



FY 2020-2024

# Strategic Plan



Howard County  
RECREATION & PARKS



*John R. Byrd*

May 7, 2019  
John R. Byrd  
Director  
Howard County Recreation & Parks

# 2019 Department Fact Sheet

The **Office of the Director** reports directly to the County Executive, provides reports and guidance to the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board, general supervision to four department bureaus and is responsible for total operation of the Department.

The **Bureau of Capital Projects, Park Planning and Construction** is responsible for the Comprehensive Plan, land acquisition, real estate leases, park design, park construction, capital grants and review of subdivision plans and acceptance of developer dedicated open space. The Park Construction and Heritage Division perform major repairs and rehabilitation to existing park facilities, historic site maintenance efforts and manage operational responsibilities for the Department. The Bureau is responsible for the preparation of the Department's Capital Improvement Plan and the Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan.

There are three divisions within the **Bureau of Recreation**. The Recreation Services Division includes the delivery of programs and services to pre-school, school-age, adults, special events and projects, volunteers, facility coordination and summer camps and lead oversight of Wine in the Woods. Also included are Gary J. Arthur Community Center, Roger Carter Community Center, North Laurel Community Center and Timbers at Troy Golf Course. The Sports and Adventure Services Division includes, adventure, outdoors, nature, competitions, fitness, health and wellness, sports leagues, large sports tournaments, spring and summer sports camps, Meadowbrook Athletic Center, Centennial Park boat rentals and partnerships. The Recreation Licensed Childcare and Community Services Division manages Recreation Licensed Childcare programs in a variety of age groups, camps, trips and tours, teens and grants, therapeutic recreation and inclusion services, Active Aging and Encore programs and classes focusing on ages 50-75. All ten core program areas are provided and maintained for trending programs. They include: volunteerism, special events, music and dance, arts & crafts, sports, games, health & wellness, outdoor recreation, adventure & nature, self-improvement & hobbies, cognitive & gaming, trips & tours, and county tourism.

The Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks is accredited by the National Parks and Recreation Association's Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies. This document is managed by the Bureau of Recreation.

The **Bureau of Parks** is responsible for the maintenance and management of 9,572.5 acres of county parks, open space and forest conservation areas. The Horticulture and Land Management Division manages the mowing and landscaping for all government buildings, developed parks, libraries, county-owned historic sites and fire stations. The Natural and Historic Resources Division manages Park Rangers, heritage programs and sites, deer and wildlife management, reforestation, natural surface trails, open space and parkland encroachments, invasive plant control, environmental concerns on county land, Stream ReLeaf and Tree Canopy programs, and sub-division plan review as well as the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area and Robinson Nature Center. The Park Operations Division manages the county's developed parks which include small neighborhood and community parks and the eight larger regional parks, paved trail systems and synthetic turf fields at park sites and the 12 high schools. Park amenities include: ballfields (both turf and synthetic), courts, playgrounds, comfort stations, picnic pavilions and unique facilities like an off-road bicycle skills course. Belmont Manor and Historic Park, an event and wedding facility, features a manor house built in 1738, gardens and a carriage house where nature programs are offered. The division also provides logistical and program support to many department and county-wide special events such as Wine in the Woods and the July 4<sup>th</sup> Celebration.

The **Bureau of Administrative Services** coordinates and supports administrative functions for the Department to include preparation and review of the operating budget, marketing and promotion, information technology, procurement, processing payments, warehouse operation, program registration, pavilion rental and human resources management responsibilities. The Bureau also manages the fleet equipment repair operation.

# MISSION

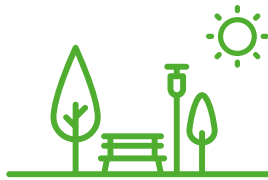
TO RESPONSIBLY MANAGE



**NATURAL  
resources;**

PROVIDE EXCELLENT

**PARKS,  
FACILITIES,  
& RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR THE → COMMUNITY;**



AND ENSURE THE

**highest quality**

OF LIFE FOR **current & future  
GENERATIONS.**



# VISION

THE DEPARTMENT OF  
RECREATION & PARKS  
STRIVES TO DELIVER



**recreation & leisure  
OPPORTUNITIES**

THAT WILL IMPROVE THE

**health & well-being  
OF THE → COMMUNITY;**

AND TO SERVE AS MODEL STEWARDS OF THE  
ENVIRONMENT BY MANAGING, PROTECTING,  
AND CONSERVING OUR RESOURCES FOR A

**SUSTAINABLE  
FUTURE.**

**teamwork**

**integrity**

## CORE VALUES

**TREND  
setting**

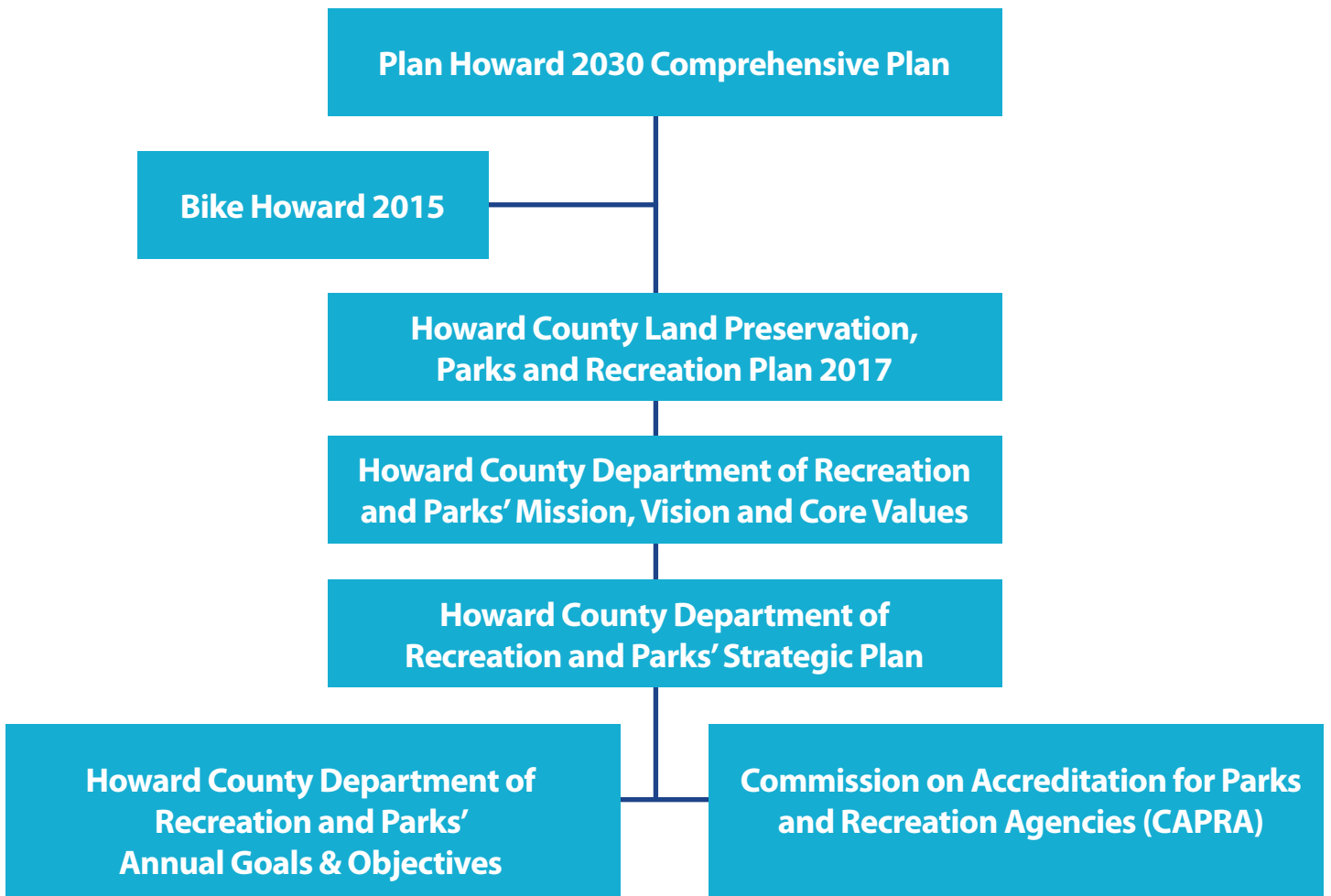
**exceptional  
customer service**

**PROFESSIONALISM**

**ACCOUNTABILITY**

**knowledgeable, well-trained staff**

# Planning Flow Chart



# Plan Definitions

## Plan Howard 2030

Adopted in 2012, this comprehensive plan update similarly embraces the principles of smart growth, sustainability and environmental stewardship.

## Bike Howard 2015

This master plan emphasizes the importance of a connected bike network to promote sustainable transportation options and overall physical activity for county residents.

## Howard County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan

This plan is a public engagement and planning effort that aims to provide Howard County residents and visitors greater access to programs, amenities, expand and preserve protected agricultural land, and enhance the long-term benefits of natural resources and open space – ensuring that the system will prosper for future generations. The plan is revised every 5-years and is tied to the Department's Program Open Space funding allocation.

## Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks' Mission, Vision and Core Values

These three tenets serve to guide the operation of the Department:

- **Mission:** To responsibly manage natural resources; provide excellent parks, facilities and recreation opportunities for the community; and ensure the highest quality of life for current and future generations.
- **Vision:** The Department of Recreation and Parks strives to deliver recreation and leisure opportunities that will improve the health and well-being of the community and to serve as model stewards of the environment by managing, protecting, and conserving our resources for a sustainable future.
- **Core Values:** Exceptional Customer Service; Professionalism; Accountability; Knowledgeable, Well-Trained Staff; Teamwork; Integrity and; Trend Setting.



## Howard County Department of Recreation & Parks' Strategic Plan

This plan is designed to establish the Department's long-term goals; develop a strategy to achieve these goals and; implement methods to test whether the Department has successfully achieved its objectives.

## Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks' Annual Goals and Objectives

This plan represents a desired outcome that act on the mission of the organization. Annual Goals are established with objectives and performance indicators designed in a way to measure the success of meeting these goals. Howard County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan is the primary guidance tool used for establishing a comprehensive plan for measuring the success of meeting the Department's goals and objectives.

## Commission on Accreditation for Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA)

Accreditation process used by park and recreation agencies for excellence in operation and service. Charged with providing high quality services and experiences, park and recreation agencies across the United States turn to CAPRA Accreditation as a credible and efficient means of achieving these goals, while providing assurance to the public that the agency meets national (151) standards of best practices. The accreditation process is repeated every five years.

# Introduction



On May 15, 2017 the Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks enacted the Howard County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP). This plan is required every five years by the State of Maryland Department of Natural Resources so that the county may remain eligible to receive Program Open Space (POS) funding to purchase and develop parkland. The plan is the result of a 16-month research, engagement and planning effort that aims to provide Howard County residents and visitors greater access to programs and amenities, expand and preserve protected agricultural land, and enhance the long-term benefits of natural resources and open-space ensuring that the system will prosper for future generations.

The planning firm, Sasaki, was hired to guide the Department through the planning process by assessing existing conditions, comparing where the county relates to similar agencies throughout the country, conducting a needs assessment, establishing goals and objectives, and providing recommendations for improvement. Sasaki led the Department through several engagement sessions with the public to get input on how they feel about the current level of services and amenities and what direction the public would like the department to move toward in the future.

To meet these recommendations, the Department created a 5-year strategic plan to address the nine goals outlined in the LPPRP and assembled teams to research and identify methods for achieving the goals. The process used to break down the components within each goal to determine specific tasks are as follows:

- Strategic Initiatives – Strategic Initiatives are specific topics within each goal that the Department will focus on to achieve that goal. Each goal has at least one strategic initiative.
- Action Strategy – Action Strategies are specific steps the Department will take to accomplish the strategic initiatives and goals. Action Strategies follow strategic initiatives.
- Tasks – Tasks are detailed assignments within action strategies that explain in further detail how the Department will accomplish the actions and initiatives.

Specific tasks will be assigned to department personnel that have the knowledge, skills and abilities to complete the task as well as determine the outcome-based measurement tool to be used to determine the level of success and its impact on the county. The strategic plan will be reviewed once a year to measure the progress of completing specific tasks, and adding, adjusting or deleting tasks to adapt to any change in the climate of the Department or county.

To be fully transparent about the direction the Department is heading, the Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks FY2020-2024 Strategic Plan can be found on the Department's website at [www.howardcountymd.gov/rap](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/rap).

# Goals Identified In The 2017 Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan



1. Promote programs and spaces accessible to all people.
2. Improve connectivity of people to recreation and park resources through all modes of travel, including walking, biking and transit.
3. Stay at the forefront of trends in recreation and park facilities, recreation programs and park design.
4. Instill flexibility to adapt to shifts in community needs and meet future growth.
5. Provide a range of recreation programs and inclusive park and facility designs to facilitate diversity and cultural awareness.
6. Build partnerships within county government and across the county to efficiently share resources and provide the best customer service.
7. Use best practices to continue providing sustainable parks, open spaces, and recreation facilities that are safe and secure for users of all ages and backgrounds.
8. Integrate a multi-faceted approach to health and wellness, supporting the mental, physical, social and emotional well-being of the diverse Howard County Community.
9. Maintain CAPRA accreditation with NRPA.

# Goal 1

## Promote programs and spaces accessible to all people

Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks is committed to contributing to the health and vitality of its citizens and fostering community engagement. The Department strives to utilize a variety of communication measures to provide information regarding quality recreational environments and opportunities readily accessible to its' citizens, and thereby contribute to their physical and mental well-being.

### Strategic Initiative (1)

Utilize diverse marketing methods to promote a variety of parks and recreation programs and facilities making them readily accessible to the public

#### Action Strategy (1)

Review data pertaining to public outreach strategies

#### Tasks

- Analyze data on print versus social media marketing tactics
- Re-create website to be more user-friendly
- Create a video schedule for social media release
- Create a database with local editors and television stations
- Enhance marketing partnership with tourism agencies

#### Action Strategy (2)

Audit signage in parks and facilities

#### Tasks

- Research wayfinding methods and implement corrective measures
- Re-create signs as needed to ensure consistent rules, regulations, and design
- Determine if signs are strategically located and are up-to-date; prioritize and make corrective adjustments

### Strategic Initiative (2)

Identify language barriers within the county and region

#### Action Strategy (1)

Obtain and review census data on languages spoken in county and region

#### Tasks

- Research methods on how to better reach non-English speaking populations
- Review invoices on translation services for the Department to determine trends
- Obtain data on languages spoken within the household through surveys and program evaluations

#### Action Strategy (3)

Work with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) committee and review (LEP) research conducted by county and other county agencies

#### Tasks

- Enhance partnerships with local translation service organizations to translate targeted marketing literature
- Prioritize languages spoken in county to provide accommodations

### Strategic Initiative (3)

Review marketing strategies on accessibility of publications for parks, facilities and programs

#### Action Strategy (1)

Conduct an analysis of parks, facilities and programs printed and electronic material

#### Tasks

- Create a larger version of the activity guides for visually-impaired constituents
- Create an informational tool to highlight accessible pathways and amenities



# Goal 2

## Improve connectivity of people to recreation and park resources through all modes of travel, including walking, biking and transit

Part of the Department's vision is to, "serve as model stewards of the environment by managing, protecting, and conserving our resources for a sustainable future." To the greatest degree feasible, the Department strives to 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 and open space resources.

### Strategic Initiative (1)

Evaluate public transportation access to Recreation and Parks' amenities

### Action Strategy (1)

Evaluate current Regional Transit Authority (RTA) routes as they connect to Recreation and Parks' amenities

#### Tasks

- Review the online fixed route schedule as related to the ability of the public to access Howard County Recreation and Parks' amenities
- Investigate the RTA Mobility Program to determine the ability of the public to access Recreation and Parks' amenities
- Determine the walking distance from each Recreation and Parks' facility to a public transportation access point
- Meet with Transportation Manager to review and recommend changes

### Action Strategy (2)

Evaluate the Howard County Bike Share Program as it relates to public accessibility to Recreation and Parks' facilities



#### Tasks

- Evaluate the Blandair Park Bike Share initiative to determine its level of success
- Review plans and the feasibility of expanding the bike share initiative into other parks

### Strategic Initiative (2)

Review current pathway and trail systems for connectivity to Recreation and Parks' amenities

### Action Strategy (1)

Evaluate the Walk Howard Plan as it relates to public accessibility to Recreation and Parks' facilities

#### Tasks

- Examine the identified priorities within the Walk Howard Plan as they relate to connectivity to Recreation and Parks' amenities
- Meet with the Office of Transportation to determine implementation schedule as related to identified priorities



## Action Strategy (2)

Evaluate the Bike Howard Plan and its relationship to Recreation and Parks' sites

### Tasks

- Examine the identified priorities within the Bike Howard Plan as they relate to connectivity to Recreation and Parks' amenities
- Review the plan to identify Recreation and Parks' sites for future expansion
- Meet with the Office of Transportation and the Department of Planning and Zoning to determine implementation schedule as related to identified priorities and trails and/or pathways that are currently in the design phase
- Update the county's bike pathways information and map

## Action Strategy (3)

Review the Columbia Association Plan related to connectivity to Howard County Recreation and Parks' amenities

### Tasks

- Examine the identified priorities within the Columbia Association Plan as they relate to connectivity to Recreation and Parks' amenities
- Meet with the Columbia Association to identify partnership opportunities for the implementation of the identified priorities

## Action Strategy (4)

Evaluate the existing Howard County park trail system for connectivity opportunities to state owned parkland

### Tasks

- Conduct a GIS analysis of the current park trail system to determine accuracy of the current baseline
- Identify existing and possible new links, extensions and connections to state parks
- Meet with the state trail planners to identify possible partnership opportunities

## Strategic Initiative (3)

Evaluate maintenance requirements and condition of current natural surface trail system

## Action Strategy (1)

Create a comprehensive natural surface trail plan to address gaps in the system

### Tasks

- Create a comprehensive natural surface trail map within the park system
- Conduct trail assessments for condition and needed corrective measures
- Create individual trail plans for identified priorities

## Strategic Initiative (4)

Promote land acquisition to enhance connectivity across county-owned parcels

## Action Strategy (1)

Identify property that link and connect current county-owned parkland holdings

### Tasks

- Utilize GIS system to analyze and determine connection opportunities
- Research tax rolls to determine current ownership
- Create data base of information collected, including corresponding maps
- Work with the Real Estate Services Division to obtain appraisals of identified properties

## Action Strategy (2)

Design linking trails and pathways on Open Space property

### Tasks

- Create proposed designs for trails and/or pathways
- Identify connections that enhance walkability or bike-ability to Recreation and Parks' amenities

# Goal 3

## Stay at the forefront of trends in recreation and park facilities, recreation programs and park design

Trend setting is a Department core value and is one of the characteristics it is best known for. Howard County is a culturally diverse community requiring interaction with its' citizens to understand the direction in which the Department should be planning for new programs and facilities. Trends are measured by periodically assessing societal and local recreation and leisure trends and determining how those trends impact existing and projected user populations. The Department strives to recognize and strategically use parks and recreation facilities to make the county a more desirable place to live, work and play.

### Strategic Initiative (1)

Develop a means for researching and identifying trends

#### Action Strategy (1)

Establish a trends committee consisting of a diverse group of employees

#### Tasks

- Subscribe to trends related magazines, publications and websites to stay on top of programmatic trends
- The Trend Committee will analyze results from the Department's Evaluation Team and will provide a summary of the analysis to divisions
- Schedule retreats or another type of environment that is conducive to collaboration among various staff to discuss possible action regarding identified trends
- Attend Maryland Recreation and Parks Association and/or National Recreation and Park Association conferences to identify emerging trends
- Generate an annual Recreation & Parks' Trends Report



### Action Strategy (2)

Stay abreast of trends in relation to Recreation and Parks' facility construction and design

#### Tasks

- Research innovative recreation and park facilities and arrange for visits where possible
- Refer to product guides, publications, websites, and advertisements to stay on top of the new park and facility design trends
- Develop a centralized method of communication, which allows any member of the staff to share an experience at another facility/park that they may have visited no matter the location
- Make recommendations to the Department's Capital Budget

### Strategic Initiative (2)

Develop a process which allows the Department's internal and external customers to give input and suggestions on new initiatives



### Action Strategy (1)

Create a uniform comment card to be placed in facilities and parks

#### Tasks

- Develop universal comment language
- Create a digital and physical comment card
- Develop distribution and collection methods
- Communicate information and feedback to program areas and facilities

### Action Strategy (2)

Educate and empower internal and external customers to submit trends feedback

#### Tasks

- Define and share the purpose of the comment cards
- Incentivize customers to participate
- Provide timely response to commenter
- Provide training and guidelines for the process of submitting comments



### Action Strategy (3)

Construct a process to filter information to the newly formed Trends Committee

#### Tasks

- Categorize comments/trends and distribute to the Trends Committee
- Create and maintain a staff accessible portal that contains refined submissions
- Include refined submissions of external comments in the Department Annual Report for transparency
- Research and evaluate the cost/benefit of specified trends based on their anticipated lifespan

# Goal 4

## Instill Flexibility to adopt to shifts in community needs and meet future growth



Although the Department currently offers a wide variety of recreation and parks programs and facilities, it is imperative that staff continues to keep track of population projections and changing local demographics. To this end, the Department must balance infrastructure and other public investments and priorities in existing communities and areas planned for growth. This ongoing assessment will be accomplished through strategies that consider investment in neighborhood and community parks, facilities and recreation programs.

### Strategic Initiative (1)

Evaluate distribution of Department programs across Howard County

### Action Strategy (1)

Increase participation of targeted demographic groups not being fully reached by the Department

#### Tasks

- Identify the top three underserved demographic markets
- Meet with representatives from the community or specific targeted groups to get a better understanding of their desire for programs
- Evaluate current participants within targeted program areas
- Determine program needs and areas for potential growth
- Improve yearly program offerings to reflect demand gathered from findings

### Action Strategy (2)

Determine areas where obstacles may exist that impede program participation

#### Tasks

- Create a community survey to establish program awareness and affordability
- Establish a fundraising and community outreach program to increase visibility and subsidize/expand the Department's scholarship program
- Use the Community Inventory (a document that includes a complete and current listing of park, facility, program services and resources, available in Howard County) to regulate program offerings

### Strategic Initiative (2)

Improve the Department's registration process

### Action Strategy (1)

Eliminate barriers associated with the Department's registration process

#### Tasks

- Eliminate 24-hour program registration waiting period currently used to ensure current customer accounts have a zero balance
- Expand point of sale process to eliminate excessive paperwork
- Utilize and improve registration by creating a mobile app

# Goal 5

## Provide a range of recreation programs and inclusive park and facility designs to facilitate diversity and cultural awareness

The Department currently provides a variety of programs based across ten different program concentrations – volunteering/service opportunities; special events/social recreation; music & dance; sports and games; visual arts/arts and crafts; outdoor recreation/nature/environmental activities; drama; self-improvement/hobbies/leisure education; cognitive and literary; trips and tours/tourism. It is the Department's desire to celebrate the uniqueness of Howard County's diverse community through recreational opportunities that support multi-generational play, evolving trends, and diverse programming that are accessible to the public. These opportunities should maintain a healthy balance of facility and park supply to support growing demand.

### Strategic Initiative (1)

Strengthen the quality, responsiveness, and accessibility of recreation programs

### Action Strategy (1)

Develop an action plan to fill programming gaps

#### Tasks

- Create an ongoing, cyclical process for needs analysis utilizing previously collected data
- Create a shared document for programmers and facility leaders to help guide future planning
- Establish benchmarks for measuring quality, responsiveness and accessibility of recreation programs
- Establish criteria for sun-setting of programs and events

### Action Strategy (2)

Strengthen organizational efficiency and support innovation



#### Tasks

- Create a Department work team focused on evaluations, surveys and assessments
- Centralize process of program evaluations in addition to coordinating Department-wide focused surveys of the Department's best customers
- Promote information sharing through engagement with program managers and staff in evaluation and survey studies
- Research and determine applicable use of Virtual Event Management Systems

### Strategic Initiative (2)

Preserve and celebrate the county's diverse historic and cultural resources



## Action Strategy (1)

Cultivate and recruit programming partners from the community

### Tasks

- Develop a database of potential cultural, historical and environmental programming partners that represent the wide range of diversity within the county
- Research and determine applicable constraints related to potential partnerships
- Partner with agencies, research institutions, community groups and private industry to develop, implement, manage, and promote cultural, historical and environmental programs for the public at large

## Action Strategy (2)

Align infrastructure needs and service expectations

### Tasks

- Review and update the Department's Heritage Program Management Plan
- Conduct and assess county-owned physical spaces, building conditions and equipment within cultural/heritage structures to identify gaps in cultural infrastructure
- Plan for new purpose-built spaces that supports programming, performance, and cultural/heritage activities
- Support fundraising, planning and ongoing stewardship efforts for partner-driven Symphony Woods renovation project with the Columbia Association, Inner Arbor Trust and Downtown Columbia Arts and Cultural Commission
- Support and assist with the Harriett Tubman school development process
- Review and update the Department's Cultural Events Management Plan
- Ensure staff, volunteers and contractors receive cultural awareness training

## Strategic Initiative (3)

Inspire the great parks and facilities of tomorrow

### Action Strategy (1)

Strengthen the quality of parks and facilities

### Tasks

- Research qualities of parks and facilities that appeal to people of various backgrounds and ages to promote social equity
- Develop design standards and guidelines for renovation and the development of new parks and facilities based on actual and emerging user demands to include public input
- Develop an infrastructure maintenance plan that establishes preventative maintenance and renewal cycles
- Manage existing capacity and level of service for fields and courts
- Establish recommendations in facility design that focus on sustainability

### Action Strategy (2)

Ensure county residents have access to the benefits of recreation and parks

### Tasks

- Develop a Department social equity position statement and review the Department's core values
- Review and update ADA Transition Plan and Site Inventory
- Complete an ADA assessment of Recreation and Parks' playgrounds and fields to determine level of accessibility
- Develop feasibility studies and business plans for future facilities identified in the Land Preservation Parks and Recreation Plan
- Ensure staff, volunteers and contractors receive inclusion, equity and accessibility training

# Goal 6

## Review partnerships within county government and across the county to efficiently share resources and provide the best customer service



Exceptional customer service is one of the Department's core values. Although the Department currently partners with 100+ agencies and non-profit organizations, it will continue to build partnerships outside the Department to enhance the visitor experience and community outreach. This effort supports lifelong learning through programming and partnerships that build community knowledge around the importance of healthy living and wellness.

### Strategic Initiative (1)

Cultivate partnerships to enhance service delivery and operations

### Action Strategy (1)

Identify barriers to increasing sustainable partnerships

#### Tasks

- Create a workgroup to identify current barriers and potential solutions to partnerships
- Compare "like" cities that retain partnerships and their policies/systems as well as the benefits received
- Standardize the Department's agreements to expedite the partnering process

### Action Strategy (2)

Take a proactive approach to identifying, soliciting and entering into partnerships

#### Tasks

- Identify opportunities for partnerships
- Update inventory of existing partnerships
- Develop specific strategies for different partnership types (non-profit/for profit/community initiated)
- Develop evaluation criteria for partnerships to measure benefits
- Work with Trends Committee to identify areas in the private sector that are offering or have unique facilities for partnership opportunities



# Goal 7

## Use best practices to continue providing sustainable parks, open spaces, and recreation facilities that are safe and secure for users of all ages and backgrounds

Protected lands and historic resources managed by the Department support essential ecosystems while offering residents the opportunity to connect with nature and the county's cultural heritage contributing to Howard County's high quality of life. The Department's commitment and vision for environmental protection and conservation of natural and heritage resources exist while addressing challenges and conditions that are unique to Howard County. It is essential that when the public visits county park and facility sites that they feel safe and secure.

### Strategic Initiative (1)

Establish a culture of safety

### Action Strategy (1)

Implement initiatives that will focus on establishing a culture of safety

#### Tasks

- Implement campaigns such as National Safety Month with the support of the Department's Safety Committee
- Expand the Department's "Park Watch" program to all county-owned parks and trails
- Expand the Department's Safety Committee's tasks list to facilitate the implementation of health and environmental initiatives
- Collaborate with Office of Emergency Management and Risk Management as well as other stakeholders to review existing safety protocols
- Increase OSHA safety compliance requirements for the operation of parks and recreation facilities

### Action Strategy (2)

Continually assess risks and hazards that may impact operations and affect our most important resource, the public

#### Tasks

- Develop a park and recreation facilities self-audit plan to proactively anticipate and mitigate risks, remove redundancies and processes
- Establish a comprehensive safety compliance gap analysis to continuously improve safety compliance
- Integrate safety protocols into existing park and facilities maintenance plans and train staff
- Develop a series of safety tips for the public to use when visiting Parks and Recreation facilities
- Investigate the possibility of placing lightning detection systems in the eight regional parks

### Action Strategy (3)

Designate the Department's Marketing Team to create plans and procedures designed to inform and educate the public when potential hazards and/or threats to public safety are present

#### Tasks

- Create pre-scripted information bulletins for large-scale events
- Determine a method to coordinate and clear information for release to the public
- Provide public outreach information that communicates with special needs and diverse populations

# Goal 8

## Integrate a multi-faceted approach to health and wellness, supporting the mental, physical, social and emotional well-being of the diverse Howard County community



Local park and recreation agencies provide crucial health and wellness opportunities for all populations in the county. As America continues to face serious health issues including rising rates of chronic disease, childhood obesity, an increased prevalence of sedentary lifestyles and poor nutrition habits, the Department of Recreation and Parks can offer an affordable and accessible solutions.

### Strategic Initiative (1)

Evaluate current Department program offerings geared toward health and wellness

### Action Strategy (1)

Create a system by which health and wellness initiatives can be measured

#### Tasks

- Create definitions for the health and wellness variables (mental, physical, social and emotional well-being) and how they relate to recreation and parks opportunities
- Create an internal classification system for tracking current program offerings to identify health and wellness programming as it relates to the identified variables
- Implement an annual evaluation of health and wellness programs



### Action Strategy (2)

Identify a method to gather demographic data of Howard County residents to identify health and wellness program gaps

#### Tasks

- Review the 2020 Howard County census for data related to Howard County residents
- Review Department registration program participant data for significant demographic variables
- Compare and contrast county census data to the Department registration data to identify demographic anomalies
- Create program opportunities to address identified gaps



## Strategic Initiative (2)

Identify examples of specific health and wellness opportunities

### Action Strategy (1)

Create innovative program offerings that address health and wellness

#### Tasks

- Research, develop and implement the Park Rx program with local pediatricians
- Research ways in which computerized gaming can be tied to physical activity
- Continually evaluate the healthy snack offerings within Department programs
- Meet with culturally diverse populations to evaluate/create unique health and wellness opportunities
- Evaluate/create health and wellness opportunities for active older adults

## Action Strategy (2)

Create areas within the park system to address health and wellness

#### Tasks

- Create a listing of scenic walks within the park system
- Improve and increase the number of water fountains within the system to optimize opportunities for hydration
- Employ volunteers to assist in the creation of sustainable hiking/biking trails
- Research opportunities to establish community gardens
- Research viability of installing exercise stations within the parks
- Research opportunities to establish “playgrounds” geared toward adults such as obstacles courses or senior playgrounds

# Goal 9

## Maintain CAPRA accreditation with NRPA

The Department is committed to maintaining excellence and driving innovation to enhance place-making and strive for equity in existing and future recreation and parks amenities and programs. The three National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) pillars - Social Equity, Health and Wellness and Conservation – are woven throughout the Department’s programs and facilities. NRPA’s Commission on Accreditation for Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) is an accreditation process used by park and recreation agencies for excellence in operation and service. Charged with providing high quality services and experiences, park and recreation agencies across the United States turn to CAPRA accreditation as a credible and efficient means of achieving these goals, while providing assurance to the public that the agency meets the (151) national standards of best practices. The accreditation process is repeated every five years. The Department has received this accreditation since 2002 with the next renewal in 2022.

### Strategic Initiative (1)

Revise and update an agency-wide 2022 CAPRA Self-Assessment preparation strategy

### Action Strategy (1)

Implement agency-wide production schedules

#### Tasks

- Identify the release of the 2019 CAPRA Standards revision and schedule an Oversight Team meeting to review the revised standards
- CAPRA Committee Chairs will create action items for each Committee member to be addressed with a progress report at each subsequent meeting

### Action Strategy (2)

Adapt 2022 CAPRA Self-Assessment production to evolving requirements



#### Tasks

- Compare the 2017 and 2022 CAPRA Self-Assessment templates
- Assess the value of third-party reaccreditation resources/tools
- Identify active CAPRA Visitation Team members within the State of Maryland to provide input on Self-Assessment Evidence of Compliance presentation preferences
- Evaluate internal review by agency staff vs. external review by a contracted editor of the draft Self-Assessment Report
- If relying on internal draft Self-Assessment Report review, designate an internal review committee comprised of select staff to critique the Report following Oversight Committee review of the Report



### Action Strategy (3)

Actively manage the preparation of external documents for submittal as Evidence of Compliance

#### Tasks

- Identify all external agency policies, plans, guidelines, and statements regulating the use and maintenance of facilities utilized by the Department of Recreation and Parks and obtain copies
- Determine the review and renewal/revision schedule for relevant external agency documents to enable incorporation of the latest editions in the Self-Assessment Report
- Recognize gaps in external documents and request that revisions address matters of concern in a timely manner
- Obtain a written statement from the responsible agency confirming that the current document is the one in use and that revisions to the document are in the planning phase
- Maintain CAPRA documentation within the electronic file throughout the 5-year span

### Strategic Initiative (2)

Optimize the Visitation Team's experience

#### Action Strategy (1)

Create an accommodating environment for the visitation team

#### Tasks

- Identify how each Visitor wishes to receive and review Self-Assessment Report documents and cater to their work habits
- Plan accommodations, dining, work site options, and site visits with sufficient contingencies and revise following Visitation Team designation

#### Action Strategy (2)

Develop a distinctive, Howard County tour experience

#### Tasks

- Evaluate accommodating visitors at Belmont Manor and Historic Park's cottage vs. a Columbia hotel
- Incorporate Department's Ellicott City Floods experiences into the park and facility tour
- Survey peers for trends and insight into the current visitation experience
- Designate staff to create the Visitation Team itinerary and contingencies prior to their arrival

# Strategic Plan Workgroup Leads and Teams

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