

CHAPTER 6: PARKS

Introduction

Recreation and open space make an essential contribution to a healthier population and a greener city. They are integral to quality of life and provide beauty, respite, and opportunity for structured and informal play, and they are an important part of the urban living experience. Annapolis' parks and open spaces are also an important part of its community character and should be approached as a valuable aspect of the community's identity. The park system encompasses a broad variety of parks, trails and open spaces providing passive and active activities to the community.



Annapolis children at play

Primary Challenges

The public continues to demand excellent parks and recreational facilities that accommodate new trends and activities. In allocating resources, the City must strike a balance between maintaining and redeveloping its existing parks and facilities and developing new parks and open space. Furthermore, parks and recreational facilities must be accessible to all neighborhoods.

Policies

To respond to the primary challenges, the City embraces three main Policies; further details are in the Policy Recommendation section:

- ▶ Enhance existing parks and facilities, with the objective of supporting structured and informal recreation, protecting the natural environment, and encouraging human health and fitness.
- ▶ Complete the network of pedestrian and bicycle pathways.
- ▶ Expansion of the parks system should be undertaken selectively and strategically, with the objective of taking advantage of rare opportunities, providing parks and recreation services to underserved areas, allowing public access to the waterfront, and furthering environmental goals.



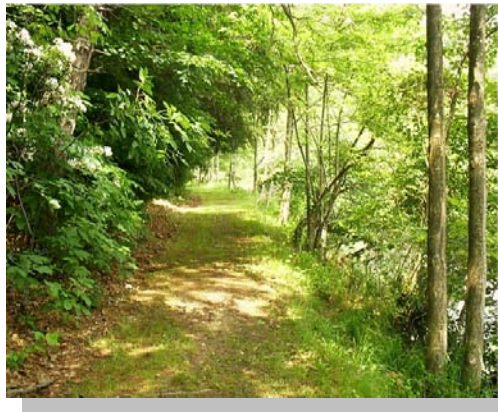
Summary of Existing Conditions

The Context for Planning

- ▶ State legislation, reflected in Article 66B, Land Use, Section 3.05(4)(iv) requires a “community facilities plan element, which...may include parks and recreation areas...” The Parks Element of the Comprehensive Plan complements Ch. 5 - *Municipal Growth & Community Facilities*.
- ▶ In 2004, the City completed an extensive *Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan*. It serves as a comprehensive source of information related to the management of existing facilities and programs. It updated the 1987 award - winning *Parks and Paths for People Plan*.
- ▶ Annapolis recently adopted an Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) that requires “adequate availability of recreation facilities” within 0.5 miles of a new development. New development can contribute fees or land to satisfy the requirement.

Existing Conditions

- ▶ The City of Annapolis Department of Recreation and Parks owns or manages 40 parks and facilities (Figure 6.1). Large parks include Truxtun Park (70 acres), Back Creek Nature Park (12 acres), Bates Athletic Complex (14 acres), fields at the Bates Heritage Complex (8 acres), Spa Creek Conservancy (5 acres), Waterworks Park (650 acres, of which 45 acres are in recreational use), the Annapolis Sports Complex (32 acres), and about twenty small neighborhood and street-end parks. Some are sitting parks for relaxing by the water’s edge, such as those along Spa Creek and Back Creek. Others support more activity, like the woodland trails at Truxtun Park, Back Creek Nature Park and Waterworks Park.



Waterworks Park

- ▶ To the north of Waterworks Park lies the 199-acre Eisenhower Golf Course, a property owned by the City but leased to Anne Arundel County for operation of the golf course (Figure 6.1). The City’s lease with the County expires in 2011.
- ▶ When only considering City-owned facilities, Annapolitans have fewer park acres per person (5.7 acres per 1,000 persons) than the recommended minimum national standard (6.0 acres per 1,000 persons). However, residents benefit from parks and recreation areas provided by other entities such as Anne Arundel County, the Board of Education, and the US Naval Academy. Park resources are also complemented by the Chesapeake Bay and the many associated water activities.

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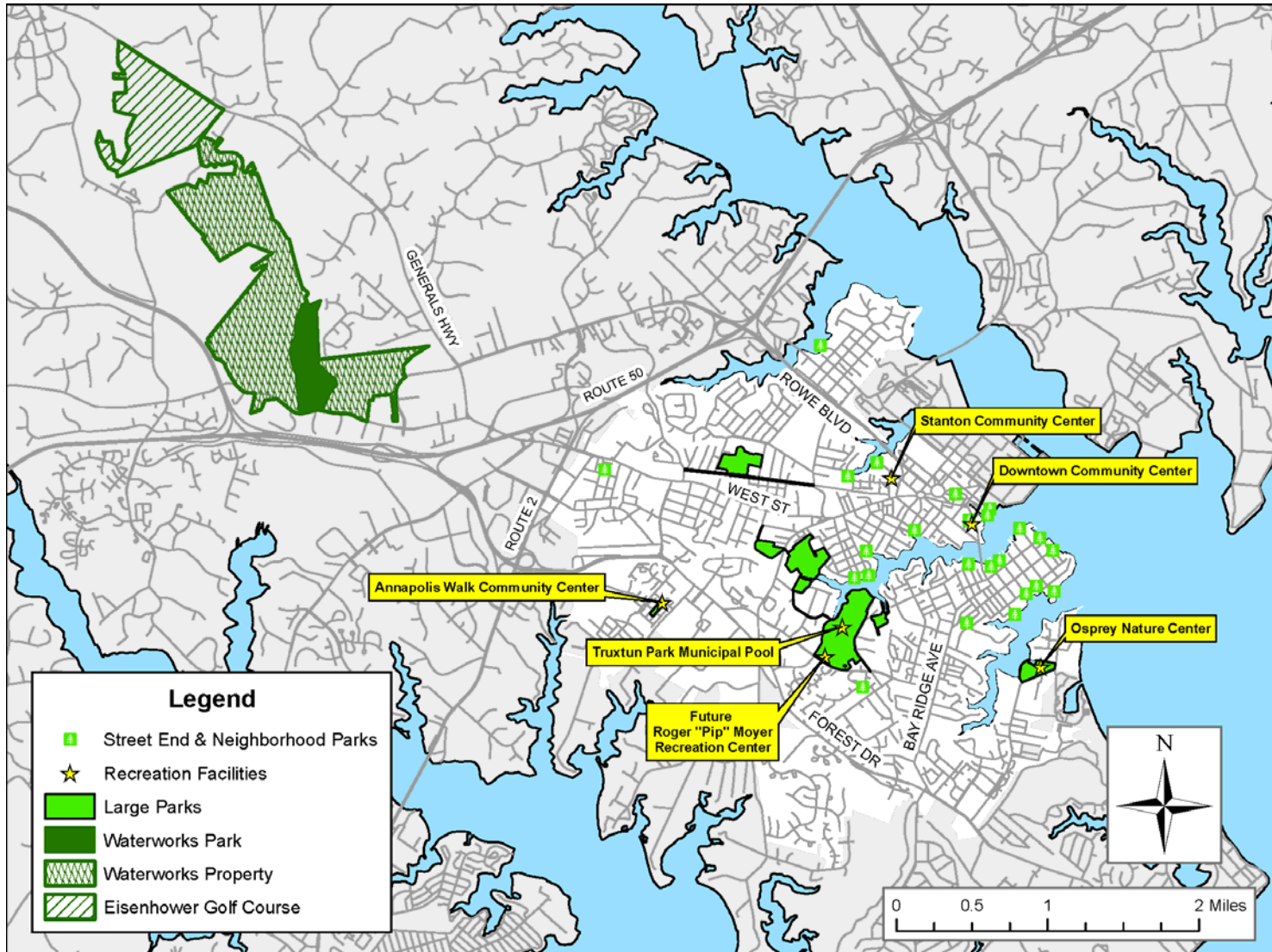


Figure 6-1 Parks and Facilities Map

- ▶ The desire for recreational opportunities is growing, along with growth in the population of seniors and retirees. Annapolis has been cited as one of the best retirement communities (AARP (2000), Money Magazine (2005), and US News & World Report (2007).

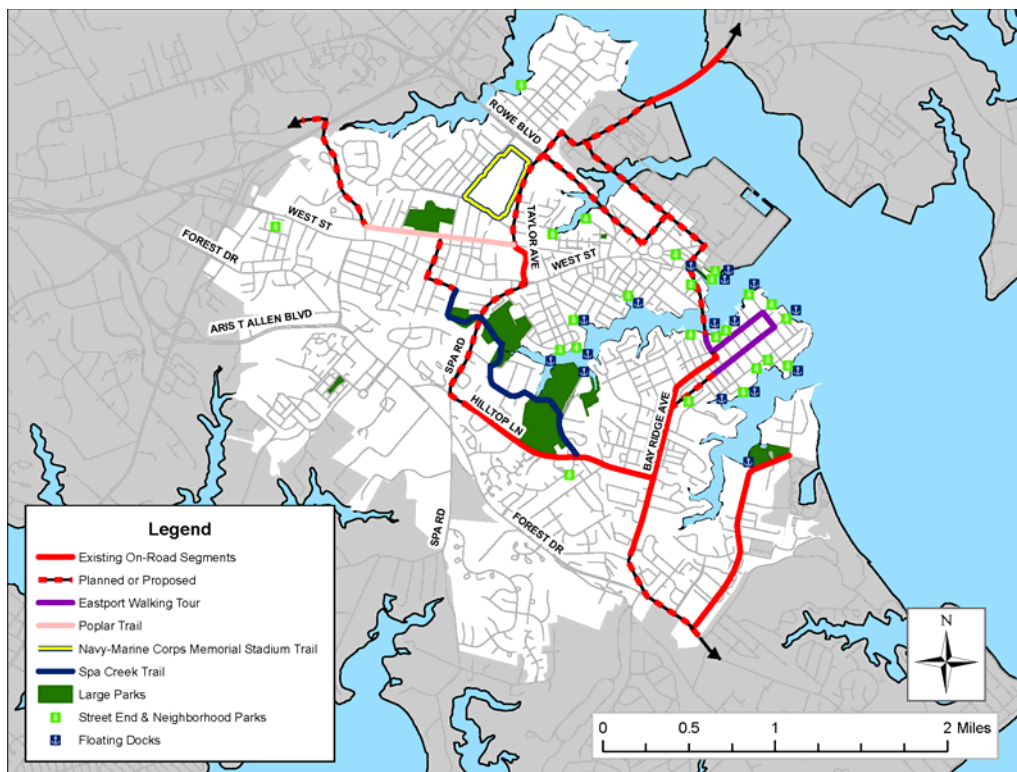


Figure 6-2 Trail Network Map

- ▶ The Colonial Annapolis Maritime Trail (CAMT), a 16-mile bicycle and pedestrian network remains a work in progress (shown in Figure 6.2). It encompasses the 1.3 mile Poplar Trail, the 1.5 mile Spa Creek trail, and the 1.25 mile Navy Stadium Trail. Challenges include connecting all the segments of the CAMT.
- ▶ The Colonial Annapolis Maritime Trail (CAMT) is part of the Maryland Millennium Legacy Trail, which also encompasses the BWI and Baltimore Annapolis Trail facilities in Anne Arundel County. Annapolis is the only place in the United States where two national trails connect: the East Coast Greenway Trail, running from Maine to the Florida Keys, and the transcontinental Great American Discovery Trail, stretching from Delaware to California. Both the East Coast Greenway Trail and the Great American Discovery Trail enter the City at the Naval Academy Bridge and follow City roads before connecting to the Poplar Trail, then leave the City via Admiral Drive.
- ▶ Outreach programs engage the community to support and advocate for public open spaces. The annual GreenScape program has demonstrated robust public commitment and interest that has grown since it began in 1992.

- ▶ Lack of available vacant land and increased market demand mean that land for new parks and facilities is expensive. Despite the cost, additional purchase of park land is critical to the success of many of the items in this plan, such as the proposed West Street park, trail connections and storm water modifications.
- ▶ The City of Annapolis is faced with a number of the same trends facing most parks and recreation departments across the country including outdated and failing park infrastructure, demand for increased services, and less state and federal funding opportunities.
- ▶ Annapolis has utilized its parks and open spaces to highlight environmental stewardship.
- ▶ The Recreation and Parks Department offers programs and services accessible to residents in the community. After-school activities, sport leagues, and a variety of enrichment programs contribute to the affordable offerings. Limited program space restricts the variety and level of participation that can be provided.

Policy Recommendations

Parks, open spaces and other recreation opportunities play an important role in sustainability, quality of life, property values, and overall marketability of the community. Furthermore, parks and recreation offerings can influence the health of a community. As part of the urban living experience, parks are elevated to a higher priority than in the past. Planning for parks and recreation facilities and recognizing their significant role in the overall comprehensive planning of a community is perhaps the best means to ensure not only a beautiful city, but a healthy, prosperous one too. The future of parks and open spaces should be one of vision, excellence, inclusion, partnership and balance.

Policy 1. Enhance existing parks and facilities with the objective of supporting structured and informal recreation, protecting the natural environment, and encouraging human health and fitness.

- 1.1 Use the draft 2004 *Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan* as a planning tool for upgrading and enhancing current recreation and park facilities. Priority areas include completion of the new Pip Moyer Recreation Center at Truxtun Park, further improvements at Truxtun Park, Bates Athletic Complex, Annapolis Sports Complex, and Waterworks Park, and other areas as outlined in the Plan.

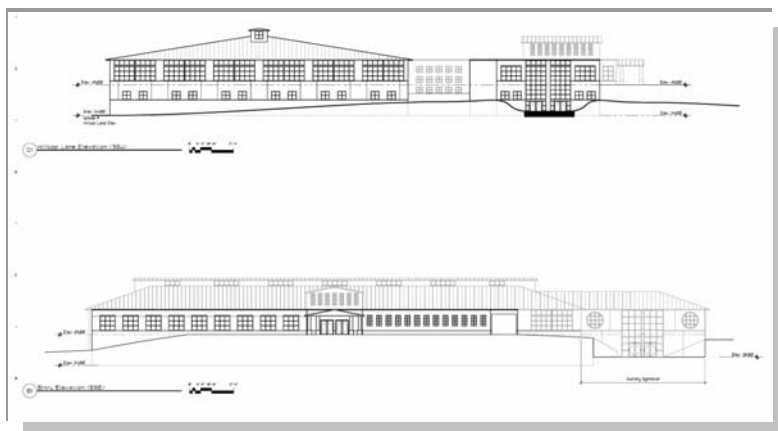


Figure 6-3 Architectural drawings for the new Pip Moyer Recreation Center at Truxtun Park

- 1.2 Aggressively implement best land management practices in park improvements and maintenance, specifically for purposes of environmental protection and management as well as interactive education opportunities and overall beautification efforts. Enhancements should reflect a diverse mix of natural areas, urban green spaces, and informal and structured spaces for active and passive use.
- 1.3 Recreation area improvements should be undertaken in order to better address the needs of the City's senior citizens, cultural groups, and at-risk youth. Programs and facilities should provide an outlet for physical activity and community involvement.

- 1.4 Incorporate cultural, historical, environmental and other educational activities into parks, open spaces and trails.

Policy 2. Complete the network of pedestrian and bicycle pathways.

- 2.1 Expand and consolidate Annapolis' proposed Colonial Annapolis Maritime Trail into one comprehensive, safe and user-friendly network for both cyclists and pedestrians. Close coordination between the Departments of Recreation & Parks, Planning and Zoning, Transportation, and Public Works will be necessary for the successful completion of such a network. Coordinate with the County, State (Maryland Millenium Legacy Trail, of which the Baltimore & Annapolis Trail is a component) and national trail systems (East Coast Greenway, Great American Discovery Trail) for the purpose of publicity, education, and implementation.



Poplar Trail

- 2.2 Coordinate implementation of the Colonial Annapolis Maritime Trail with bike and pedestrian improvements described in Ch. 4 – *Transportation*.
- 2.3 Expand the “Navigate Annapolis” wayfinding and identification system to sites owned or maintained by Annapolis Recreation and Parks.

Policy 3. Expansion of the parks system should be undertaken selectively and strategically, with the objective of taking advantage of rare opportunities, providing parks and recreation services to underserved areas, allowing public access to the waterfront, and furthering environmental goals.

- 3.1 Expansion of the park system should meet the objectives of taking advantage of rare opportunities, providing parks and recreation services to underserved areas, allowing public access to the waterfront, and furthering environmental goals. Careful consideration should be given when applying these standards so that the park system does not get overwhelmed with an array of small, substandard parcels. A creative mix of heritage sites, resource lands, athletic fields, downtown parks, trails, and conservation areas should be part of the open space system.

- 3.2** Incorporate urban parks into redevelopment plans for the Opportunity Areas described in Chapter 3 – *Land Use & Economic Development*. Urban parks could include “village greens“ (such as the park at Acton’s Landing), natural areas, playgrounds, and plazas with amenities such as trees, benches and art in public places. In the Outer West Opportunity Area, consider an urban park concept that may be incorporated into a multi-level building.
- 3.3** Build upon partnerships with other major open space providers, including Anne Arundel County and the US Naval Academy, to coordinate services and programs.
- 3.4** Implement parks, open spaces and trails as part of annexation or redevelopment projects.