nearly 20-mile Anacostia Riverwalk Trail and the local 11th Street Bridge, which now serves pedestrians and cyclists. When constructed, the planned Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge will continue this momentum along with the planned pedestrian and cyclist bridge spanning the Anacostia River and additional new miles of bike paths linking underserved communities. ^{812.7}

In addition, the Anacostia waterfront has emerged as a cultural center complementing the Mall with cultural venues, sports arenas, and museums. These amenities enliven the waterfront's shores with millions of annual visitors and reinforce the District's unique cultural heritage. There are also new developments and neighborhoods that serve as destinations themselves, such as the Wharf, and that are changing the image of the District and its relationship with the water through unique public spaces and programming. From Nationals Park and Audi Field to new museums, music venues, future monuments, and the planned 11th Street Bridge Park, the Anacostia waterfront is adding to the cultural energy and dynamism of Washington, DC. Despite these successes, significant environmental, urban design, and infrastructure challenges remain. ^{812.8}

See the Environmental Protection, Urban Design, and Infrastructure elements for more information about these issues.

Policies for the waterfront are presented in the Section PROS-3.2 of this element ^{812.9}

Policy PROS-3.1.1: District Open Space Networks

Coordinate with NPS and other relevant organizations to restore the environmental health of the District’s open space networks, including tree cover and habitat, and to help more residents experience these areas through nature programs and trails. ^{812.10}

Policy PROS-3.1.2: Monumental Core

Preserve the integrity of the National Mall open space, and advocate for federal plans and programs that protect this area from inappropriate or excessive development. ^{812.11}

Policy PROS-3.1.3: East and West Potomac Parks

Work with the federal government to protect and enhance the great open spaces of the Monumental Core beyond the National Mall, such as Hains Point and the Tidal Basin parklands. In efforts consistent with the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan, support the use of these areas for outdoor cultural events and celebrations, and for recreational activities and amenities that serve District residents and visitors. Planning for these areas should provide opportunities to expand the National Mall and better integrate East Potomac Park with the Southwest Waterfront across the Washington Channel. Planning for these areas should also seek to mitigate sea level rise through nature-based design solutions where possible. ^{812.12}

Policy PROS-3.1.4: Rock Creek Park

The District’s land use and transportation decisions should support the conservation of Rock Creek Park as a national scenic resource. Actively participate in discussions about the management of park resources—including roadways and recreational facilities—and environmental quality. ^{812.13}

Policy PROS-3.1.5: Tributary Parks

Maintain the scenic open space qualities and ecology of the District’s stream valley parks, including tributaries to the Potomac and Anacostia rivers and tributaries to Rock Creek. Create and maintain hiking and walking paths along tributary streams as appropriate to preserve habitats, minimize erosion, and preserve trees. Ensure that development adjacent to stream valley corridor parks does not compromise visual and ecological values and access to natural and forested areas. ^{812.14}

See the Environmental Protection Element for additional policies on stream preservation

Policy PROS-3.1.6: Fort Circle Parks

Protect and enhance the Fort Circle Parks as an integrated network of permanent open spaces that connect neighborhoods, provide scenic beauty and historic interest, and offer a variety of recreational activities. Recognize these parks as an important District and national resource. Prevent District and federal actions that would harm historic and ecological resources in the Fort Circle Parks, and strongly support actions that would improve their maintenance, connectivity, visibility, accessibility, and safety. ^{812.15}

Policy PROS-3.1.6: Compatibility with Parklands

Maintain and design public and private development adjacent to the edges of open spaces and parks to be compatible with these parklands and improve park access and safety. ^{812.16}

Action PROS-3.1.A: Participation in Federal Planning Park Efforts

Support and participate in NPS and NCPC efforts to plan for parks and open spaces in, and adjacent to, the Monumental Core. Encourage resident participation in these efforts. ^{812.17}

Action PROS-3.1.B: Monument and Memorial Siting

Actively participate with the appropriate federal agencies, commissions, and others in discussions and decisions on the siting of new monuments, memorials, and other commemorative works on open spaces within Washington, DC. ^{812.18}

Action PROS-3.1.C: Implementation of General Management Plans

Support federal efforts to implement the Comprehensive Design Plan for the White House and President's Park and the GMPs for Rock Creek Park and the Fort Circle Parks. ^{812.19}

Action PROS-3.1.D: Fort Circle Park Trail

Use land acquisition and/or easements to complete the Fort Circle Park Hiker-Biker Trail and to provide additional Fort Circle Park signage and historic markers. ^{812.20}

Action PROS-3.1.E: Fort Circle Partnerships

Actively participate in interjurisdictional and public-private partnerships to preserve, enhance, restore, and complete the Fort Circle Parks. ^{812.21}

Action PROS-3.1.F: Park Land Transfers

In cooperation with appropriate federal agencies, identify park resources in federal ownership that could potentially be transferred to the District

for conservation or recreational purposes only, such as Franklin Park, the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium (RFK Stadium), and Langston Golf Course, along with various triangle parks, such as Murrow and Monroe parks. ^{812.22}

PROS-3.2 Reclaiming the Waterfront ⁸¹³

The contrast between the District's two waterfronts—the Potomac and the Anacostia—has been well documented. Virtually the entire Potomac shoreline north of Hains Point is publicly accessible, with such amenities as the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Canal towpath, Georgetown Waterfront Park, Thompson Boat Center, and Theodore Roosevelt Island. The shoreline affords stunning views of the District's monuments and picturesque vistas across the river to Virginia. On the other hand, much of the 22 miles of shoreline along the Anacostia River, while inaccessible, is natural and relatively undisturbed. In 2003, the Anacostia Waterfront Framework Plan set a visionary and ambitious agenda for the revitalization of the Anacostia waterfront as a world-class destination and the center of 21st-century Washington, DC. The Anacostia Waterfront Initiative (AWI) set in motion a transformation that includes new mixed-income neighborhoods, environmental restoration, transportation infrastructure, enhanced public access, new connected parks, and cultural destinations. Fifteen years after the AWI Plan, the turnaround of the Anacostia waterfront is a national model for urban rivers in terms of environmental restoration, public access, economic development, and inclusive growth. ^{813.1}

Along the Potomac, the District's priority is conserving the federal parklands, retaining public access, and improving access where it does not exist today. Along the Anacostia, the District has created a system of interconnected and continuous waterfront parks that establish access to the river for recreation, from signature locations like Yards Park to improved facilities like Kenilworth Recreation Center, all joined by the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail. However, despite these significant achievements, several recreational and open space improvements have yet to be realized. Map 8.3 provides an overview of completed and ongoing projects along the Anacostia waterfront. The Area Elements should be consulted for additional detail. ^{813.2}

Policy PROS-3.2.1: Preserving Waterfront Open Space

Recognize the importance of Washington, DC's waterfronts for recreation, public access, ecological protection, and scenic beauty. ^{813.3}

Policy PROS-3.2.2: Connecting Neighborhoods to the Rivers

Develop open space linkages between the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers and adjacent neighborhoods using stream tributaries such as Watts Branch

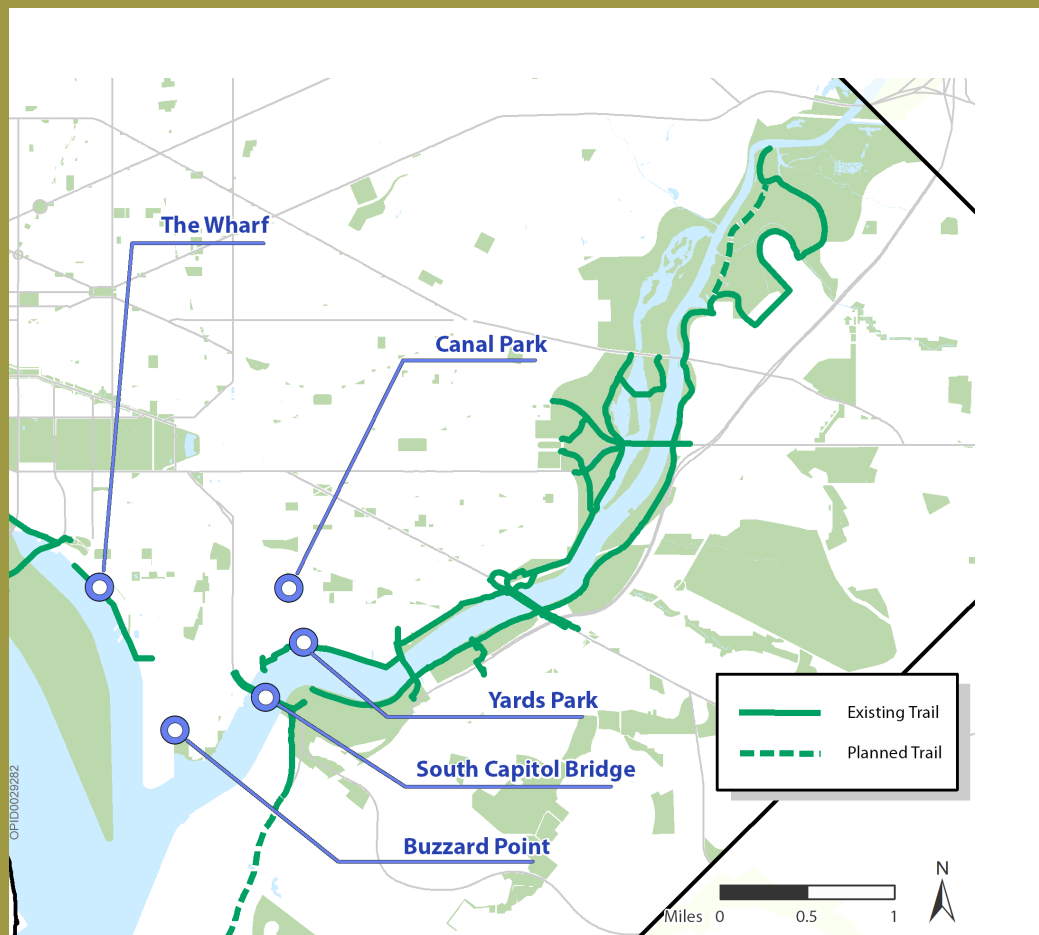
and Pope Branch as a framework for linear parks between the shoreline and nearby residential areas. ^{813.4}

Policy PROS-3.2.3: Linking Residents to Waterfront Park Spaces

Establish stronger multimodal linkages between the waterfront and adjacent upland neighborhoods, including Deanwood, Mayfair, Kenilworth-Parkside, River Terrace, Fairlawn, Twining, Kenilworth, Historic Anacostia, Carver-Langston, Kingman Park, Hill East, Capitol Hill, Barney Circle, Southwest, and Buzzard Point. Maximize public access to the waterfront from these areas through the development of a continued riverwalk and shoreline trail, natural shorelines, green infrastructure along streets, improved public

Map 8.3:

Overview of Completed and Ongoing Projects along the Anacostia Waterfront ^{813.5}



Source: DC Office of Planning, 2018

transportation, redesigned bridges and freeways, additional pedestrian access routes, and the extension of neighborhood streets and avenues to the water's edge. ^{813.6}

Policy PROS-3.2.4: Waterfront Visibility and Accessibility

Improve access to the shoreline parks from across Washington, DC, and reduce barriers to waterfront access created by railroads, freeways, and non-water-dependent industrial uses. However, no freeway or highway removal shall be undertaken prior to the completion of an adequate and feasible alternative traffic plan that has been approved by the District government.

^{813.7}

Policy PROS-3.2.5: Water-Oriented Recreation

Provide for a variety of water-oriented activities—including fishing, boating, kayaking, and paddle-boarding—on the District's rivers. Recognize both the Anacostia and Potomac rivers as vital aquatic resources than can accommodate kayaking, canoeing, sculling, fishing, and other forms of water-oriented recreation. ^{813.8}

Policy PROS-3.2.6: River Facilities

Coordinate with federal and private partners to create a network of facilities along the Anacostia and Potomac rivers that provide water access, recreational equipment, educational space, and other amenities. These amenities must be equitably distributed along the rivers and easily accessible from nearby neighborhoods. ^{813.9}

Policy PROS-3.2.7: Shoreline Access

On waterfront development sites under District jurisdiction, require public access to the shoreline unless precluded by safety or security considerations. Incorporate natural shorelines where appropriate. ^{813.10}

Policy PROS-3.2.8: Waterfront Park Design

Waterfront parks shall be designed and planned to maximize the scenic and recreational value of the rivers. Features such as parking lots and park maintenance facilities should be located away from the water's edge, and environmentally sensitive resources should be protected. ^{813.11}

Policy PROS-3.2.9: Upper Potomac Waterfront

Partner with NPS and other federal agencies to conserve open space along the Potomac waterfront and to protect the wooded and scenic qualities of the Potomac Palisades and adjacent islands and shoreline. Support efforts by NPS and partners to restore, reimagine, and revitalize the C&O Canal National Historic Park. ^{813.12}

Policy PROS-3.2.10: Lower Potomac Waterfront

Support additional public access to the Potomac waterfront from the mouth of the Anacostia River southward. While general access is currently restricted due to existing uses (such as that by Bolling Air Force Base), the District should identify long-term opportunities for shoreline open space and recreation, in the event that federal needs and use of this land change. ^{813.13}

See also the Urban Design Element for additional policies and actions related to shoreline development and aesthetics and the Lower Anacostia Waterfront/Near Southwest Element for additional information about the planned shoreline parks.

Action PROS-3.2.A: Anacostia River Park Improvements

Work collaboratively with the federal government, the private sector, and community and nonprofit groups to implement the open space improvement plans of the AWI. Planned improvements include:

- A major destination park at Poplar Point;
- Restored natural areas at Kingman and Heritage islands;
- New parks, including recreational fields, around RFK Stadium;
- Continuous bicycle and pedestrian trails along the waterfront and new pedestrian crossings on the upper reaches of the river;
- New neighborhood parks and athletic fields within redeveloping areas along the waterfront, including the Southwest Waterfront, Buzzard Point, Near Southeast, and Hill East; and
- Enhancements to the existing waterfront parks. ^{813.14}

For more details on these planned parks, see the Lower Anacostia Waterfront/Near Southwest Area Element and the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative Framework Plan.

Action PROS-3.2.B: Signage and Branding

Work with NPS to develop and implement a consistent system of signage and markers for the Anacostia and Potomac waterfronts. ^{813.15}

Action PROS-3.2.C: Anacostia River Boating

Develop additional marine facilities, including rowing centers, appropriately scaled boathouses, boat slips, and piers along the banks of the Anacostia River as recommended in the Anacostia Waterfront Framework Plan. All new marinas should become Clean Marina Partners. Implement boating access improvements utilizing the Boating Access grants from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife & Sport Fish Restoration Program. ^{813.16}



The Fort Circle Trail

8

Action PROS-3.2.D: Anacostia Riverwalk

Construct new sections of the Anacostia Riverwalk according to the Buzzard Point Vision Framework's riverwalk design guidelines. Work with Fort McNair to extend the Anacostia Riverwalk along the Washington Channel and design it to include co-benefits, such as enhanced security and flood protection for the base and ecological restoration features, thereby completing a key piece of the District-wide riverwalk system. ^{813.17}

PROS-3.3 Other Significant Open Space Networks 814 ⁸¹⁴

The District's formal open space networks are complemented by several smaller open space systems. These networks may be lesser known due to fragmented ownership and multiple functions, but they are no less important—particularly to the communities they serve. ^{814.1}

A unique open space network comprised primarily of major federal facilities, cemeteries, and institutional uses is located just north of Washington, DC's geographic center, in an area otherwise lacking in public parkland. The network includes McMillan Reservoir, the Armed Forces Retirement Home, Rock Creek Cemetery, Battleground National Cemetery, and Glenwood, Prospect Hill, and St. Mary's cemeteries. This area was already established as a major recreational ground for Washington, DC, in the 19th century. Its role was confirmed by the 1901 McMillan Plan, which recognized the dual purposes of these lands as functional facilities and passive open spaces. While public access to many of these properties is restricted today, their presence as an open space corridor is plainly visible on aerial photos of the District. ^{814.2}

See the Upper Northeast Element for more information on these properties.

Several sites along the path of the McMillan to Fort Totten open space network are currently under consideration for development. As detailed plans are developed for these sites, the District should take an active role in conserving the connected open space network as a historic, ecological, aesthetic, and recreational resource. ^{814.3}

Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.'s Highway Plan for the District created two kinds of boulevards and parkways that are part of a larger park and open space system. Some broad boulevards—including Nebraska Avenue, South Dakota Avenue, and Minnesota Avenue—connect parks to the Potomac and Anacostia rivers. Winding parkways along ridges, in valleys, or other roadways leading into large parks include Reno Road, Arkansas Avenue, and Alabama Avenue. These boulevards and parkways, enhanced by circle and triangle parks, should be preserved and maintained as elements of the larger park and open space system. Additionally, although parkways were not intended or designed to be major transportation arteries, they also currently function as primary transportation routes. ^{814.4}

Continued enhancement and preservation of open space networks in other parts of the District are also important. These networks include the forested greenbelt along Oxon Run, the woodlands and wetlands around Oxon Cove (extending south into Maryland), and the wooded areas extending from Westmoreland Circle to the Potomac River (including Dalecarlia Reservoir). ^{814.5}

Policy PROS-3.3.1: North-Central Open Space Network

Preserve and enhance the historic open space network extending from McMillan Reservoir to Fort Totten. As land use changes in this area, an integrated system of permanent open spaces and improved parks should be maintained or created. ^{814.6}

Policy PROS-3.3.2: Other Open Space Networks

Recognize the recreational, scenic, environmental, and historic value of other interconnected or linear open spaces in the District, including Oxon Run, Oxon Cove, and the Dalecarlia Reservoir area. ^{814.7}

Policy PROS-3.3.3: Small Park and Open Space Cluster Improvements

Prioritize improvements of small open spaces in areas with limited access to parks and open space, and a growing population. Apply common themes, such as sustainability, placemaking, or connectivity to plan, enhance, and maintain the small parks as a system. ^{814.8}

See the Environment Protection Element for more information on the use of pollinator gardens in small parks and open spaces.

Policy PROS-3.3.4: Small Parks Database

Develop a shared database of small parks, as defined by the CapitalSpace Plan, to inform coordination efforts between agencies and with the public. The database should include data on ownership, size, location, function, level of use, historic or cultural value, commemorative elements, programs, and condition. Assess existing agency jurisdiction for certain small parks so that each parcel is managed effectively to meet District and/or federal objectives and clarify the responsibilities of the managing agencies. ^{814.9}

Policy PROS-3.3.5: Boulevards and Parkways

Balance the transportation needs and safety standards of modern roadways with the preservation of resources and of scenic parkway goals to minimize impacts on viewsheds and natural and cultural resources that comprise the parkway landscape. ^{814.10}

See the Urban Design Element for additional information on parkways.

Policy PROS-3.3.6: Enlivening Cemeteries

Explore using cemeteries for passive open space. Collaborate with cemetery administrators to reconnect the burial grounds to the surrounding neighborhoods for greater public access. ^{814.11}

Action PROS-3.3.A: Creating Washington, DC's Central Park

Work with the federal government and institutional and open space landowners to create a linear system of parks and open space extending from Bryant Street on the south to Fort Totten on the north. This system should be created from existing large publicly-owned and institutional tracts, as well as adjacent triangle parks, cemeteries, and rights-of-way. ^{814.12}

See the Rock Creek East and Mid-City elements for additional information on this network. ^{814.8}

Action PROS-3.3.B: Boulevards and Parkways

Preserve and maintain boulevards and parkways as elements of the larger park and open space system. Proposed improvements and maintenance projects along trails and parkways should minimize impacts on viewsheds and be sensitive to the natural and historic qualities that make them significant. ^{814.13}

PROS-3.4 Connecting the District Through Trails ⁸¹⁵

Trails and linear parks are an important part of the open space network. They link the District's open spaces to one another and provide access between neighborhoods and nature. In some cases, they provide stream buffers or visual edges within communities. There are many different kinds of trails serving a range of recreational and transportation functions. Recent trail planning efforts have focused on improving bicycle mobility and waterfront access, and on showcasing the District's cultural, historic, and scenic resources. Trail planning is an integral part of park and open space planning. It is a means of improving access to parks and developing new trails within parks. ^{815.1}

Key trail-building initiatives include the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail and Fort Circle Parks Hiker-Biker Trail (both referenced in the previous section), the Metropolitan Branch Trail between Union Station and Silver Spring, the Watts Branch Trail, the Georgetown Waterfront Trail, the Broad Branch Road NW connection between the Western Ridge Trail and Soapstone Valley Trail, and the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST). The PHNST is of particular interest, as it is one of the country's 22 scenic national trails and includes multiple strands extending from the Chesapeake Bay to western Pennsylvania. Several of these strands pass through Washington, DC. ^{815.2}

The Bicycle Element of moveDC, released in 2014, includes many recommendations to improve bicycle facilities and infrastructure, such as expanding and upgrading the network of shared-use paths to eliminate bicycle network gaps, and facilitating and supporting development of regional and national trail routes. Additional details on the Bicycle Element of moveDC may be found in the Transportation Element of this Comprehensive Plan. ^{815.3}

Figure 8.5

Trail Improvements Recommended by moveDC ^{815.4}

Anacostia Park Trail/Prince George's County's Colmar Manor Park Trail
Gallatin Street NE Trail/Prince George's County's Trail Connection to West Hyattsville Metrorail Station
Long Bridge Trail/Mount Vernon Trail in Arlington County
New York Avenue NE Trail/Prince George's County's Colmar Manor Park Trail
Oxon Run Trail/Prince George's County's Oxon Run Trail
Pennsylvania Avenue SE Trail/Prince George's County's Pennsylvania Avenue Bicycle Lane/Trail
Rock Creek Park (Beach Drive NW) Trail/Montgomery County's Rock Creek Trail
Suitland Parkway Trail into Prince George's County
South Capitol Street Trail into Oxon Hill Farm and Prince George's County
Dalecarlia Parkway shared use path

Policy PROS-3.4.1: Trail Network

Develop a network of trails, paths, and linear parks to link the District's open space areas and improve access to open space. Trails and paths should provide a safe and convenient way for residents to experience Washington, DC's scenery and natural beauty on foot or by bicycle. ^{815.5}

Policy PROS-3.4.2: Linear Park Connections

Work with the federal government to improve connections between the open spaces within the District of Columbia through land acquisition and park dedication, particularly where gaps in the District's open space network exist. Attention should be given to acquisitions that better connect the Fort Circle Parks and improve shoreline access. ^{815.6}

Policy PROS-3.4.3: Preserving Natural Features

Preserve the scenic qualities of trails and the parklands they traverse. This includes designing trails to reduce erosion and tree removal and preserving the integrity of the settings that make each trail unique. ^{815.7}

Policy PROS-3.4.4: Trails in Underutilized Rights-of-Way

Develop multiuse trails in underutilized rights-of-way, including surplus railroad corridors, undeveloped street rights-of-way, and possibly alleys. ^{815.8}

Policy PROS-3.4.5: Trail Dedication

Require trail dedication, as appropriate, on privately-owned development sites along the District's streams, waterfronts, and linear parks. ^{815.9}

Policy PROS-3.4.6: Trails and Rivers

New development along the Anacostia and Potomac rivers should provide public right-of-way for trail connections and extensions where needed, and to construct trails according to applicable design standards and guidelines.

^{815.10}

Policy PROS-3.4.7: Trails and the Environment

Limit the effects of trails on natural areas and open space by using environmentally responsible building materials, paving to prevent erosion where necessary, and locating new trails in areas that will minimize the degradation of sensitive environmental areas. Recognize that trails have broader environmental benefits, such as reducing vehicular traffic and emissions. ^{815.11}

Policy PROS-3.4.8: Multijurisdictional Coordination

Work closely with other jurisdictions and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC) to provide a regional system of trails. Continually seek to connect District trails with those in bordering jurisdictions and complete a regional system of trails. ^{815.12}

Action PROS-3.4.A: Bicycle Trail Implementation

Initiate focused trail planning and construction efforts to eliminate gaps in the bicycle trail network and to improve substandard trails, as itemized in moveDC. Coordinate with NPS on trails for which both DDOT and NPS have responsibility. Support District and federal agencies, including DDOT and NPS, in developing, funding, and building multiuse trails within select parks that can connect to the District-wide trail system. Work with NPS to align District planning and implementation efforts with the NPS National Capital Region Paved Trails Study (2016), which calls for coordination with local jurisdictions to advance trail projects that contribute to the success of the regional trail network. ^{815.13}

Action PROS-3.4.B: District-wide Bicycle Network

In support of Sustainable DC, continue to develop a District-wide 100-mile bicycle lane network. Prioritize bicycle connections to parks and recreation facilities. ^{815.14}

Action PROS-3.4.C: Signage and Parking

Provide more consistent and unified signage along the District's trails to improve their identity and accessibility. Provide secure bike parking at trailheads and key destinations. ^{815.15}

Action PROS-3.4.D: Water Trails

Continue to develop designated water trails and water access points in the Potomac and Anacostia rivers for travel by canoe, kayak, and other paddlecraft. ^{815.16}



Open spaces such as Congressional Cemetery—while not public parks—serve as important open space assets, particularly where conventional parks are in short supply.

PROS-4 Maximizing Assets ⁸¹⁶

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan estimated that meeting the projected parks and recreation needs of the District would require \$1.2 billion in capital funds over the next 20 years. The District government has neither the land nor the dollars to completely fill parkland gaps and meet future recreational needs on its own. In addition to capital costs, competing budget needs make it difficult to deliver optimal levels of services, maintenance, and programming. In 2015, the District spent about \$162 per capita, per year on its park system. While this was slightly above the average for large U.S. cities, more resources may be required to meet District goals for quality and equity. Through increased investment, collaboration with the federal government, and community partnerships, non-traditional forms of support can be leveraged to dramatically improve access to open space and recreational services. It is important to foster agreements with the federal government, public and private schools, local colleges and universities, major employers, and others in the private sector in support of the District's efforts to broaden recreational choices for all residents. ^{816.1}

Maximizing assets also means redefining open space to include more than just parkland. Broadly defined, open space includes cemeteries, golf courses, reservoirs, institutions, parkways, military bases, and even private lawns and backyards. In this context, the value of open space may be its contribution to the District's form rather than its use for recreation. Preserving a balance between development and open space is important in all District neighborhoods and essential to the health of the community. Similarly, provisions for high-quality open space in new development—including amenities such as balconies, courtyards, and landscaping—is important to the psychological well-being of future residents and the aesthetic qualities of the District. ^{816.2}

CapitalSpace

Over 23 percent of Washington, DC's land area is devoted to parks and open spaces, ranging from the formal circles and squares established by the L'Enfant Plan to neighborhood pocket parks, large, forested stream valley corridors, recreational centers, and waterfront parks. Planning, ownership, and management of these different areas are provided by different branches of the District government, the federal government, and, occasionally, nonprofit organizations. ^{817.3a}

DPR, NCPC, the DC Office of Planning (OP), and NPS joined together for the CapitalSpace Initiative to establish a shared planning framework to address all of the parks and open spaces within the District. ^{817.3b}

CapitalSpace is an opportunity to achieve a seamless system of high-quality parks and open spaces meeting both national and local needs; addressing the often-competing demands placed on these spaces; clarifying their appropriate uses; providing established and new neighborhoods access to adequate parkland; and developing strategies to best use scarce resources to design, program, and maintain parks and open spaces according to the highest possible standards. ^{817.3c}

PROS-4.1 Maximizing Access Through Partnerships ⁸¹⁷

The need for joint planning to coordinate federal and District open space planning has been mentioned throughout this element. In 2005, the District, NPS, and NCPC launched the CapitalSpace Initiative to increase access to green space for District residents and visitors (see the CapitalSpace text box). It focuses on improving access to parks in neighborhoods where they are in short supply, such as Central and Northeast DC. NCPC continues to work with partnering agencies to implement the plan's recommendations, including the coordination of planning and management of small parks among the various park and planning agencies for efficiency and the promotion of investments across all small park resources. In 2017, NPS developed the Small Parks Management Strategies Plan, which lays out several management options to achieve that goal. In addition, NCPC maintains the Parks and Open Space Element of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital (Federal Elements), which includes policies for improved coordination between the federal and District governments. Similar joint planning and design exercises should be pursued with the District's public schools and with other local governments in the region. ^{817.1}

More recently, public-private partnerships have been recognized as a way to develop and operate new parks. Such partnerships can facilitate the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of park and recreational facilities, offering a win-win for local government and private partners. Typically, the private partner provides the capital funds or operating services in exchange for a return on investment over the life of the project. The public benefits by getting new facilities at a lower cost. Recent park improvements at the Yards and Canal Parks were completed in this manner, creating some of the District's most popular recreation spaces and facilities. A number of ingredients are required for success, including a sound business plan, realistic revenue forecasts, a commitment to programming and maintenance, and sustained and equitable access for all District residents. ^{817.2}

There are several different forms of public-private partnerships. Real estate development provides a range of opportunities, such as the renovation of aging recreation centers in exchange for allowing private development above it or adjacent to it. Allowing private concessions in parks or in recreation centers is another example. In other cases, recreation center hours might be extended to allow a third party to

provide services. The District could also lease space in its recreation centers to nonprofit service providers with missions that are compatible with the mission of DPR, such as health and wellness organizations. In all of these cases, such partnerships must preserve the fundamental function of parks as open spaces and places for public gathering. ^{817.3}

The philanthropic community is another important partner. Foundations, “friends” groups, and other charitable or advocacy organizations offer significant potential for funding. Nonprofit service providers also provide recreational facilities and programs for District residents. Groups like the United Planning Organization, Friendship House Association, the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, and the YMCA/YWCA fill gaps in local recreational services as they pursue their missions to foster the spiritual, mental, and physical development of individuals, families, and communities. Local colleges and universities also provide athletic programs and community services, many for free or at greatly reduced costs. These entities should not be viewed as competitors to DPR, but as partners that can help increase recreational access for all. ^{817.4}

Building a world-class park system is not only a governmental responsibility. It is a collective effort that requires the contribution of private businesses, institutions, nonprofits, residents, and community organizations. ^{817.5}

Policy PROS-4.1.1: National Park Service Partnerships

Promote expanded partnerships with NPS and other District agencies to broaden the range of recreational opportunities available to District residents. ^{817.6}

Policy PROS-4.1.2: Joint Planning and Management Strategies

Develop joint planning and management strategies for all parks for which the District and NPS have overlapping responsibilities. Use coordinated standards for lighting, fencing, walkways, maintenance, and security in these areas. ^{817.7}

Policy PROS-4.1.3: Greener, More Accessible Schoolyards

Work with DCPS to improve the appearance and usefulness of schoolyards and outdoor recreational facilities such as playgrounds and athletic fields. Strive to make such areas more park-like in character, with increased tree canopy, especially in communities without access to District-operated parks. ^{817.8}

See the Educational Facilities Element for policies on joint-use agreements between the District government and DCPS.

Policy PROS-4.1.4: Nonprofit Recreational Facilities

Support the development of nonprofit recreational facilities, such as Boys & Girls Clubs, to meet the recreational needs of District residents and complement the facilities provided by the District. ^{817.9}

Policy PROS-4.1.5: Regional Open Space Planning

Support federal, interstate, and multi-jurisdictional efforts to preserve open space and create interconnected greenbelts and hiking trails within and around the Washington region. ^{817.10}

Action PROS-4.1.A: Capital Space

Complete implementation of the CapitalSpace Initiative, which provides a coordinated strategy for open space and park management between the District and federal government. ^{817.11}

Action PROS-4.1.B: Expanding Partnerships

Provide an annual list of parks and recreation partnerships, including “friends” groups, program partners, inter-agency government partners, and sponsors that support District parks, recreation facilities, and programs. In concert with community members and agency staff, create an action plan to recruit new business, philanthropic, nonprofit, and governmental partners in the region to enhance park and recreation services benefitting residents and visitors. ^{817.12}

Action PROS-4.1.C: Sponsorships and Foundations

Explore opportunities for financial sponsorship of park and recreation facilities by corporate and nonprofit partners, foundations, and “friends” organizations. ^{817.13}

Action PROS-4.1.D: Joint-Use Partnerships

Consider alternative joint-use partnership models with DCPS and nonprofit service providers and select and implement the most effective approaches. ^{817.14}

Action PROS-4.1.E: Cooperative Management Agreements

Develop a District-wide strategy for securing cooperative management agreements with NPS and other federal partners to update, operate, and maintain federally controlled parks in Washington, DC. ^{817.15}

PROS-4.2 Recognizing the Value of Functional Open Space ⁸¹⁸

Functional open space refers to undeveloped land used for purposes other than parks and conservation. Such space comprises hundreds of acres of public and private land in the District, including sites that are valued for their large trees, scenic vistas, and natural beauty. Some of these sites are

regarded as public amenities, with features like hiking trails, lawns for picnics, and other forms of recreation. Such spaces are particularly important in neighborhoods like Brookland, where conventional parks are in short supply. There and elsewhere in the District, the grounds of seminaries, hospitals, and cemeteries are informally serving some of the functions usually associated with a neighborhood park. ^{818.1}

Retaining public access to these assets is important to the well-being of surrounding neighborhoods. Even where public access is not possible, the role of these spaces in improving the physical environment and shaping the visual quality of District neighborhoods should be acknowledged. ^{818.2}

Policy PROS-4.2.1: Institutional Open Space

Encourage local institutions—such as private and parochial schools, colleges and universities, seminaries, hospitals, and churches and cemeteries—to allow the cooperative use of their open space lands for the benefit of District residents. Explore funding and insurance mechanisms that would incentivize and preserve local institutions that choose to provide cooperative use. Ensure that cooperative uses recognize and respect institution missions and operations. ^{818.3}

Policy PROS-4.2.2: Utility Open Space

Recognize the value of undeveloped land associated with utilities, reservoirs, and other infrastructure facilities in providing visual buffers for adjacent neighborhoods and opportunities for recreational trails. ^{818.4}

Policy PROS-4.2.3: Parkways and Medians

Enhance the visual and open space qualities of Washington, DC's streets and highways through the landscaping of medians, traffic islands, and rights-of-way. If sufficient right-of-way is available, consider use of these spaces for active recreation. ^{818.5}

Policy PROS-4.2.4: Freeway Joint Use

Where compatible with adjacent land uses, support the use of land under or adjacent to freeways or other limited-access roadways for passive open space, public art, or other uses that enhance the usefulness and appearance of such land. ^{818.6}

Policy PROS-4.2.5: Podium Parks

Consider the development of podium-type open spaces and parks in the air rights over below-grade freeways and urban federal highways, including the I-395 through Downtown Washington, DC, the Southeast-Southwest Freeway near Capitol Hill, and the underpasses of North Capitol Street. ^{818.7}

PROS-4.3 Open Space and the Cityscape ⁸¹⁹

Improving open space is part of the District's broader vision of building green and healthy communities. The Sustainable DC Plan envisions a District with high-quality, well-connected habitats on land and water providing strong corridors and ecosystems for wildlife. The following policies seek to increase the amount of open space in Washington, DC, and preserve open space where it exists today. Although these spaces are often small, they collectively make an important contribution to the livability of the District. ^{819.1}

Zoning provisions seek to retain open space by setting lot coverage limits and front, rear, and side yard requirements. The maximum area that may be covered by structures varies from 40 percent to 75 percent in residential zones and from 60 to 100 percent in commercial zones. Creation or preservation of open space is also defined as a public benefit or public amenity for the purpose of granting additional density in a Planned Unit Development (PUD). ^{819.2}

Policy PROS-4.3.1: Open Space in the Downtown Landscape

Sustain a high-quality network of downtown pocket parks, courtyards, arcades, plazas, and rooftop gardens that provide space for recreation, scenic beauty, and outdoor activities for workers, visitors, and residents. ^{819.3}

Policy PROS-4.3.2: Plazas in Commercial Districts

Encourage the development of high-quality, multifunctional, and publicly accessible outdoor plazas around Metro station entrances, in neighborhood business districts, around civic buildings, and in other areas with high volumes of pedestrian activity. Design plazas to reflect neighborhood preferences, to serve as gathering spaces, and to function as green infrastructure. Use the PUD process to promote such spaces for public benefit and to encourage tree planting, public art, sculpture, seating areas, and other amenities within such spaces. ^{819.4}

Policy PROS-4.3.3: Common Open Space in New Development

Work with developers for new and rehabilitated buildings to include green roofs, rain gardens, landscaped open areas, and other common open space areas that provide visual relief and aesthetic balance. ^{819.5}

Policy PROS-4.3.4: Preservation of Open Space in Multi-family Development

Recognize the implicit value of the lawns, courtyards, gardens, and other open areas that surround many of the District's older high- and medium-density residential buildings. Discourage the practice of building on these areas if the historic proportions and character of the original buildings would be compromised. ^{819.6}

Policy PROS-4.3.5: Residential Yards

Recognize the value of residential yards as a component of the District's open space system and discourage increased coverage of such areas by buildings and impervious surfaces while balancing that value against other District priorities such as the creation of affordable housing. ^{819,7}

i American College of Sports Medicine, 2018.

ii Trust for Public Land, 2018.

iii Policies for National Park Service lands are contained in individual General Management Plans prepared by NPS, and are also included in the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan. There have also been several joint District-federal park planning initiatives launched since the 1960s.

iv Trust for Public Land, 2018.

