

## Chapter III - Recreation, Parks and Open Space

### ***Goals for Recreation, Parks, and Open Space***

#### **State Goals**

- Make a variety of quality recreational environments and opportunities readily accessible to all of its citizens, and thereby contribute to their physical and mental well-being.
- Recognize and strategically use parks and recreation facilities as amenities to make communities, counties, and the State more desirable places to live, work and visit.
- Use State investment in parks, recreation and open space to complement and mutually support the broader goals and objectives of local comprehensive/master plans.
- To the greatest degree feasible, ensure that recreational land and facilities for local populations are conveniently located relative to population centers, are accessible without reliance on the automobile, and help to protect natural open spaces and resources.
- Complement infrastructure and other public investments and priorities in existing communities and areas planned for growth through investment in neighborhood and community parks and facilities.
- Continue to protect recreational open space and resource lands at a rate that equals or exceeds the rate that land is developed at a statewide level.

#### **County Goals**

The Carroll County Master Plan contains goals, policies, strategies, and community viability thresholds that pertain to recreation, parks and open space. They are as follows:

Goal: Provide a coordinated and comprehensive system of public and private parks, recreational facilities and programs, and open space that will meet the active and passive recreational needs of all citizenry of the county and enhance community design, identity, and vitality

#### Policies:

- The majority of additional park facilities will be funded through impact fees, POS funds, and other non-General Fund sources.
- The Planning Commission will consider the location and development of community parks to be an integral part of CPA plan updates.

### Strategies:

- Locate designated open space contiguous to existing or proposed open space on adjoining development in order to establish scenic greenways, whenever possible.
- Encourage the creation of local land trusts for the purpose of accepting non-agricultural easements for recreation and open space and acquiring land for open space.
- Develop thresholds for recreational uses as part of the update of the Carroll County Parks and Land Preservation Plan.
- Adopt and periodically review the Greenways, Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Plan.
- Evaluate the existing impact fee structure for parks to see if the fee is adequate to cover the cost of park facility needs attributable to new development.

### **Community Viability Threshold 1**

A minimum of 30 acres of public recreation area per 1,000 county residents will be maintained.

#### Strategies

- As the Union Mills and Gillis Falls areas develop for recreational uses, maintain certain areas specifically for low-impact recreation to ensure that this type of recreation remains available, to reduce the cost of park development, and to help preserve some of the county's natural and wooded areas.
- Designate public recreation areas countywide that meet the projected needs of the local and county populations.

### **Community Viability Threshold 2**

Increase pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian facilities by 5 miles or more per year, or an average that produces 110 miles of alternative transportation corridors by 2020.

#### Strategies

- Adopt and periodically review the Greenways, Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Plan to encourage recreational and commuter trips along alternative transportation corridors.
  - Create an easement mechanism for designating segments of identified greenway corridors as protected open space on any parcels undergoing development review.
  - Create an easement mechanism for voluntary donation of segments of identified greenway corridors.
- Seek non-county (state/federal) funds for construction of greenway corridor trails.
- Explore the use of Program Open Space (POS) or other funds for fee simple or easement purchases of segments of identified greenway corridors.
- Give first priority to connection of parks and school facilities with greenway corridors to improve access and to enhance their use as alternative transportation facilities.

The County's goals, policies, strategies and thresholds clearly support the State goals for recreation, parks and open space. As with the State goals, the County goals, policies, and strategies emphasize providing recreational opportunities for all citizens while at the same time directing most of the effort to provide these opportunities towards the areas of greatest population concentration. These are the county's community planning areas, planning for which is done through the county's nine community comprehensive plans. Parks, recreational facilities, and open space are recognized in the goals of these plans, as well as those of the County Master Plan, as essential components of quality living environments, just as they are in the State goals. Appropriately, and consistent with the State goals, funding for recreational projects primarily is directed towards the community planning areas in order to fulfill the goals of the plans and serve the greatest number of people. This objective is achieved further through the use of a County budget line item for the towns to assist with parks and recreation projects. For more information on the funding of projects, see the "Land Acquisition and Facility Development" section below.

Appendix I contains the many goals and objectives related to parks and recreation that are included in the community comprehensive plans.

## ***County Parks and Recreation Programs***

Carroll County utilizes a number of tools for providing parks, recreational facilities and programs, and open space. Chief among them are: planning; land acquisition and facility development; impact fees; designated open space, set asides and facilities as required by zoning and the subdivision process; joint use agreements; area recreation councils; and special facilities.

### **Planning**

Planning for open space, parks and recreational facilities takes place through the County Master Plan and community comprehensive plans, all of which are undertaken by the county Department of Planning.

The County Master Plan and each of its nine community comprehensive plans contain goals and strategies related to the provision of open space, parks, and recreational facilities (see above). Because these local planning initiatives have significant public input opportunities, ranging from public workshops to formal public hearings, they reflect the community's desires for their local parks and recreational opportunities. The plans vary in levels of specificity about these desires, sometimes identifying specific improvements needed at specific facilities and other times broadly stating a desire to meet various recreational needs. In the County Master Plan, the emphasis is on providing regional facilities and preserving open space on a large scale, while in the community comprehensive plans the emphasis is on meeting the specific needs of a local population. As a result, planning for parks and recreational facilities in Carroll County meets the

eight visions of State Planning Policy by focusing on providing most of the parks and recreational facilities in and around the community planning areas, where the largest population concentrations exist. Parks and recreational facilities outside of these areas are designed to meet countywide needs or to serve rural populations that do not fall within the service area of a community planning area. Because this planning takes place in the context of the local plans, the proximity of open space, parks and recreational facilities to local populations and their integration into the surrounding landscape is an inherent result.

During the development of the County Master Plan and community comprehensive plans, the Department of Planning staff collaborates closely with staff from other county agencies. Meetings are held with staff from the Department of Recreation and Parks to identify sites and facilities already planned as well as new sites and facilities that might be needed. Once the plan is adopted, identified projects are pursued through the capital programming process of the budget by being recommended by one of the recreation councils, by Recreation and Parks staff, or through joint discussions between the Department of Recreation and Parks and the Department of Planning. The priority is always on serving the areas with the highest populations and implementing the comprehensive plans, both of which go hand-in-hand.

The county Department of Planning and Department of Recreation and Parks staff are funded through the county's General Fund. The Bureau of Comprehensive Planning undertakes the bulk of the long-range planning for the county. The bureau is staffed by five full-time planners, as well as four GIS staff, a planning manager, two office associates and the bureau chief. The FY06 budget contains \$588,780 in personnel, operating, and capital outlay expenses for the bureau. Additional expenses appear in the Planning Administration portion of the budget, which addresses personnel, operating, and capital outlay expenses for the Director, his secretary, and the Planning Commission secretary, as well as the staff associated with the county's Agricultural Land Preservation Program.

In FY06, Recreation and Parks Administration and the Bureau of Recreation received \$190,140 and \$286,385 respectively for personnel and operating costs. Recreation and Parks Administration includes the Director and a park planner, as well as administrative support staff, while the Bureau of Recreation oversees the recreation programming in the county through two recreation supervisors, nine part-time community coordinators, a bureau chief, and administrative support staff. Several of the county's special facilities receive budget appropriations through their own line items. In FY06, the General Fund provided personnel, operating, and capital outlay funding for the Sports Complex (\$181,340), Hashawha (\$652,690), and Piney Run (\$414,800).

## **Land Acquisition and Facility Development**

Land acquisition and facility development for parks and recreational facilities are funded through several sources. Program Open Space (POS) funds are combined with revenue

collected from developer-paid impact fees and money from the County General Fund that is budgeted for capital projects through the Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

In the FY05-10 CIP, \$7,689,650 was budgeted for Culture and Recreation projects through 2010. The FY06-11 CIP increased the budgeted amount by \$6,621,352 to \$14,311,002. For the most part, the additional funding was the result of one time project funding derived from additional property tax revenues and dedicated to parks (among other things) to make up for decreases in POS funding that have occurred in recent years. The following table shows how the money is allocated for future years in both the current adopted and the proposed CIPs, and which sources of funding are anticipated. The “Acquisition, Development and Rehabilitation Priorities” table found in the Tables section at the back of this plan lists the specific projects contained in the CIP for which the money is allocated.

<b>Culture and Recreation Funding</b>								
<b>Proposed Capital Improvement Plan FY2006-2011</b>								
<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>FY2006</b>	<b>FY2007</b>	<b>FY2008</b>	<b>FY2009</b>	<b>FY2010</b>	<b>FY2011</b>	<b>Prior Allocation</b>	<b>Total</b>
Transfer from General Fund	\$129,205	\$79,205	\$90,450	\$100,950	\$108,950	\$330,200	\$15,000	\$853,960
Property Tax	\$4,250,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$4,259,000
Impact Fee – Parks	\$366,000	\$360,500	\$124,500	\$127,500	\$114,000	\$255,620	\$1,014,758	\$2,362,878
Reallocated Impact Fee - Parks	\$56,250	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$56,250
POS – Land Acquisition	\$518,565	\$340,000	\$340,000	\$340,000	\$340,000	\$340,000	\$2,030,523	\$4,249,088
POS – Park Development	\$602,696	\$394,500	\$322,250	\$443,750	\$349,250	\$381,380	\$45,000	\$2,538,826
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,922,716</b>	<b>\$1,174,205</b>	<b>\$877,244</b>	<b>\$1,912,200</b>	<b>\$912,200</b>	<b>\$1,307,200</b>	<b>\$3,105,281</b>	<b>\$14,311,002</b>
<i>Source: Carroll County FY06-11 CIP</i>								

Additionally, the FY06-11 CIP allocates \$45 million for four new schools, all of which will contain gymnasiums and playing fields that will help to alleviate the deficit of these facilities in the northeast and southeast areas of the county. Appendix II contains a summary of the capital recreation projects listed in the budgets and CIPs of the county and its municipalities.

Approximately 47% of the County’s FY2006 budget for Culture and Recreation projects came from POS funds, about 6% came from the General Fund, about 30% came from property tax revenue, and the remaining 17% came from development impact fees. Additionally, the County provides funding for town projects through its Town Fund line item, which is set aside to correlate with Program Open Space funds directed toward town projects. Program Open Space covers 75% of the cost of a project, the County covers 12.5% of the cost, and the town covers the remaining 12.5% of the cost. This money is allocated to each of the towns on a rotating basis determined by the Maryland Municipal League representatives.

Impact fees levied for new home construction account for a significant amount of revenue for the development of parks and recreational facilities. Because of the nature of the fee, which is designed to offset the impacts of new development on a specific locale, these fees typically go towards facilities that benefit a specific area rather than those that have countywide benefits - funds from the General Fund typically go towards those types of projects. Currently, the parks and recreation impact fee is \$533 for single family homes, \$538 for mobile homes, \$604 for townhouses, \$530 for multi-family units. This fee is charged for projects both in the county and in incorporated municipalities. The municipalities listed below charge an additional parks and recreation impact fee:

- Hampstead: Single-family residential - \$309 per unit  
Other residential - \$ 228 per unit
- Manchester: Single-family residential - \$200 per unit  
Other residential - \$200 per equivalent dwelling unit
- Sykesville: General development impact fee of \$1200, which can be used towards services, roads, or capital projects listed in the CIP (including parks and recreational facilities)
- Westminster: A Special Capital Benefit Assessment fee is charged for each dwelling unit and may be used for capital recreation projects. Single-family homes are charged \$3,200, and multi-family units are charged between \$2,560 for a one-bedroom unit to \$3,040 for a four-bedroom unit. Industrial, commercial and other non-residential uses are charged varying fees as well.

### **Designated Open Space, Set Asides and Facilities (as required by zoning and the subdivision process)**

In the county, open space and park facilities can be created through the subdivision process in several ways. Clustered subdivisions and planned unit developments both require a certain percentage of land for open space or recreation. Additionally, the county's environmental regulations require that certain environmental features be protected during the development process, thereby resulting in undeveloped open space as well.

Clustering is permitted in the Conservation zone, the Historic zone, and the residential zones R-40,000, R-20,000, and R-10,000. In the Historic zone and the residential zones, the land that results from smaller lot sizes is maintained as "open space" or "recreational areas." This open space must meet several requirements:

- It shall not be less than 15% of the gross acreage of any tract using clustering
- A maximum of 50% of the required open space can be steep slopes, streams, ponds, watercourses, or floodplains

- A minimum of 10% of the required open space or 1.5 acres, whichever is greater, must be suitable for active recreational use and may not exceed a grade of 3%.

In the Conservation zone, the land resulting from smaller lot sizes also is maintained as “open space” or “recreational areas,” but there are additional stipulations that relate to environmental features that are not applied in the Historic or residential zones. In the Conservation zone, all land within 300 feet of a planned reservoir flood pool and all land within 100 feet of a tributary of a public water supply (planned or existing) must be designated as open space.

Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) are permitted in the residential zones of R-10,000 and R-7,500 if they meet certain requirements and are approved by the Planning Commission. One of the requirements that must be met is that no less than 25% of the gross area of the development is to be common open space.

Each of the towns in Carroll County has its own requirements related to the provision of open space. They are summarized in Appendix III.

The County has a set of environmental regulations that are designed to protect sensitive environmental features. These are explained in greater detail in Chapter V, but are mentioned here because the land that is set aside to protect these environmental features can be considered open space. The requirements for cluster developments may or may not allow for these areas to be counted towards open space minimums, but in conventional subdivision developments the protection of these features undoubtedly provides open space where otherwise there might be none. Features that are protected include wellheads and well sites, streams, floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes, carbonate rock areas, and surface water supply areas. Typically a buffer around these resources is required, which results in a certain amount of open space creation.

## **Joint Use Agreements**

The Board of Education has a joint use agreement with the County to permit town and County-sponsored recreational activities on school properties when school groups are not using them. In exchange for this, the County Department of Recreation and Parks uses POS funds to install recreational hardware such as backstops, goal posts, tot lots, etc.

The Department of Recreation and Parks also works with the Board of Education to plan their recreational facilities in the early stages of designing school sites. The goal of this effort is to create fields and facilities that can be used equally as well by adults as by children, therefore maximizing the usefulness of the investment. For instance, the most recently constructed elementary schools have been designed to have full-sized basketball courts that can be used by others during non-school hours. Additionally, schools are designed to have restrooms that can be accessed from outside so that the school itself can be locked but users of the recreational fields can still access the restrooms.

## Area Recreation Councils

The county has nine area recreation councils, three countywide councils, and two facility-based councils. These councils are extremely valuable because they are the primary source for input on project planning and the development of the recreation portion of the CIP. Their broad geographic range and interest base ensures that projects are (more or less) evenly distributed throughout the county and represent both the wide spectrum of recreational interests countywide as well as the specific needs of a targeted area.

Two recreation councils (Charles Carroll and North Carroll) operate in the northern portion of the county, four recreation councils (Deer Park, Sandymount, West Carroll, and Westminster Area) operate in the central portion of the county, and three recreation councils (Freedom Area, Winfield, and Woodbine) operate in the southern portion of the county. The Carroll County Arts Council, Carroll County Equestrian Council, and Seniors in Action Recreation Council operate countywide. The Friends of Hashawha/Bear Branch Council and the Piney Run Recreation & Conservation Council specifically address programs and issues associated with those two facilities.

Each year in April, the county Department of Recreation and Parks begins its programming process by mailing a capital request letter to all of the recreation councils, department facility administrators, and the Director of School Support Services for projects to be included in the countywide Capital Improvements Program (CIP). In this way, the recreation councils are involved in influencing the provision of parks and recreational facilities locally. Projects are submitted to the Department of Recreation and Parks for review and technical assistance with development, after which they are presented to the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board for review. This board ranks all of the projects submitted, then presents its recommendations to the county Planning Commission. The Planning Commission reviews the projects then makes its recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners for projects to be included in the CIP. The CIP is adopted following standard procedures for public hearing, review and approval of the annual budget.

The recreation councils are volunteer organizations that have an elected Board, which typically meets on a monthly basis. In 2004, 480,229 volunteer hours were dedicated to the operation and administration of recreation council programs. This equates to \$3,361,603 worth of volunteer contributions. The councils raised \$3,105,206 dollars. In addition to the volunteer hours donated and the funds raised, the county Bureau of Recreation had an operating budget in 2004 of \$175,810 for programs and activities.

The Carroll Association of Recreation Councils is composed of an elected member from each of the councils. It meets every other month to discuss issues that are common to all of the recreation councils and serves as an advisory group on certain policy issues. Additionally, the Association solicits donations for various facility improvements, equipment purchases, and sponsorships. The County Recreation and Parks Advisory Board advises on policy issues and community recreation needs. It is a 12-member board, with eleven members that are appointed by the County Commissioners and one

Commissioner serves as ex-officio. The primary responsibility of the Board is to review and make recommendations on all of the capital project requests.

## **Special Facilities**

In an effort to address the recreational needs of special populations and interests, a number of unique facilities are provided throughout the county. These facilities reflect the diversity of interests and age groups that make up the recreational user population. In general, they either are located centrally or are evenly dispersed throughout the county, so as to be easily accessible to the greatest number of people. Five of these facilities (Hashawha Environmental Center, Piney Run Park and Nature Center, the Carroll County Sports Complex, the Carroll County Farm Museum, and the Union Mills Homestead) have their own operating budgets and generate revenue through user fees and special events. Capital expenditures are included with other recreation projects in the overall Culture and Recreation or General Government portions of the CIP. Funding for the senior centers is provided through the county operating budget, state and federally funded grant positions, and the General Government portion of the CIP.

The county's five senior centers, administered by the County Bureau of Aging, are located in Eldersburg, Hampstead, Mt. Airy, Taneytown, and Westminster. The centers offer activities such as games, crafts, and fitness programs as well as educational programs and trips. The general public can arrange to use the senior centers when they are not in use by seniors, and many Recreation Council programs take place there.

The Carroll County Sports Complex, just north of Westminster, contains 7 fields that are used by a variety of teams to supplement the fields available at local facilities. Adjacent to the Sports Complex is one of two nature centers in the county, Bear Branch Nature Center located at the Hashawha Environmental Center. The Nature Center provides environmental education opportunities for visitors, school groups and youth groups that focus on native plants and animals. It has a library, Bird Observation Room, Discovery Room, Exhibit Hall, a forty-seat planetarium, live reptiles, amphibians, and raptors, and a nature gift shop. The Nature Center has a wheel chair-accessible trail and links into other trails at Hashawha Environmental Center. Hashawha Environmental Center provides cabins and conference facilities for private groups. It hosts numerous events throughout the year as well and has four trails totaling about 5 miles.

Piney Nature Center, located at Piney Run Park, is the other nature center in the county. It is located in the southern portion of the county and contains exhibits and meeting rooms. The nature center also hosts a variety of nature-oriented programs for all ages and groups. Piney Run Nature Center is located at Piney Run Park, a County-owned park surrounding Piney Run Reservoir. Fishing, boating, picnicking, and recreational courts are available at the park. Two other planned reservoir sites – Union Mills reservoir in the north central part of the county and Gillis Falls reservoir in the southwestern part of the county – contain hiking and equestrian trails.

The Carroll County Firearms Facility is another special facility operated by the County. It offers county residents a safe place to learn and practice shooting. It is located on the same property as the Northern Landfill just outside of Westminster.

Heritage programming is conducted at two of the county's most popular tourist attractions: Union Mills Homestead and the Carroll County Farm Museum. The Union Mills Homestead and Grist Mill are historic landmarks in the county that date to the colonial era. The Grist Mill has been restored to working condition and corn, buckwheat, and whole wheat flour ground at the mill are for sale on site. Additionally, tours are offered of the Homestead and the entire property is host to special events throughout the year. The Carroll County Farm Museum also is a historic property that is open for tours and hosts special events. The museum uses the 1850s farmhouse, barns and outbuildings, and grounds to promote the county's rural heritage through displays, demonstrations, and traditional arts classes. The special events held at the Farm Museum are among the most popular in the county and include the Maryland Wine Festival, an Old-Fashioned 4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration, Traditional Arts Week, the Fiddler's Convention, and Common Ground on the Hill's American Music and Arts Festival.

## ***Needs Analysis and County Priorities for Lands, Facilities, and Rehabilitation***

### **Supply**

Carroll County contains a great diversity of parks, recreation, and open spaces. Mini-parks and neighborhood parks are found in the densely developed towns and larger subdivisions in the county, and are designed to serve a small, localized population. Community parks that are somewhat larger in size can be found throughout the county and in the towns, and provide a more diverse set of recreational opportunities to reflect the broader population base they serve. The county's two regional parks and its sports complex appropriately are located in the two most populous areas. Two largely undeveloped future reservoir sites, along with the existing buffer lands of Liberty Reservoir and the state lands of Morgan Run Natural Environmental Area and Patapsco Valley State Park, provide countywide access to more natural settings and miles of multi-use trails open to hikers, horseback riders, and cross-country skiers. School facilities located throughout the county provide recreational facilities as well, and many county residents enjoy open space adjacent to their homes that is provided as a requirement of the subdivision process.

Among the maps that appear at the back of this plan is a map that illustrates the location of town and county park facilities and public school locations (see Park Facilities & Recreation Planning Areas Map). From this map, two things are evident. The first is that the majority of the sites are focused in and around the community planning areas, where the majority of the county's population resides. Additionally, the county's community planning areas are such that they are fairly evenly distributed geographically. When

combined with several school sites and major natural resource areas located outside of the growth areas, this has the result of making parks and recreational facilities easily accessible to most county residents regardless of whether they live in the rural parts of the county or in its community planning areas. Appendix IV contains a more detailed inventory of parks and recreational facilities in the county. This inventory, which is generated through the State's Maryland Electronic Inventory of Recreation Sites (MEIRS) database, will be updated on a continuous basis as parks and recreational facilities are developed, and at the very least will be reviewed on a yearly basis for accuracy. The County intends to use this database as a source of on-going information related to the inventory of recreational facilities, which especially will be useful during the yearly review of projects proposed for the upcoming fiscal year budget and the development of community comprehensive and countywide plans.

County Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data related to parks and recreation are being provided to the State in shapefile format projected in Maryland State Plane 83 feet, along with the corresponding metadata.

The "Supply Report," found in the Tables section at the back of this plan, quantifies the number of existing fields and courts for specific sports. It also estimates the number of uses possible for each facility based upon the number of players that can be accommodated per game, the number of games that can be played per day, and the number of days the facility is available during the year. This yields an annual carrying capacity per facility and, when multiplied by the number of fields or courts countywide, a total supply of potential annual uses.

## **Demand**

A number of information sources were used to determine the demand for parks and recreational facilities in Carroll County. The May 2003 reports issued by the Maryland Institute for Policy Analysis and Research at UMBC entitled "Participation in Local Park and Recreation Activities in Maryland" and "State Parks and Natural Resource Areas in Maryland: A Survey of Public Opinion" provided substantial quantified data with respect to demand. Additionally, statistical and empirical evidence from area recreation councils, and the results of surveys conducted as part of the comprehensive planning process provided a better understanding of the local demand for these facilities. The targeted measure of demand that these local sources provided is reflected in the "Demand Report" in the Tables section. The Demand Report multiplies the current population by the participation rates cited in the state survey for particular sports and the frequency of participation rates reported by the county's recreation councils. The recreation councils track actual attendance of registered participants for baseball, softball, soccer, lacrosse, basketball, and football, therefore providing a more accurate measure of the frequency of participation than the generalized regional numbers provided by the State survey. By dividing the total attendance for a given sport by the total number of registrants, it is possible to calculate the average frequency of participation and obtain a more accurate assessment of the demand for playing space. Since the local numbers for frequency of

participation were significantly higher than those cited in the state survey, these numbers were used in calculating demand. Projected demand was calculated by using projected population numbers and multiplying them by the same participation and frequency rates.

The “Participation in Local Park and Recreation Activities in Maryland” report randomly sampled 400 households in each of seven regions in the state, as well as 1105 households throughout the state. It contained the following generalizations about the participation in and preferences for recreational activities statewide and in the Baltimore suburbs (the subregion into which Carroll County was classified).

- Statewide: More people take part in individual, family or group activities than in organized sports. The most popular activities for individuals were attending fairs and festivals (55.8%), walking (49.5%), swimming (45.6%), picnicking (37%), visiting playgrounds (34%), and going to outdoor concerts (26.9%). Walking and swimming were done most frequently. Less than 10% of those surveyed participated in organized sports, but those that did participated in those activities frequently. A majority (53.6%) of those surveyed statewide said there were not enough bike lanes on roads, about 40% of those surveyed said there were not enough indoor recreation facilities and swimming pools, and about 30% said there were not enough trails and pathways, playgrounds, and picnic facilities.
- In the Baltimore suburbs: The regional differences that distinguished the Baltimore suburbs from the other six regions of the state included an increased popularity in golf, jogging, and dog exercising as favorite activities and a preference for the sports of soccer and lacrosse. The facilities most cited as lacking were natural parks and wildlife areas in suburban Baltimore, trails and pathways, and swimming pools.

The “State Parks and Natural Resource Areas in Maryland” report describes the results of a survey that randomly sampled 800 households statewide and 1080 households in four regions (Western, Central, Southern, and Eastern). 450 households were sampled in the Central region, the region in which Carroll County was placed along with Baltimore City and Baltimore, Cecil, Harford, Howard, and Montgomery counties. It contained the following generalizations about visits to and experiences at Maryland state parks and natural resource areas and out-of-state parks.

- Statewide: About two-thirds of those surveyed had visited a state park or natural resource area in the past year. Of these visitors, 90+ percent rated their experiences with specific activities in the parks as excellent or good. A majority of those who had not visited a state park or natural area cited a lack of interest or desire as the reason for not visiting. This indicates a fairly high visitor rate to the state’s parks and a high level of satisfaction with the state park experience. It also indicates that little could be done to entice those who didn’t visit to do so, since they simply are not interested. Additionally, while just over half of the respondents had visited another state’s parks or natural areas in the past year, the majority had done so because of a unique natural feature, a special or one-of-a

kind experience, or a planned trip. This indicates that people don't necessarily visit other state's parks because Maryland's state parks and natural areas are lacking a particular activity or feature.

Of those who had visited a state park or natural resource area, they most frequently participated in walking, family outings, nature appreciation activities and hiking. Other popular activities were picnicking, fishing from a pier or shore, bicycling, nature center activities or naturalist programs, picnicking with organized groups, fishing from a boat, and camping at a campsite.

Participants also were surveyed on their thoughts regarding governmental action concerning open space and on growth management in the state. Their responses were nearly split in terms of whether government was doing enough or not enough to protect open space for recreation and natural resources. Approximately 90 percent of respondents felt that governmental action to acquire parkland, preserve farmland, and provide public access to the Bay or rivers was very or somewhat important. An even greater percentage placed high importance on governmental action to protect lands for the protection of wildlife and the environment. With respect to growth management, over 70 percent of those surveyed were either not very familiar or not familiar at all with the state's Smart Growth initiative. Yet, over 50 percent did not feel that government was doing enough to manage growth and development. There was strong support for governmental actions that would manage growth and protect the environment. In particular, more than 80 percent of those surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with government limiting growth and development through planning and land use regulation. Nearly as many agreed or strongly agreed that government should buy more land for parks and resource protection. More than 90 percent agreed or strongly agreed that government should require developers to preserve more natural areas and open space when they develop, and nearly as many agreed or strongly agreed that government should provide economic incentives to private land owners for conservation and resource protection.

- Central Region: For the most part, the answers that respondents in the central region gave did not vary significantly from the statewide response rates. Slightly more people in the central region felt that government was not doing enough to protect open space or to manage growth than the statewide rate. Central region respondents also were slightly more in agreement that government should use planning and land use regulation to limit growth and should buy more land for parks and resource protection.

The recreation councils serve the critical function of being in touch with the needs of local populations and recommending inclusion of appropriate projects in the proposed budget requests. Because they are keenly aware of the need for improvements at existing facilities, the shortage of specific facilities to meet programmatic needs, and the overall desires of their particular community for recreational facilities, the recreation councils provide one of the best measures of demand. Because participation on the councils or at

council meetings is open to the general public, there is ample opportunity for input on projects or programs that are needed.

Public input used to gauge demand for parks and recreation facilities also is generated through the comprehensive planning process. Surveys and workshops are standard tools used throughout the various stages of plan development, and the topics of parks, recreational facilities and open space are included to determine community needs and emerging issues. Additionally, population and demographics projections are used to measure potential future demand.

## **Needs Analysis**

The “Needs Analysis” table used the data tabulated in the Supply Report and the Demand Report to calculate current and projected demand for facilities. The current annual demand for facilities was subtracted from the current supply of facilities to determine the current unmet need for facilities (calculated in “number of uses”). The total surplus or deficit of available uses was then divided by the annual carrying capacity per facility to obtain an estimate of the surplus or deficit of actual facilities. The projected demand for facilities that was calculated in the demand report was then applied to the same set of calculations to arrive at projected unmet demand and, therefore, the unmet need for facilities based upon the current supply.

The Needs Analysis table shows that, statistically, the number of baseball/softball fields and the number of fields used for lacrosse countywide are just barely adequate, while soccer and football fields are greatly needed and basketball courts are needed as well. These calculations are supported by observations made “on-the-ground” by towns, area recreation councils, and Department of Recreation and Parks staff, who constantly vie for space to accommodate recreational programs and have to juggle the use of limited facilities. However, the table shows a need for more tennis courts than there appears to be demand. While funds to upgrade existing tennis courts have been requested on occasion by recreation councils, there are few requests for more tennis courts and few observations that there is a demand for additional courts countywide.

The mid-range and long-range demand projections show these needs continuing to grow, in some instances to an extreme. Based upon population projections through 2020, the county could need as many as 60 soccer fields, 23 basketball courts, and 20 softball fields. As a result, the primary emphasis in the CIP is, and will continue to be, on providing new and/or upgraded fields and indoor basketball courts. Additionally, the maintenance of existing facilities is an on-going priority that cannot be underestimated; poorly maintained facilities only undermine the system because they remain in the inventory but are not useable. Maintaining the investment made in these facilities is essential.

The need for several other types of facilities is not as easily quantified because user data is more difficult to obtain. However, data from the state surveys, input from the towns

and area recreation councils, surveys conducted as part of the comprehensive plan update process, and requests made in other public forums provide a more complete picture of the types of facilities that are desired by the community. The need for hiker/biker trails is an ever-present request, and the growing equestrian population is generating an increased demand for bridle trails (see Carroll County Proposed Greenway, Bicycle, and Pedestrian Facilities Network Plan Map and county park trail maps at the back of the plan). Additionally, passive recreation and family-oriented activities such as picnic facilities, areas for wildlife observation, and community centers have been noted as important. Specialized facilities including public swimming pools, an indoor ice rink, a large skate park, and an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) park also have been identified as established and emerging recreational needs. Because of their highly specialized nature, these facilities lend themselves to a greater likelihood of being constructed as private enterprises or public-private ventures.

In identifying the County's top ten recreational priorities, the results shown in the Needs Analysis table figure prominently. The top five priorities include most of the needs shown in the Needs Analysis table. They are:

1. Soccer fields
2. Softball/baseball fields
3. Lacrosse fields
4. Hiker/biker trails
5. Basketball courts

Additional priority needs identified through the area recreation councils, towns, Department of Recreation and Parks, and the comprehensive planning process include:

6. ATV park
7. Ice skating rink
8. Equestrian trails
9. Community centers
10. Picnicking facilities

It is anticipated that these facilities will be funded with Program Open Space funds, developer impact fees, and the county General Fund, as well as through public-private ventures. Some facilities, such as the construction of full-sized basketball courts in elementary schools and senior centers and the integration of hiker/biker trails into other active recreation projects, are being programmed in to maximize multi-use potential and to leverage public investment to the greatest degree possible.

### **County Priorities for Land Acquisition, Facility Development, and Rehabilitation**

The "Acquisition, Development, and Rehabilitation Priorities" table outlines short-term, mid-term, and long-term priorities for land acquisition, facility development, and facility renovation. The short-term projects are those listed in the 2006-2010 CIP and generally reflect the needs identified in the needs analysis and through observation. They include

playing fields, trails, picnic facilities, and the maintenance and upgrade of existing facilities. A line item for town projects that accounts for the County's 12.5% contribution toward town projects appears as an annual sum and is divided evenly between the towns on a rotating basis.

Mid- and long-term priorities focus on the on-going need for playing fields and hiker/biker trails predicted by growth projections and past trends. They also reflect the expressed and/or anticipated desires of a diverse population. Facilities such as an ice-skating rink, an ATV park, and equestrian trails exemplify the breadth of interests in the county and the County's desire to provide opportunities for a wide range of recreational activities.

The short-, mid-, and long-range priorities aim both to keep up with traditional demands and maintenance obligations and to fill existing or emerging gaps in the number and variety of recreational opportunities that exist in the county. In keeping with established policy, the bulk of the projects in all time periods are or are expected to be in the areas where the largest populations exist – the towns and community planning areas. The exception to this is with facilities that, by their nature, require large amounts of open space or are to be located in already established parks outside of the towns and community planning areas.

The funding for short-term projects comes from three sources: the County General Fund, a parks impact fee, and Program Open Space acquisition and development funds. The 2005-2010 CIP allocates 8 % of the total costs to the General Fund source, 30 percent of the total costs to parks impact fees, and the remaining 62 percent of the costs to Program Open Space funds (35 percent for land acquisition and 27 percent for park development). Projected funding levels vary from year to year. In fiscal years 2005, 2006, and 2007, POS funding is projected to remain at current levels due to anticipated budgetary constraints. The following three fiscal years (2008-2010) contain higher projected funding levels that are similar to those of past years. Projected impact fees generally decrease over the six-year period, reflecting an anticipated decrease in revenue collected as a result of slower growth. These figures are adjusted annually, however, to better reflect the shifting dynamics of funding sources. Contributions from the County General Fund fluctuate but not as dramatically. They consistently remain the smallest contribution to the total funding of projects.

### ***Acquisition (Acreage) Goal***

In keeping with its Master Plan, Carroll County has a goal to maintain a minimum of 30 acres of public recreation area per 1,000 citizens. The May 2004 population estimate (which was used to calculate demand and, therefore, will serve as the baseline population for this plan) was 166,032. Using the minimum recreation acreage goal of 30 acres per 1,000 citizens, the County should have 4,980.96 acres of public recreation area.

The calculation of land that can be counted towards this goal to determine if it is being met is somewhat complex but logical. All of the land contained within local parks of the following nature may be counted:

- Neighborhood Parks
- Community Parks
- City/Countywide Parks
- Metro/Regional Parks
- Educational Recreation Areas (60% of the total acreage of school sites)

Additionally, local natural resource areas can be counted towards the acreage goal. However, only 1/3 of this acreage qualifies and it must fall within one of the following categories:

- Natural Resource Areas
- Historic Cultural Areas
- Private Open Space (only if permanently preserved and accessible to members of the community in which it is situated)

Finally, state and federal lands may be counted towards the acreage goal, but only that portion of which exceeds a ratio of 60 acres per 1,000 people. For example, if the total state and federal lands in Carroll county equaled 75 acres per 1,000 people, then only 15 acres per 1,000 people could be used towards the goal of 30 acres per 1,000 people.

The parks in Carroll County fall into a wide range of classifications. The table below breaks down the number and acreage of parks in the county by classification, as defined by the classification definitions that appear in the *Guidelines for State and Local Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Planning* produced by the state.

<b>Carroll County Parks by Classification</b>		
<b>Classification</b>	<b>Number of Facilities</b>	<b>Acres</b>
<b><u>Local Recreation*</u></b>		
Mini-Park	8	12.825
Neighborhood Park	12	57.4
Community Park	39	535.795
Large Urban/Regional	2	970
School Recreational Area	42	1024.87
Special Use Area	20	604.4
Sports Complex	1	76.6
Undeveloped Parks	6	2600.26
Other Public Land	2	22.3
<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b>128</b>	<b>5904.45</b>
<b><u>Acreage Calculation</u></b>	<b>5904.45 / (166,032 / 1,000) = 35.56 acres per 1,000 people</b>	
<b><u>Local Natural Resource</u></b>		
Natural Resource Area	1	5699
Historic/Cultural Areas	3	156.5
<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5855.5</b>
<b><u>Acreage Calculation</u></b>	<b>(1/3 x 5855.5) / (166,032 / 1,000) = 11.76 acres per 1,000 people</b>	
Source: MEIRS database, 2005		
* Recreational facilities generally considered to be “private” and/or not accessible to the general public were not included in these counts, though they are included in the MEIRS database.		

The County goal of providing 30 acres of recreational land per 1,000 people is the same as that recommended by the State. By combining the calculations for local recreation land and for local natural resource land, it is shown that the county currently provides 47.32 acres of land per 1,000 people. It should be noted that a substantial number of acres fall within the “Undeveloped Parks” category, which includes both the Gillis Falls and Union Mills reservoir areas.

The future population projections for the county are 179,708 by 2010, 187,037 by 2015, and 191,874 by 2020. Using these projections, and assuming no change in recreational acreage from above, the county would still be well within the recommended state acreage goal. By 2010, there would be 43.72 acres per 1,000 people, which would fall to 42 acres per 1,000 by 2015 and 40.95 acres per 1,000 by 2020.

Because it exceeds the minimum acquisition goal, Carroll County would like to be certified under the Natural Resources Article §5-905 c (1)(ii) as qualifying to use more than 50% of its POS allocation for development projects. This will assist with the development of facilities that are sorely needed to alleviate the discrepancy between the demand for recreational facilities and the supply of facilities available.

## ***Public Participation***

Citizen input into the land preservation and parks planning process is encouraged through a number of on-going and periodic processes. Because these processes have been in place and are utilized routinely, a separate, extensive process for citizen input was not undertaken for the 2006 Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan.

The overall guidance for parks and land preservation initiatives comes from the County Master Plan and its community comprehensive plans. All of these plans contain goals and objectives specifically related to the provision of parks and recreation and the preservation of open space. The development of all of these plans includes a substantial amount of public input that ranges from community workshops and work sessions to the open deliberation of the plans by the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners and official public hearings to adopt them.

The planning process helps to develop goals for recreation and parks that can then be implemented through area recreation councils and the Capital Improvements Program. The citizen-based, volunteer recreation councils influence the programming of recreation and park facilities by requesting the inclusion of area-specific projects into the CIP. The Recreation and Parks Advisory Board, composed of citizens appointed by the County Commissioners, reviews these projects and makes recommendations as to which should be included. The County Planning Commission then reviews these projects during open meetings. Finally, a public hearing is held on the CIP, which allows for additional citizen input. This process provides a number of opportunities for public participation, particularly at the grass-roots level of the recreation councils. In addition, every time a

park is developed, public meetings are held to inform and solicit comments from the public.

Each of the towns has its own budget or CIP that contains parks and recreation projects geared toward the specific needs and interests of the municipality. The deliberation on and adoption of these budgetary matters follows standard procedures for open meetings, citizen input, and a public hearing. Most of the towns also fall within the boundaries of one of the area recreation councils, providing town citizens with additional opportunities for input on planned projects in the area.

Input on the 2006 Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan itself was sought through various means. A copy of the draft plan was circulated to the Carroll Association of Recreation Councils, the County Recreation and Parks Advisory Board, the County Environmental Advisory Board, the County Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board, each of the municipal Planning Commissions, and the planning councils operating within the county's two unincorporated community planning areas – the Freedom Area Citizens' Council and the Finksburg Planning Area Council. The plan was posted on the Planning Department's website, and a press release was sent out notifying the public that the draft plan was available for review there. The County Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners, as well as the county Council of Governments, were given an overview of the draft plan. Opportunities for public comment on the plan were available during the review period, at a public meeting held June 23, 2005, and when the draft plan was presented to the Planning Commission at their June 21, 2005 regular meeting. After review by the state and revisions as necessary, the draft plan was presented to the Board of County Commissioners for their approval on (fill in date with final draft). The Public Participation Summary Table at the back the plan summarizes who received the plan for review, when they received it, and any significant comments that were returned.

## ***Program Development Strategy for Recreation, Parks, and Open Space***

1. The County will continue to use the County Master Plan, community comprehensive plans, and capital budget as the primary tools for achieving its parks and recreation goals and priorities. Each of these tools are reviewed on a regular basis, and adjustments made accordingly based upon county priorities.  
*Fiscal Note: Refer to the Acquisition, Development, and Rehabilitation Priorities table for additional information regarding the fiscal implications of planned or recommended capital projects.*
2. The County will continue to maximize its return on investment by incorporating full-sized gymnasiums and activity rooms into new schools and senior centers and constructing trails in conjunction with the development of new parks and playing fields.
3. The County will seek certification under the Natural Resources Article §5-905 c (1)(ii) as qualifying to use more than 50% of its POS allocation for development

projects. This will better enable the County to develop the facilities it has identified as priority projects, while at the same time still allow it to pursue land acquisition for future projects.

4. The County has projected gradual increases in POS funding over the next several years despite the sharp decrease in funding experienced recently due to budgetary constraints. The State will need to work towards returning POS funding to previous levels if the County is to have any prospect of achieving its short-, mid-, and long-range goals for parks and recreation.