

# PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE

## OVERVIEW

This Element addresses the future of the 7,600 acres of permanent open space and parkland in the District of Columbia. It also addresses the need for new parks, and includes policies on related topics such as recreational facility development, the use of private open space, and the creation of trails to better connect the city's open spaces and neighborhoods. The Element recognizes the importance of open space to the image of the District and the nation, and acknowledges the role it plays in recreation, aesthetics, neighborhood character, and environmental quality.

Park and open space issues were the impetus for many of Washington's early master plans. The McMillan Plan of 1901 was prepared in part to beautify and better organize the District's open spaces—the National Mall and much of Rock Creek Park are among its legacies. Many of the early plans prepared by the National Capital Parks and Planning Commission placed a similar emphasis on improving the city's open spaces and parkways.

Nonetheless, when the District achieved Home Rule and set about developing its first Comprehensive Plan, a “park and open space element” was not included. This responsibility was left to the federal government, primarily because over 85 percent of the District's parkland is managed by the National Park Service (NPS) and is not under the city's jurisdiction. Policies for the Park Service lands are contained in individual General Management Plans prepared by the NPS, and in the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

Including a chapter on parks, recreation, and open space in the District Elements is important for a number of reasons. First, the District itself has jurisdiction over 900 acres of parkland and there is a need for a coordinated set of policies on the management of this resource. Second, access to quality parks and open space is a top priority for District residents—regardless of who owns the land. The fact that most of the city's open space is federally controlled suggests that joint policy planning for these assets is essential. Third, the city is growing, which means recreational needs also are growing. Policies are needed to make sure that new parks are provided to meet the needs of a changing and expanding population.

## WORKING DRAFT

The Comprehensive Plan is supplemented by a more detailed Parks Master Plan prepared by the District Department of Parks and Recreation in 2005-6. While this Element highlights some of the key recommendations of the DPR Master Plan, that document should be consulted for more detailed guidance on facilities, recreational programming, and direction for specific District parks. Key data from the Parks Master Plan, including “benchmarking” data that compares the District to peer cities and the findings of a 2005 resident survey, are cited in this Element to provide context for the policies and actions.

## **PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE GOAL**

**Preserve and enhance the District’s parks and open spaces to meet active and passive recreational needs, improve environmental quality, enhance the identity and character of District neighborhoods, and provide visual beauty in all parts of the national capital.**

### **THE PARKS MASTER PLAN**

In 2006, the District Department of Parks and Recreation completed its first Comprehensive Master Parks Master Plan since its establishment in 1942. The Plan sets the stage for a new and exciting future for park and recreation services and facilities in Washington. It provides strategic direction to address the public’s core issues and is intended to improve park management and operations in the city. The Plan includes a detailed assessment of recreational needs in each of the District’s 39 neighborhood clusters, along with an assessment of the facilities serving each cluster. These assessments are intended to serve as tools for prioritizing future capital improvement projects.

Specific outcomes of the Parks Master Plan include:

- New service standards for parks, recreational programs, and facilities
- Comprehensive information on the recreational needs of DC residents
- Projections of expected future needs, based on growth and demographics
- Information on customer usage and satisfaction
- Identification of current and potential shortfalls
- Strategies for overcoming shortfalls, including land acquisition and programming changes

The Master Plan includes seven strategic policy directives to guide park planning and programming during the coming years. These directives call for an enhanced identity for the District’s park system, new programs to serve a diverse community, improvements to facility condition, better communication, more effective financial management, improved partnerships, and greater accessibility and connectivity. The Plan includes specific action steps and priorities for implementing these directives.

# POLICIES AND ACTIONS

## PROS1.0 OPEN SPACE NETWORKS

The District of Columbia is characterized by four outstanding and distinct networks of open space:

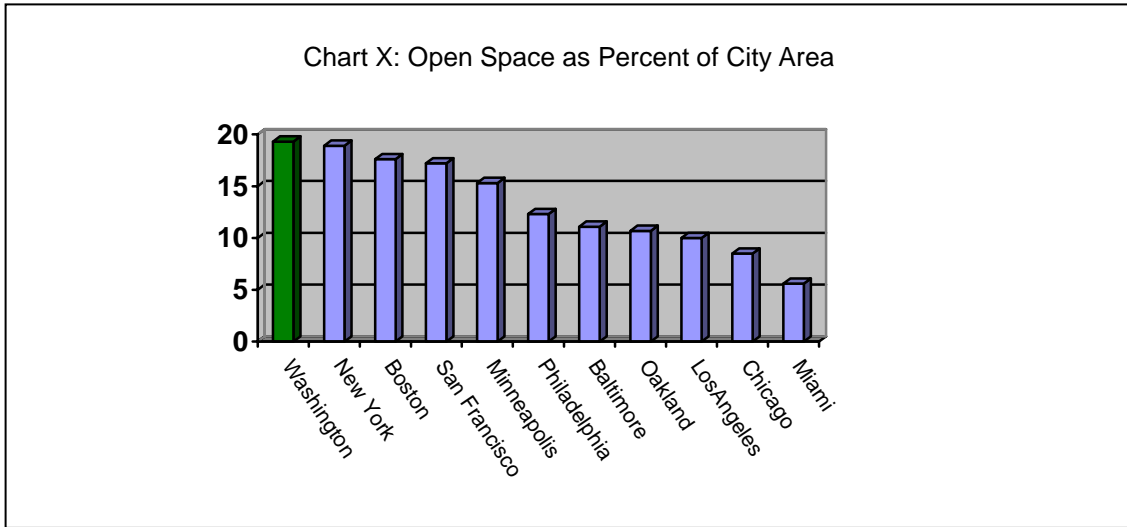
- The Monumental Core, including the National Mall and adjacent areas in East and West Potomac Parks
- Rock Creek Park, extending from the Potomac River to the Maryland border
- The Fort Circle Parks, forming a “ring” of open space approximately five miles from the city center.
- The Anacostia and Potomac parklands, including linear parks along tributary streams

Each of these areas is profiled in more detail below. Together, they comprise 6,700 acres of parkland, or about 18 percent of the city’s land area (see Figure X). Because almost all of this land is under the control of the National Park Service, the policies presented here are intended to express the District’s aspirations for their long term management. They are statements of values and priorities for our federal partners to consider as they plan and manage these important properties.

This section of the Comprehensive Plan includes a special focus on park and open space planning for Washington’s waterfronts. The need to improve connectivity between our open spaces through trails and greenbelts also is addressed.

Chart XX compares the District’s total public open space acreage to other high density US cities, using data from a recent analysis by the Trust for Public Land. The District ranks first among the 11 cities shown in terms of open space acreage as a percent of total land area. Despite the apparent abundance of open space, however, this resource is not evenly distributed across the city. Many residents still lack access to parks and natural areas. [This may be a caption under the bar chart on the next page]

(insert Figure X : Open Space Networks in the District of Columbia)



## PROS 1.1 Sustaining and Enhancing the Federal Open Space Systems

### The National Mall and Environs

Although the District of Columbia does not have jurisdiction over the National Mall and the adjoining open spaces in East and West Potomac Parks, these are arguably the most visible and high profile parklands in the city. They project the image of Washington to the world and attract millions of visitors each year. The future of the landscaped glades between the US Capitol and the Potomac River are often the focus of debate as the need for new monuments and memorials is balanced against the need to retain the Mall's historic form, sight lines, and open quality. The National Capital Planning Commission has prepared several important plans on these issues, including the Legacy Plan and the Monuments and Memorials Master Plan. Both plans seek to preserve the historic proportions of the Mall and expand the open space network to new areas along South Capitol Street and the Anacostia River.

### Rock Creek Park

Rock Creek Park is the District's largest open space, encompassing over 2,000 acres along the Rock Creek Valley and its tributary streams. The park's scenic landscapes provide a respite from the cityscape of Washington. Each year, more than two million people visit the park to hike, picnic, play, and enjoy its rugged beauty. More than 12 million people a year use the park roads for commuting or scenic driving.

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In 2005, the National Park Service completed a General Management Plan for the largest unit of Rock Creek Park, providing guidance on how to best protect natural resources and manage visitor services. The goals of the GMP are to preserve and perpetuate the ecology of the Rock Creek Valley, protect archaeological and historic resources, provide for education and exploration, and create opportunities for recreation that are compatible with the park's natural and cultural setting. The GMP itself includes management "prescriptions" that will guide future land use decisions and issues regarding road closures and traffic management.

### **The Fort Circle Parks**

At the start of the Civil War in 1861, a series of fortifications was built around Washington to protect the nation's capital from a confederate invasion. Among these sites were Fort Stevens—site of an 1864 battle; Fort Reno—the highest point in the District of Columbia; and Fort Dupont, the largest park east of the Anacostia River. After the Civil War, most of the 68 forts and 93 batteries were dismantled and the land was returned to its pre-war owners. Before they disappeared completely, the remaining sites were purchased and developed as parkland. The Fort Circle greenbelt featured prominently in the McMillan Plan of 1901, and with the advent of the automobile was proposed for a 23-mile circumferential parkway around the growing city (the Fort Drive).

A General Management Plan for the Fort Circle Parks was prepared in 2003. The Plan seeks to remedy issues such as the deteriorated state of the parks' historical earthworks, concerns about visitor safety, and a lack of visitor services and interpretive facilities. Among the planned improvements are new trails and recreational features, coordinated signage, and new public access points. The District supports these efforts and strongly encourages additional measures to connect the Fort Circle open spaces and elevate public awareness of this magnificent resource.

### **The Potomac and Anacostia Parklands**

The two rivers and their associated tributaries provide an important link in the District's open space network. They provide protection for sensitive natural habitat, scenic beauty, and water-oriented recreation for District residents and visitors. Washington's waterfront open spaces actually encompass an area larger than all of Rock Creek Park. However, a lack of continuity between the waterfront parks hinders their ability to function as an open space "network". Many of the parks are disconnected or are cut off from one another by highways, railroads, industry, and other barriers.

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Policies for the waterfront are presented in the next section of this Element.

### **POLICY PROS 1.1.1: MONUMENTAL CORE**

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

*New*

### **POLICY PROS 1.1.2: EAST AND WEST POTOMAC PARKS**

Work with the federal government to protect and enhance the great open spaces of the monumental core beyond the National Mall, such as Hains Point and the Tidal Basin parklands. Consistent with the Federal Elements of the Comp Plan, support the use of these areas for outdoor cultural events and celebrations, and for recreational activities and amenities that serve District residents and visitors.

*New*

### **POLICY PROS 1.1.3: ROCK CREEK PARK**

Ensure that the District's land use and transportation decisions support the conservation of Rock Creek Park as a national scenic resource. Actively participate in discussions about the management of park resources, including roadways and recreational facilities.

*New*

### **POLICY PROS 1.1.4: TRIBUTARY PARKS**

Maintain the scenic open space qualities of the city's stream valley parks, including tributaries to the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers as well as tributaries to Rock Creek. Recognize the ability of these areas to connect residential areas to the city's larger open spaces. Ensure that the visual qualities of these natural and forested areas are not compromised by development on their perimeters.

*New*

### **POLICY PROS 1.1.5: FORT CIRCLE PARKS**

Protect and enhance the Fort Circle Parks as an integrated network of permanent open spaces that connect neighborhoods, provide scenic beauty and historic interest, and offer a variety of recreational activities. Prevent District actions that would compromise the integrity of these parks, and strongly support actions that would improve their connectivity and visibility.

*Replaces 1406.5(a)(7)*

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### ***ACTION PROS 1.1-A: NATIONAL MALL MASTER PLAN***

*Support and participate in National Park Service efforts to update the 1976 Master Plan for the National Mall.*

*New*

### ***ACTION PROS 1.1-B: MONUMENT AND MEMORIAL SITING***

*Actively participate with the National Capital Planning Commission, the Commission on Fine Arts, and others in discussions and decisions on the siting of new monuments, memorials, and other commemorative works on the District's open spaces.*

*New*

### ***ACTION PROS 1.1-C: IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLANS***

*Support federal efforts to implement the General Management Plans for Rock Creek Park and the Fort Circle Parks (Civil War Defenses of Washington).*

*New*

## **PROS1.2 Reclaiming the Waterfront**

The contrast between the city's two waterfronts—the Potomac and the Anacostia—has been well documented and widely publicized. Virtually the entire Potomac shoreline north of Hains Point is publicly accessible, with such amenities as the C&O Canal towpath, Thompson's Boathouse, and Theodore Roosevelt Island. The shoreline affords stunning views of the city's monuments and picturesque vistas across the river to Virginia. On the other hand, much of the 22 miles of shoreline along the Anacostia River is underutilized, unattractive, and inaccessible.

Along the Potomac, the District's priority is conserving the federal parklands, retaining public access, and improving access where it does not exist today. Along the Anacostia, the priority is to link more than a dozen disconnected open spaces to create a unified system of first-class parks, and to connect these parks to the neighborhoods they adjoin.

The District's Anacostia Waterfront Initiative calls for a unified identity for more than 1,800 acres along the Anacostia River, including 100 acres of additional parks, many new community access points, and expanded waterfront recreational facilities. The Initiative also includes plans for a continuous riverfront trail, public access to the shoreline within new neighborhoods, interpretive nature and boating facilities,

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and pedestrian and bicycle bridges to better link the east and west sides of the River. The AWI Framework Plan should be consulted for more detail on these proposals.

Possibly Include AWI Framework Plan Map showing proposed waterfront park improvements.

### **POLICY PROS 1.2.1: PROTECTING WATERFRONT OPEN SPACE**

Recognize the importance of Washington's waterfronts for recreation, public access, ecological protection, and scenic beauty. Support and promote efforts to improve waterfront open spaces and create a variety of waterfront environments, from passive natural areas to urban plazas and shoreline promenades.

*Replaces 706.1(b), 1347.1, 1829/1(g), 1920.1(d)*

### **POLICY PROS 1.2.2: UPPER POTOMAC WATERFRONT**

Partner with the National Park Service and other federal agencies to conserve open space along the Potomac waterfront and to protect the wooded and scenic qualities of the Potomac Palisades and adjacent islands and shoreline areas.

*New*

### **POLICY PROS 1.2.3: LOWER POTOMAC WATERFRONT**

Support additional public access to the Potomac waterfront from the mouth of the Anacostia River southward. While general access is currently restricted due to existing uses (Bolling Air Force Base), long-term opportunities for shoreline open space and recreation should not be ruled out.

*New*

### **POLICY PROS 1.2.4: ANACOSTIA RIVERPARKS**

Develop a network of "RiverParks" along the Anacostia River, including:

- A major destination park at Poplar Point
- Restored natural areas at Kingman and Heritage Islands
- New parks around RFK stadium
- Continuous bicycle and pedestrian trails along the waterfront
- New neighborhood parks and athletic fields within redeveloping areas along the waterfront, including the Southwest waterfront, Near Southeast, and Hill East
- Enhancements to the existing waterfront parks

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Provide a variety of recreational experiences and waterfront “edge” conditions at these parks, ranging from habitat restoration and nature-based recreation to active recreation such as athletic fields and boating facilities.

*New, per AWI Framework Plan*

### **POLICY PROS 1.2.5: CONNECTING NEIGHBORHOODS TO THE RIVERS**

Develop open space linkages between the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers and the adjacent neighborhoods, using stream tributaries such as Watts Branch and Pope Branch as a framework for linear parks between the shoreline and nearby residential areas.

*New, per AWI Framework Plan*

### **POLICY PROS 1.2.6: WATERFRONT VISIBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY**

Improve access to the shoreline parks from across the city, and reduce barriers to waterfront access created by railroads, freeways, and non-water dependent industrial uses.

*Replaces 1715.1(r)*

### **POLICY PROS 1.2.7: WATER-ORIENTED RECREATION**

Provide for a variety of water-oriented activities, including fishing and boating, on the District’s rivers. Recognize both the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers as vital national aquatic resources that can accommodate kayaking, canoeing, sculling, fishing, and other forms of water-oriented recreation.

*New, per AWI Framework Plan*

### **POLICY PROS 1.2.8: WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT**

On waterfront development sites under District jurisdiction, require public access to the shoreline unless precluded by safety or security considerations. On such sites, encourage architecture and design that is visually integrated with the shoreline and that enhances the waterfront’s aesthetic qualities.

*Replaces 405.2(f), 1308.1(a)(7), 1317.1(d)(1), 1347.1, 1812.1(f)(2)(C)*

### **POLICY PROS 1.2.9: WATERFRONT PARK DESIGN**

Require the design and planning of waterfront parks to maximize the scenic and recreational value of the rivers. Activities such as parking lots and park maintenance facilities should be located away from the water’s edge, and environmentally sensitive resources should be protected.

*New*

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### ***ACTION 1.2-A: ANACOSTIA RIVER PARK IMPROVEMENTS***

*Work collaboratively with the federal government, the private sector, community and non-profit groups, and the Anacostia Waterfront Corporation to implement the open space improvement plans of the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative.*

*New*

### ***ACTION 1.2-B: SIGNAGE AND BRANDING***

*Develop and implement a consistent system of signage and markers for the Anacostia waterfront parks.*

*New, per AWI Framework Plan*

### ***ACTION 1.2-C: ANACOSTIA RIVER BOATING***

*Develop additional marine facilities, including rowing centers, boathouses, boat slips, and piers on the west bank of the Lower Anacostia River.*

*Replaces 1732.12*

## **PROS 1.3 Connecting the City Through Trails and Pathways**

Trails, pathways, and linear parks are an important part of the open space network. They link the District's open spaces to one another and provide access between neighborhoods and nature. In some cases, they provide stream buffers or visual edges within communities. Trails also provide an important recreational and transportation function, serving pedestrians, hikers, joggers, and bicyclists. Recent trail planning efforts have focused on improving bicycle mobility, improving waterfront access, and showcasing the city's cultural, historic, and scenic resources.

In 2005, the District adopted an updated Bicycle Master Plan, including recommendations for improving bike routes and completing bike trails and bridges across the city. Among the key recommendations are eliminating gaps in the trail network, improving access along the Anacostia River, and linking the District's trails to a larger regional network. The Bicycle Plan also recommends coordination with the National Park Service to improve off-road trails like those traversing the National Mall, Rock Creek Park, Watts Branch, and Oxon Run (see Table X). Additional details on the Bicycle Plan may be found in the Transportation Element of this Comprehensive Plan.

Other key trail-building initiatives include the Anacostia Riverwalk and Fort Circle Parks Trail (both referenced in the previous section), the Metropolitan Branch Trail between Union Station and Silver

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Spring, the Watts Branch Trail, the Georgetown Waterfront Trail, and the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail Plan (PHNST). The PHNST is of particular interest, as it is one of the country's 22 scenic national trails and includes multiple strands extending from the Chesapeake Bay to western Pennsylvania. Several of these strands pass through the District of Columbia.

### *TABLE X:*

#### *TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS RECOMMENDED BY THE DC BICYCLE MASTER PLAN*

##### *Trails to be Upgraded or Extended*

*National Mall shared use paths*  
*Mount Vernon Trail*  
*Rock Creek Trail*  
*Suitland Parkway Trail*  
*Watts Branch Trail*  
*Oxon Run Trail*  
*Fort Circle Trail (Fort Dupont to Watts Branch)*  
*Piney Branch trail spur*  
*M Street SE trail spur to the Anacostia River*  
*Dalecarlia Parkway shared use path*

##### *Gaps to be Eliminated through New Trail Construction*

*Historic Anacostia light rail line trail*  
*Capital Crescent to Rock Creek Trail connection*  
*South Capitol Street to Oxon Cove connection*  
*New York Av Corridor Trail (Mt. Vernon Sq to MD)*  
*Kennedy Center to Roosevelt Bridge*  
*Military Road crossing of Rock Creek Park*  
*Kenilworth Park to Arboretum*  
*Massachusetts Av Bridge*  
*Beach Drive in Upper Rock Creek Park*

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*Source: DC Bicycle Master Plan, 2005*

### **POLICY PROS 1.3.1: TRAIL NETWORK**

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

*New*

### **POLICY PROS 1.3.2: LINEAR PARK CONNECTIONS**

Work with the federal government to improve connections between the District's open spaces through land acquisition and park dedication, particularly where "gaps" in the city's open space network exist. Attention should be given to acquisitions that better connect the Fort Circle Parks, protect the District's streams, and improve shoreline access.

*New*

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### **POLICY PROS 1.3.3: PROTECTING NATURAL FEATURES**

Protect the scenic qualities of trails and the parklands they traverse. This includes designing trails to reduce erosion and tree removal, and protecting the integrity of the settings that make each trail unique.

*New*

### **POLICY PROS 1.3.4: TRAILS IN UNDERUTILIZED RIGHTS-OF-WAY**

Support the development of trails in underutilized rights of way, including surplus railroad corridors and undeveloped street rights of way.

*New*

*[insert photo of Capital Crescent Trail and caption: The Capital Crescent Trail, which connects the city's northwest suburbs to the Georgetown waterfront, was created in the 1990s using an abandoned railroad right of way.]*

### **POLICY PROS 1.3.5: TRAIL DEDICATION**

Require trail dedication as appropriate on development sites along the District's streams, waterfronts, and linear parks.

*New*

### ***ACTION PROS 1.3-A: BICYCLE MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION***

*Initiate focused trail planning, acquisition, and construction efforts to eliminate gaps in the bicycle trail network and to improve substandard trails, as itemized in the District's Bicycle Master Plan. Coordinate with the National Park Service for trails where both DDOT and NPS have responsibility.*

*New, 2005 Bicycle Master Plan*

### ***ACTION PROS 1.3-B: SIGNAGE***

*Provide more consistent and unified signage along the city's trails to improve their identity and accessibility.*

*New*

### ***ACTION PROS 1.3-C: WATER TRAILS***

*Develop designated "water trails" in the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers for travel and recreation by canoes, kayaks, and other paddlecraft.*

*New*

## **PROS2.0. PARK PLANNING AND LAND MANAGEMENT**

This section of the Element focuses on parks that are operated by the District of Columbia. Many of these policies also express the District’s perspectives on the federally-owned parks that serve city residents, however. While the federal government has jurisdiction over the District’s National Parks, the Comprehensive Plan acknowledges and supports the essential role that these lands play in meeting our recreational needs.

The District itself manages an inventory of 359 properties, comprising 917 acres. More than two-thirds of these properties are small open space triangles formed by the intersection of diagonal avenues and the city street grid. The remainder includes 69 recreation center grounds, 50 neighborhood parks, and four large natural areas.

For planning purposes, park activities are usually divided into two categories: active recreation and passive recreation. Active recreation is associated with sports or play activities and requires related facilities such as playgrounds, ballfields, tennis courts, and swimming pools. Passive recreation emphasizes the open space aspect of a park and includes activities like hiking and picnicking. In Washington, the presence of District of Columbia parks and National Parks provides a unique blend of active and passive recreational opportunities. Collaborative planning is important to avoid redundancy and deliver services most effectively.

### **A Brief History of the District’s Department of Parks and Recreation**

Until the mid-1900s, the District’s park and recreation services were administered by the federal government. By the time the District Department of Recreation was created in 1942, the US government had developed a network of recreation centers for indoor recreation and a series of parks, promenades, trails, and other recreational open spaces for residents and visitors.

In 1973, the Home Rule Act transferred ownership of most of the neighborhood parks and recreation centers to the District Department of Public Works (DPW). In 1988, the Department of Recreation became the Department of Recreation and Parks (DRP) and jurisdiction of many parks was transferred from DPW to DRP. In 2000, the Department underwent another name change—to the Department of Parks and Recreation—along with a corresponding change in its mission that emphasized the importance of land management.

## **PROS2.1 Developing a Park Classification System**

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

Until 2005, the District’s parks were only loosely classified as “large parks”, “neighborhood parks”, “recreation center grounds,” and “triangles.” These categories are not consistent with national standards, making it difficult to evaluate the adequacy of parks or to compare the District with peer cities. They are also not intuitive—the “large parks” are actually ecological areas (like Watts Branch and Kingman Island), some recreation centers have no “grounds” to speak of, and the “parks” category includes no acreage, service area, or facility standards. The classification system also does not recognize the role of National Park Service properties in meeting the city’s recreational needs.

The 2006 Parks Master Plan has recommended a new classification system to improve customer service and park management. Under this system, the four “Large Parks” (Oxon Run, Watts Branch, Pope Branch, and Kingman/Heritage Islands) will be recategorized into a broader category of conservation-oriented “natural resource areas.” Recreation center grounds and neighborhood parks will be reclassified as “community” or “neighborhood” parks based on their size and amenities. The 231 triangles will be classified as “mini parks” and are being further distinguished based on their size and function.

Table X summarizes the park classification system. Figure X shows the location of the parks by category. The mini-parks are not shown due to the map scale and small size of these parks.

### **POLICY PROS 2.1.1: PARK CLASSIFICATION**

Adopt and maintain a classification system to guide the future use of District parks. Table X provides the framework for this system. Follow general management prescriptions for each type of park, as defined by an official Parks Master Plan.

*New*

**Insert Figure XX: Location of Neighborhood, Community, and Regional Parks**

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**Table x: Park Classification System for Washington, DC**

| <b>Park Type</b>       | <b>Description</b>  | <b>Typical Uses</b>  | <b>Service Area</b>   |
|------------------------|---|--|---|
| Mini-Park              | Small pocket parks or triangles. Range from landscaped “islands” to places for socializing, playing chess, etc.   | Benches, seating areas, public art, landscaping  | ¼ mile radius   |
| Neighborhood           | Provide informal centrally located setting for neighborhood-based recreational amenities, possibly including recreation centers.  | Playgrounds, tot lots, basketball courts, open lawn areas for unstructured play, seating and picnic areas, community gardens, and interpretive or educational exhibits                             | ½-mile radius   |
| Community              | Larger parks with more structured recreational opportunities, including recreation center buildings with a range of DPR programs  | Active play-oriented outdoor facilities such as ball fields, athletic courts, playgrounds, indoor and outdoor swim facilities, natural amenities such as trails, natural areas, and picnic grounds | 1-2 mile radius, with connections to bike and pedestrian trail networks |
| Regional               | Large multi-use parks that draw users from beyond adjacent neighborhoods.   | Very large areas of open space, recreation centers, lighted athletic fields, group picnic areas, hiking, multiple activity areas   | Citywide  |
| Natural Resource Areas | Parks established to conserve open space and sensitive natural resources or heritage assets. If adjoined by open, level areas, then, recreational fields and play areas may be appropriate.                               | Low-impact passive activities such as hiking and environmental education.  | N/A—not demand-driven   |
| Sports Complexes       | Programmed athletic fields and multi-use indoor complexes, custom designed for specific programmed uses   | Track and field, natatorium, softball, soccer, tennis, basketball, volleyball, racquetball, football, boxing, martial arts.  | Citywide  |
| Special Use            | Parks dedicated to a single use such as a zoo or amphitheater. Accommodate highly organized activities and provide economic as well as social and physical benefits. May have highly specialized management requirements. | Golf courses, aquatic or spray parks, sculpture parks, dog parks, arboretums, historic homes, amphitheaters, skate parks, climbing centers.  | Citywide  |
| School Parks           | Public land on school property developed with playgrounds and open fields, designed for student activities but also available for community use.  | Running tracks, playgrounds, athletic fields, basketball courts  | ½ mile to 2 mile radius   |
| Trails and Bikeways    | Hard or soft paved paths providing linkages within or between parks, facilitating access and exploration.   | Paved or dirt trails, boardwalks, promenades   | ½ to ¼ mile to access point   |

**POLICY PROS 2.1.2: CONSIDERATION OF FEDERAL PARKLAND**

Recognize the role of federal parkland in augmenting the District parks, particularly in meeting the demand for regional parks and sports complexes. Because these properties are used by city residents, they should be considered when identifying underserved areas and assessing the need for local park improvements.

*Parks Master Plan*

**POLICY PROS 2.1.3: PARK DIVERSITY**

Provide a diverse range of recreational experiences in the District’s parks, including a balance between passive and active recreational uses, and a mix of local-serving and region-serving recreational uses.

*Replaces 1314.1(e)(1)*

***ACTION PROS 2.1-A: PARKS MASTER PLAN***

*Implement the Master Plan for the District of Columbia Parks System. Update the Plan at least once every ten years, or as needed to reflect changing conditions and needs.*

*New*

***ACTION PROS 2.1-B: MASTER PLANS FOR INDIVIDUAL PARKS***

*Prepare master plans for individual parks as funding allows, and implement capital improvements that are consistent with these plans.*

*New*

**PROS 2.2 Closing the Gaps**

At first glance, the District of Columbia appears to have a more than adequate supply of parkland. There are 12.9 acres of parks per 1,000 residents, compared to 9.0 acres per 1,000 in Baltimore; 7.2 acres per 1,000 in Philadelphia; and 7.0 acres per 1,000 in Boston. However, most of Washington’s parkland consists of passive Natural Resource Areas. Neighborhood and community parkland is much more limited and amounts to less than an acre per 1,000 residents in many parts of the city. By contrast, suburban communities typically set standards of 4 or 5 acres of active parkland per 1,000 residents.

As noted earlier, the distribution of parkland is also uneven. Figure XX indicates that much of the central and northeast neighborhoods of the city are “underserved” by parks. The analysis behind this figure, which was conducted as part of the city’s Parks Master Plan, divided the city into 39 neighborhood clusters and compared the population in each cluster against the total park area in each cluster. Most of

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the city's denser neighborhoods were found to be deficient, as were east of the River communities like Capitol View, Marshall Heights, and Washington Highlands.

But the map does not tell the whole story. Many of the parks in the neighborhoods that appear to be well-served lack basic amenities and facilities. Many are too small to meet the needs of the surrounding communities. Some are in areas where significant growth is taking place, straining the ability of the facilities to meet neighborhood needs.

Recreational needs are also a function of demographics and density. The need for parks may be more critical in high density and low-income communities due to:

- More limited means to afford private recreation
- Limited mobility due to low rates of auto ownership
- Larger numbers of children
- Larger numbers of apartment dwellers living in housing without useable open space
- Denser development patterns without the aesthetic amenities afforded by open space
- Larger concentrations of “at-risk” youth who may benefit from programmed recreational activities

These factors suggest that special attention be given to increasing useable open space in the city's densest neighborhoods, even where parks already exist.

**Insert Figure XX: Park acreage deficiencies by neighborhood cluster**

### **POLICY PROS 2.2.1: CLOSING THE GAPS**

Achieve a better distribution of parks in all neighborhoods of the city. This will require a priority on improving or expanding parks in: (a) more densely populated neighborhoods with limited open space; (b) areas that are more than ½ mile from a neighborhood or community park (or a federal park that serves an equivalent function); and (c) areas where substantial new housing growth is expected, based on the forecasts of the Comprehensive Plan.

*Replaces and expands 1719.1(e)*

### **POLICY PROS 2.2.2: IMPROVING ACCESS**

Improve access to the city's major park and open space areas through pedestrian safety and street crossing improvements, bike lanes and storage areas, and adjustments to bus routes.

*New*

**POLICY PROS 2.2.3: RESPONDING TO COMMUNITY CHANGE**

Update and improve existing parks in response to changing demographics, cultural norms, and community needs and preferences.

*New*

***ACTION PROS 2.2-A: BUS ROUTING***

*Consult with WMATA to locate more bus stops in neighborhood and community parks, particularly those with recreation centers. Currently only 28 percent of the city’s recreation centers have a bus stop; the District has set a target of increasing this percentage to 50 percent by 2014.*

*Parks Master Plan*

**PROS2.3 Protecting the Value of Parkland**

A park can be a symbol of a neighborhood’s vitality and character, or an emblem of its disorganization and lack of spirit. Too often, our parks have not been treated as the resource for revitalization and community empowerment that they should be. Some suffer from deferred maintenance, illegal dumping, and crime—others struggle to accommodate competing needs within limited space. A lack of consistent policies on park management has led to use conflicts within some parks and in some cases, land use conflicts between parks and the neighborhoods around them.

Washington’s parks should be viewed as a limited and precious resource, no less valuable than the neighborhoods they serve. This requires that a consistent set of principles be followed for park design, programming, and planning. The following policies provide guidelines for systematically managing the District’s parks to protect their long-term value. They are supplemented by more detailed park management guidelines in the Parks Master Plan.

**POLICY PROS 2.3.1: BALANCING COMPETING NEEDS**

Manage the District’s parklands to protect and enhance their open space character while also accommodating a range of recreational activities. Park activities and facilities should be designed in a way that makes the best possible use of each space while minimizing conflicts between different recreational uses.

*New*

**POLICY PROS 2.3.2: IDENTITY AND DIVERSITY**

Design parks to reinforce neighborhood identity and to complement the diverse natural and cultural resources of the neighborhoods they serve.

*New*

**POLICY PROS 2.3.3: PROTECTING NATURAL LANDSCAPES**

Design all parks and recreational facilities to be responsive to natural character and terrain. Sensitive natural areas such as creeks and steep slopes should be integrated into park design.

*Replaces 706.2(g)*

**POLICY PROS 2.3.4: PARKS AND ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES**

Design park improvements to help achieve environmental objectives such as water quality improvement, air quality improvement, and wildlife habitat restoration.

*AWI Framework*

**POLICY PROS 2.3.5: PROTECTING THE TRIANGLE PARKS**

Maintain the District’s open space triangles as neighborhood amenities supporting a range of activities. These activities should vary based on the setting of each triangle, and should range from planted “islands” to more active spaces for passive recreation.

*Parks Master Plan*

**POLICY PROS 2.3.6: CONVERSION OF PARKLAND**

Protect the basic function of parks as public open spaces and strongly discourage parkland conversion to other uses. In the event that there is no other viable alternative to conversion, require that an equivalent or greater area of parkland is acquired and improved in the immediate vicinity of the impacted site.

*New*

**POLICY PROS 2.3.7: PARK BUILDINGS**

Require any new structure on District-managed parkland to be sited to minimize impacts on existing recreational activities and facilities, avoid encroachment onto athletic fields, and to retain as much of the site as possible as useable open space. Public buildings that do not relate to recreational needs should not be located on city parkland.

*Replaces 1326.1(c); 1400.2(1), 1405.8(a), 1406.5(b)(4), 1409.7(a), 1801.1(h)*

**POLICY PROS 2.3.8: HISTORIC NATURAL AREAS**

Protect the visual integrity of large natural parks that have been designated as historic landmarks. Development adjacent to such parks must not impact park views, vistas, and historic landscapes. [this may belong in the Preservation Element...topic addressed there]

*Replaces 1403.7(a)(3), 1407.3(c)*

**POLICY PROS 2.3.9: L’ENFANT PLAN PARKS**

Maintain the integrity of the squares, circles, and triangles associated with the original L’Enfant Plan. Work collaboratively with the federal government to ensure that any improvements or alterations to these spaces complement and enhance their historic function. [this may belong in the Preservation Element]

*New*

**POLICY PROS 2.3.10: COMPATIBILITY WITH ADJACENT DEVELOPMENT**

Design and manage park activities and facilities in a way that is compatible with nearby residential and commercial uses.

*New*

***ACTION PROS 2.3-A: OPEN SPACE ZONE***

*Establish an Open Space Zone to cover District-managed parks, community gardens, and other lands where long-term open space preservation is desired. Develop limits on lot coverage and impervious surface coverage in this zone which recognize and protect the basic value of parkland as open space.*

*Replaces 1308.1(e)(2); 1409.7(d)*

***ACTION PROS 2.3-B: SITE PLAN REVIEW***

*Continue to require that appropriate District and federal agencies review plans for the redesign of individual parks or the development of park facilities to ensure that the plans advance the city’s goals for environmental protection, open space preservation, public safety, and accessibility.*

*New*

**PROS2.4 Meeting the Needs of a Growing City**

The addition of thousands of new jobs and households over the next 20 years will increase demand for programmed parks and open space. Existing parks will accommodate more users, particularly in neighborhoods where high-density infill development is planned. New parks will be needed to serve new and growing communities. Given the built out character of the city, finding land for new parks will be

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difficult and expensive. The District must seize opportunities for parkland dedication on its largest redevelopment sites and take steps now to ensure that parks are provided elsewhere as the city grows.

Presently, the District Department of Parks and Recreation operates approximately 3.5 acres of parkland for every 1,000 households in the city. If 55,000 households are added in the next 20 years, almost 200 acres of new parkland would be needed to sustain this ratio. The 100 acres of new parks planned at the Southwest Waterfront, the near Southeast, Poplar Point, Hill East, and elsewhere along the Anacostia River will meet some of this demand. Substantial areas for new parks also should also be designated in the reuse plans for St. Elizabeths Hospital, the Armed Forces Retirement Home, the McMillan Sand Filtration site, and Walter Reed Hospital.

Creating new parks in neighborhoods where intensive infill development is planned will be more challenging. There is competing pressure to use public land for other purposes, particularly revenue-generating uses like housing and office development. The city does not have a dedicated funding source for parkland acquisition (such as an impact fee) and capital improvement funds are typically used for new facilities rather than to buy vacant land. Acquisition may occur through a variety of means, such as donations and grants. Open space may also be set aside within new projects through development agreements and planned unit development amenity packages.

### **POLICY PROS 2.4.1: PARK ACQUISITION**

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

*New*

### **POLICY PROS 2.4.2: PARKS ON LARGE SITES**

Include new neighborhood and/or community parks on large sites that are redeveloped for housing, offices, and other uses that generate a demand for recreational services.

*New*

### **POLICY PROS 2.4.3: PARKS ON SURPLUS LAND**

Convert abandoned or tax delinquent land, surplus rail or road rights of way, and other land not in productive use into recreational use where feasible and appropriate, particularly in parts of the city that lack adequate access to parkland.

*Replaces 1404.6(a)*

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### **POLICY PROS 2.4.4: PARK AMENITIES ON NPS LAND**

Where consistent with the other policies in the Comprehensive Plan and where supported by nearby neighborhoods, encourage federal government projects that would provide new recreational amenities serving District residents on National Parkland.

*New*

### **POLICY PROS 2.4.5: PARKS IN EMPLOYMENT GROWTH AREAS**

Provide new parks and open spaces in areas of expected employment growth as well as areas of expected residential growth. Small pocket parks, plazas, and other open spaces should be created in the vicinity of the New York Avenue Metro Station, the Southeast Federal Center, the east end of Downtown, and the South Capitol Street Corridor to provide visual relief, aesthetic beauty, and space for outdoor seating and passive recreation.

*New*

### **POLICY PROS 2.4.6: ACQUISITION METHODS**

Acquire and improve parkland through easements, donations, land purchases, park set-asides on new development sites, and other measures. Recognize the impacts of new development on the need for additional park and recreational facilities, and determine ways that such impacts can be mitigated through dedication of parkland or in-lieu payments.

*New*

### ***ACTION PROS 2.4-A: PARKS IN SMALL AREA PLANS***

*Address park and recreational needs in all future Small Area Plans. Such plans should include provisions to meet these needs through park acquisition, improvement, and dedication requirements.*

*New*

### ***ACTION PROS 2.4-B: PARK IMPACT FEE***

*Study the feasibility of adopting a park impact fee that would require residential developers to help cover the cost of parkland acquisition and improvement. Such a fee would be based on either a standard amount per dwelling unit or square foot, with the proceeds used to acquire or improve nearby parkland.*

*New*

### **PROS3.0 RECREATIONAL FACILITIES**

While the previous section of this Element focused on land, this section focuses specifically on park facilities.

The District currently operates 69 recreation centers, four specialty recreational facilities, 74 playgrounds, 99 athletic fields, 138 tennis courts, 31 swimming pools, and more than 100 basketball courts. These facilities are used to provide recreational services to residents in all parts of the city. Department of Parks and Recreation activities range from aquatics, quilting, and environmental education to martial arts, personalized weight training, and even poetry slams, to name only a few. Many of the programs are targeted toward specific age groups, such as seniors and teens. Others are designed for persons with special needs or for families. In Winter 2005-06, some 350 different programs were offered.

Demand for recreational programs—and the facilities that accommodate them—is expected to grow in the future as population grows and leisure time increases. Demand will also be affected by cultural changes, new technology, sports and entertainment trends, and demographic shifts. The growth of the senior population, in particular, will influence future recreational needs in the city over the next 20 years. The text box below provides an indication of current recreational habits and trends in the city, based on a 2005 resident survey.

#### **THE 2005 PARKS SURVEY**

One of the outcomes of the city's 2006 Parks Master Plan was a resident survey that assessed planning issues and the demand for recreational facilities in the city. A total of 421 responses were tabulated, including representative samples from each of the city's eight wards. Some of the key findings were:

- 61 percent of the respondents had visited a DPR park in the last 12 months; 46 percent had visited a recreation center
- 37 percent of the respondents rated the condition of DPR parks as good or excellent; 46 percent rated them as fair or poor
- Half of the respondents (50%) indicated they use the city's National Parks for recreation
- 17 percent of the respondents spent more than 8 hours a week on recreation activities
- The most popular recreational activities were walking/jogging (43%), playground use (23%), swimming (24%), and picnicking (23%)
- Respondents were asked to list all the different ways they traveled to their local park. About 56 percent indicated they walked; however, an even larger number said they drove (68%)
- Only about 16 percent of the respondents indicated they had participated in a DPR program during the last 12 months. The reasons residents gave for not participating included "lack of information" (36%), lack of time (18%), and concerns about personal safety (16%).
- The highest priority expressed by respondents was the maintenance of existing parks, fields, and playgrounds. Maintenance of recreation centers was also a top priority. Lower priorities were assigned to the development of new play fields, new recreation centers, and small neighborhood parks.

**PROS3.1 Assessing Recreational Facilities**

Benchmarks provide a means of measuring the adequacy of the District’s recreational facilities based on “peer cities” and national standards. For example, the chart below indicates that the District has a higher number of recreation centers per 1,000 residents than Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, or Philadelphia. Similar analysis conducted during the Parks Master Plan found that the District ranked close to its “peer” cities in its number of swimming pools, was above average in tennis courts, and was well below average in athletic fields. These are citywide benchmarks, however. On a neighborhood level, some parts of the District are clearly better served by some facilities than others.

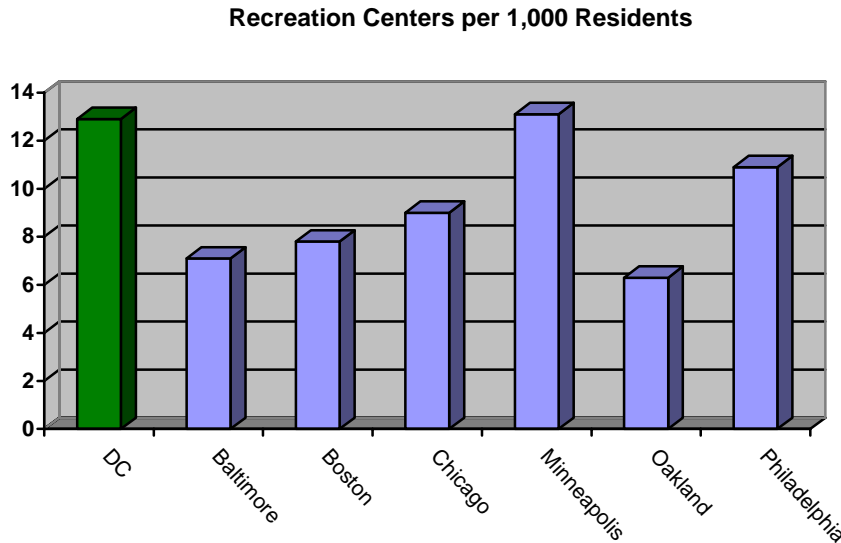


Figure XX illustrates the location of recreation centers in the city. The figure also shows a one-half mile radius—or about a ten-minute walk—around each center. Service gaps appear in several neighborhoods, including Fairlawn, Capitol View, Friendship Heights, Forest Hills, and Shepherd Park. Similar analyses for recreational facilities indicates a need for more athletic fields in the central part of the city, swimming pools in Upper Northwest, and tennis courts in the Mid-City and Capitol Hill areas. Again, other factors such as income and the number of children must be factored in when evaluating needs.

The policies below provide general direction on how existing facility gaps might be closed and how new facilities can be provided to meet future needs. Again, the Parks Master Plan provides more detail on these issues and should be consulted for additional guidance and specific programmatic recommendations.

**POLICY PROS 3.1.1: RECREATIONAL FACILITY DEVELOPMENT**

Provide a variety of recreational and athletic facilities, including playing fields, tennis courts, swimming pools, basketball courts, trails and paths, and open areas for other sports activities, in order to improve the physical and psychological health of District residents.

*New*

**POLICY PROS 3.1.2: USE OF BENCHMARKS AND STANDARDS**

Use benchmarks and service standards to help identify local needs and develop recreational facilities in an orderly, systematic way. Direct investment in new facilities to the areas with the greatest unmet needs and areas where additional demand is expected in the future.

*New*

**POLICY PROS 3.1.3: QUALITY AND COMPATIBLE DESIGN**

Require all park improvements to be of high design and construction quality, sensitive to the natural environment, and compatible with surrounding land uses—including other activities within the park and development on adjacent sites beyond the park edge.

*New*

**POLICY PROS 3.1.4: RESPONDING TO LOCAL PREFERENCES**

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

*New*

**POLICY PROS 3.1.5: ADAPTING TO CHANGING NEEDS**

Allow the development of facilities which respond to changing preferences and community needs in appropriate District parks, including fenced dog exercise areas (dog parks), skate parks, and water spray parks.

*New*

***ACTION PROS 3.1-A: CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS***

*Provide systematic and continuing funds for park improvements through the annual Capital Improvement Program. Use the Parks Master Plan as a guide for directing funds to the facilities and communities that are most in need.*

*Replaces 1219.1(e)(2), 1719.1(m)*

***ACTION PROS 3.1-B: NEEDS ASSESSMENTS AND DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS***

*Conduct periodic needs assessments, surveys, and demographic studies to better understand the current preferences and future needs of District residents with respect to parks and recreation.*

*New*

***ACTION PROS 3.1-C: INVOLVEMENT OF COMMUNITY GROUPS***

*Seek input from local Advisory Neighborhood Commissions, community organizations, and area residents as park and recreational facility improvements are planned and developed.*

*New*

*Please consult the Community Services and Facilities Element for policies on the co-location of recreational uses with other public facilities.*

**PROS3.2 Providing Quality Service to All Residents**

Maintaining a quality park system requires a high level of facility maintenance, modernization, and repair. An analysis prepared as part of the Parks Master Plan estimated that more than half of the District's recreation centers are in fair to poor condition and should be considered for replacement by 2014. This includes the 25 recreation centers in the city that are more than 50 years old.

On a per capita basis, the District spends less on maintenance than peer cities like Boston, Baltimore, Chicago, and Minneapolis. Since 2003, however, its annual expenditures on park capital improvements have been higher than these cities. New facilities like Kennedy, Emery, Sherwood, and Turkey Thicket are replacing aging buildings and providing attractive new community centers. With more capital construction planned in the coming years, the District will need to dedicate additional funds to cover the higher expenses of operating and maintaining these facilities.

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

Looking ahead, new funding sources such as public/private partnerships, grants, and concessions may be necessary. A commitment to future funding should recognize the many tangible and intangible benefits

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that Washington's parks provide to our neighborhoods. Parks can increase land values and be a catalyst for economic development. They also simply make the District a more attractive, more desirable place to live, work, and play.

### **POLICY PROS 3.2.1: MAINTENANCE AND RENOVATION**

Provide for the continuing maintenance, renovation, and upgrading of the District's parks and recreational facilities to prevent their deterioration and ensure that they continue to meet community needs.

*Replaces 1308.1(e)(1), 1521.1(b)(2)(1), 1612.1(d)(2)(C), 1618.1(a)(2)(B), 1719.1(q)*

### **POLICY PROS 3.2.2: PARK SAFETY AND SECURITY**

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

*New*

### **POLICY PROS 3.2.3: PROGRAM DIVERSITY**

Provide diverse recreational activities for persons of all ages and cultural backgrounds, distributed equitably in all parts of the city. Coordinate with other service providers, including DC Public Schools, to maximize the effectiveness of service delivery and minimize redundancy.

*Parks Master Plan*

### **POLICY PROS 3.2.4: YOUTH RECREATIONAL SERVICES**

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

*Replaces 1518.1(a)(2)(C), 1818.1(d)(2)(C), 1219.1(e)*

### **POLICY PROS 3.2.5: SPECIAL NEEDS**

Increase efforts to meet the needs of special population groups, particularly persons with disabilities. Provide "barrier free" access by modifying existing facilities to accommodate the needs of the disabled.

*Replaces 1314.1(e)(2)*

### **POLICY PROS 3.2.6: NEW FUNDING SOURCES**

Seek out and pursue new forms of federal, non-profit, and private financial support to acquire, develop, and operate the District's park and recreational facilities.

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*New*

### **POLICY PROS 3.2.7: PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS**

Consider joint public-private financing to develop or rehabilitate recreational facilities that could not be provided by District government alone due to budgetary or fiscal constraints.

*Parks Master Plan*

### **POLICY PROS 3.2.8: PARK STEWARDSHIP**

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

*New*

### **POLICY PROS 3.2.9: USER FEES**

Establish user fees and charges for recreational programs as needed to partially recover the cost of providing recreation services to the public. Provide fee schedules that make allowances for and respond to the needs of residents with limited incomes.

*New*

### **POLICY PROS 3.2.10: FISCAL IMPACT OF PARK IMPROVEMENTS**

Evaluate proposed park facilities to determine their ability to generate revenue and help recover operational and maintenance costs. When developing new facilities, ensure that projected operation and maintenance costs can be covered before requesting funding approval.

*Parks Master Plan*

### ***ACTION PROS 3.2-A: FACILITY ASSESSMENTS***

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

*Replaces 1818.1(d), 1818.1(d)(2)(A), 1518.1(a), 1518.1(a)(2)(A), Parks Master Plan*

### ***ACTION PROS 3.2-B: MAINTENANCE GUIDELINES***

*Create official maintenance guidelines to assist in measuring the effectiveness of current maintenance and service levels.*

*Parks Master Plan*

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### ***ACTION PROS 3.2-C: PARK PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM***

*Encourage community groups, businesses, and others to participate in the District’s “Park Partnership” (formerly Adopt A Park/ Adopt a Playground) program and publicize the program through signs, advertisements, websites, and other media.*

*Replaces 1612.1(d)(2)(F)*

### ***ACTION PROS 3.2-D: DATA TRACKING***

*Implement computer tracking of data on facility use, costs, and revenues to make more informed decisions and to guide policies on fees, fee waivers, scheduling, and other aspects of facility programming.*

*Parks Master Plan*

### ***ACTION PROS 3.2-E: MARKETING AND BRANDING***

*Implement a unified marketing strategy to raise awareness of the variety of the District’s recreational program offerings and to more firmly establish an identity for the District of Columbia Parks. This strategy should use advertisements, web-based information and promotions, radio and television, branding, and other means to raise the profile of District parks.*

*Parks Master Plan*

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

## **PROS4.0 MAXIMIZING OUR ASSETS**

The government of the District of Columbia has neither the land nor the dollars to completely meet the recreational needs of its residents. These resources do exist within the city, but they fall under the jurisdiction of other public agencies, or the private or non-profit sectors. Through collaboration and partnerships, community resources can be leveraged to dramatically improve access to open space and recreational services. Agreements with the federal government, the public schools, local colleges and universities, and the District's major employers are an important part of the city's efforts to broaden recreational choices for all residents.

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

### **PROS4.1 Maximizing Access Through Partnerships**

The need for joint planning to coordinate federal and District open space planning has been mentioned throughout this Element. In 2005, the District and the National Capital Planning Commission launched the *Capital Space* Initiative to increase access to green space for District residents and visitors. Its particular focus is on improving access to parks in neighborhoods where they are in short supply, such as Central and Northeast DC. Similar joint planning and design exercises should be pursued with the District's Public Schools, and with other local governments in the region.

Non-profit service providers also provide recreational facilities and programs for District residents. Groups like the United Planning Organization, Friendship House Association, the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, and the YMCA/ YWCA fill gaps in local recreational services as they pursue their missions to foster the spiritual, mental, and physical development of individuals, families, and communities. Local colleges and universities also provide athletic programs and community services, many for free or at

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greatly reduced costs. These entities should not be viewed as competitors to the District's own Parks department, but rather as a supplement that increases recreational access for a greater number of District residents.

### **POLICY PROS-4.1.1: NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PARTNERSHIPS**

Promote expanded partnerships with the National Park Service and other District agencies to broaden the range of recreational opportunities available to DC residents.

*New*

### **POLICY PROS-4.1.2: JOINT PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES**

Develop joint planning and management strategies for all parks where the District of Columbia and National Park Service have overlapping responsibilities. Use coordinated and consistent standards for lighting, fencing, walkways, maintenance, and security in these areas.

*Replaces 507.2(c), 1720.4, 1314.1(e)(3)*

### **POLICY PROS-4.1.3: GREENER, MORE ACCESSIBLE SCHOOLYARDS**

Partner with the DC Public Schools to improve the appearance and functionality of schoolyards and outdoor recreational facilities such as playgrounds and athletic fields. Strive to make such areas more "parklike" in character, so that they become neighborhood amenities as well as areas for school activities, especially in communities without access to District-operated parks.

*New*

*See the Public Educational Facilities Element for policies on joint use agreements for school property access between the District and the DC Public Schools*

### **POLICY PROS-4.1.4: NON-PROFIT RECREATIONAL FACILITIES**

Support the development of non-profit recreational facilities, such as Boys and Girls Clubs, to meet the recreational needs of District residents and complement the facilities provided by the District.

*Replaces 924.2(b)*

### **POLICY PROS-4.1.5: REGIONAL OPEN SPACE PLANNING**

Support federal, interstate and multi-jurisdictional efforts to preserve open space and create interconnected greenbelts within and around the Washington region.

*New*

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### ***ACTION PROS 4.1-A: CAPITAL SPACE***

*Complete the Capital Space Plan, which will provide a coordinated strategy for open space and parkland management between the District and federal governments.* [Note: this will probably be deleted and replaced with a

*Text Box, since this Plan will be finished within a year after Comp Plan adoption]*

*New*

### ***ACTION PROS 4.1-B: EXPANDING PARTNERSHIPS***

*Develop a comprehensive list of current partnerships, including detailed information on the scope and responsibilities of partnership agreements, and prepare a marketing plan aimed at solidifying new partnerships with universities, museums, professional sports teams, churches, and philanthropic groups.*

*Parks Master Plan*

### ***ACTION PROS 4.1-C: SPONSORSHIPS AND FOUNDATIONS***

*Explore opportunities for financial sponsorship of park and recreation facilities and events by corporate and non-profit partners. Similarly, encourage foundations and “friends” organizations that provide new sources of non-tax revenue that would not otherwise be available to fund recreational projects and programs.*

*Parks Master Plan*

## **PROS4.2 Recognizing the Value of Functional Open Space**

Functional open space comprises hundreds of acres of public and private land in the District. Some of these areas are valued for their large trees, vistas, and natural beauty; others may be important historic landscapes or cultural resources. Many are widely regarded as public amenities, with features like hiking trails and large lawns for picnics and other forms of recreation. Such spaces are particularly important in neighborhoods like Brookland, where conventional parks are in short supply. There and elsewhere in the District, the grounds of seminaries, hospitals, and cemeteries are informally serving some of the functions usually associated with a neighborhood park. The importance of these assets to each neighborhood in the city should be recognized. Even where public access is not possible, the role of these spaces in shaping the visual quality of our neighborhoods should be acknowledged.

### **POLICY PROS-4.2.1: INSTITUTIONAL OPEN SPACE**

Encourage local institutions, such as private and parochial schools, colleges and universities, seminaries, hospitals, and churches, to allow the cooperative use of their open space lands for the benefit of District residents.

*New*

**POLICY PROS-4.2.2: UTILITY OPEN SPACE**

Recognize the value of undeveloped land associated with utilities, reservoirs, and other infrastructure facilities in providing visual buffers for adjacent neighborhoods.

*New*

**POLICY PROS-4.2.3: PARKWAYS AND MEDIANS**

Enhance the visual and open space qualities of Washington’s streets and highways through landscaping of medians, traffic islands, and rights of way.

*New*

**POLICY PROS-4.2.4: FREEWAY JOINT USE**

Where compatible with adjacent land uses, support the use of land under or adjacent to freeways or other limited access roadways for passive open space, public art, or other uses which enhance the usefulness and visual appearance of such land.

*New*

**POLICY PROS 4.2.5: “LID” PARKS**

Consider the development of parks in the air rights over below-grade freeways, such as the I-395 freeway through Downtown DC, and the Southeast-Southwest Freeway near Capitol Hill. Examples of such parks elsewhere in the country include the Brooklyn Heights promenade and the I-90 Lid Park in downtown Seattle.

*New*

**ACTION PROS 2.4-A: ZONING ASSESSMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL LAND**

*Conduct a study of institutional land in the city to determine the appropriateness of existing zoning designations, given the extent of open space on each site. Recommend zoning changes as appropriate to avoid overbuilding on such sites if the event they are converted to development in the future.*

*New*

**PROS 4.3 Open Space and the Cityscape**

Improving open space is part of the District’s broader vision of “building green and healthy communities.” The following policies seek to increase the amount of open space in the city and protect

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open space where it exists today. Although these spaces are often small, they collectively make an important contribution to the livability of the city.

The District's Zoning Regulations currently require "residential recreation space" when multi-family housing is developed in commercial zones. Depending on the zoning district, up to 20 percent of a building's floor area may be required to be set aside as residential recreation space, including rooftops, courtyards, and indoor recreational facilities. Additional zoning provisions seek to retain open space by setting lot coverage limits, and front and side yard requirements. The maximum area that may be covered by structures varies from 40 percent to 75 percent in residential zones and from 60 to 100 percent in commercial zones. "Creation or preservation of open space" is also defined as a public benefit or public amenity for the purpose of granting additional density in a planned unit development.

### **POLICY PROS-4.3.1: OPEN SPACE IN THE DOWNTOWN LANDSCAPE**

Develop and sustain high quality downtown pocket parks, courtyards, arcades, plazas, rooftop gardens, and other open spaces that provide space for recreation, scenic beauty, and outdoor activities for workers, visitors, and residents.

*Replaces 924.1, 924.2(a)*

### **POLICY PROS-4.3.2: PLAZAS IN COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS**

Encourage the development of outdoor plazas around Metro station entrances, in neighborhood business districts, and in other areas with high volumes of pedestrian activity. Use the planned unit development process to promote such spaces for public benefit and to encourage public art, sculpture, seating areas, and other amenities within such spaces.

*New*

### **POLICY PROS-4.3.3: COMMON OPEN SPACE IN NEW DEVELOPMENT**

Provide incentives for new buildings to include "green roofs", rain gardens, landscaped open areas, and other common open space areas that provide visual relief and aesthetic balance. Amenities for passive recreation such as picnic tables and benches should be encouraged on private open space.

*New*

### **POLICY PROS-4.3.4: PROTECTION OF OPEN SPACE IN MULTI-FAMILY DEVELOPMENT**

Recognize the implicit value of the lawns, courtyards, gardens, and other open areas that surround many of the District's older high- and medium-density residential buildings. Discourage the practice of

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building on these areas if the historic proportions and character of the original buildings would be compromised.

*Ward 3 Plan*

### **POLICY PROS-4.3.5: RESIDENTIAL YARDS**

Recognize the value of residential yards as a component of the District's open space system and discourage excessive coverage of such areas by buildings and impervious surfaces.

*New*

### ***ACTION PROS 4.3-A: RESIDENTIAL RECREATION SPACE AND LOT COVERAGE REQUIREMENTS***

*Complete an evaluation of DC Zoning Code requirements for "residential recreation space" and "lot coverage." Explore the feasibility of requiring residential recreation space in high-density residential zones as well as commercial zones, and establishing specific conditions for lowering or waiving the requirements under certain conditions. Consider a sliding scale for lot coverage requirements which considers parcel size as well as zoning district.*

*New*