

Formula 2040 Master Plan: Functional Plan for Parks, Recreation and Open Space

RECOMMENDED GOALS, CONCEPTS, AND GUIDELINES, AND
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROGRAM



The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

Introduction

Section 27-3502 of the Zoning Ordinance requires the Planning Board to prepare a project description, recommended goals, concepts, guidelines, a public participation program, and project schedule at the time of initiation of a plan.

The purpose of this document is to brief the Planning Board and District Council on the general goals, concepts, guidelines, and the public participation process. The Department of Parks and Recreation (“the Department”) is careful to emphasize the importance of circling back to fully evaluate and measure overall performance. The function of the Department is unchanged, and therefore, our collective vision and core values aimed towards a more connected, economically viable, and healthy future remain intact. The project description and schedule are a reference guide moving the Department closer to achieving the goals of the original Master Plan. The public participation process is designed to engage with stakeholders and builds on the momentum of the original document.

Purpose & Background

The Department seeks to update its visioning and strategic policy document titled *Formula 2040: Functional Master Plan for Parks, Recreation and Open Space* (“the Formula 2040 Plan”). This policy document was originally adopted by the County Council in 2013. Prior to this approval, the *Parks and Recreation: 2010 and Beyond – a needs assessment (started in 2008) including a rigorous review of performance standards, resulting in strategic action to achieve specific goals and objectives. This needs assessment is foundational to the Formula 2040 Plan, which describes the vision for how the Department will function over the next 25 years. The Formula (i.e., Parks + Recreation = Experience)* recognizes the intricacy between park facilities and recreational programming needs. It ensures that this relationship enhances the quality of life, promotes equity and provides an exemplary experience for residents. As an added benefit, our collective stewardship of natural areas can create experiences that connect people to the land and each other.

The Formula 2040 Plan gets updated every five years and therefore the first update was published in 2019. The purpose of this project is to be the second update to *Formula 2040* and will provide a summary of key actions completed or underway to implement the policies in the original *Formula 2040* plan. This project expands on the information captured in the 2019 update by strategically meeting service needs, evaluating effective programs, leveraging funding opportunities to increase the budget where feasible, and becoming increasingly more sustainable.

A more detailed schedule is provided in another section of this report; however, internal coordination of stakeholder interviews starts October 2024. Additional meetings with key stakeholders and gathering information on current conditions establish the baseline framework for determining the best course of action for external community engagement efforts.

A consultant team will conduct certain tasks broken down into two phases with various subtasks and deliverables. The consulting team has begun work on this project and the following tasks could happen simultaneously, unless otherwise specified. Reference the figures below to better understand the timing of each individual task and possible overlap.

PHASE 1 – Pre-Planning (Completed January 2025)

- Task 1 - Administrative Coordination: the consultant helps to coordinate the overall project schedule, pre-planning, and kickoff meetings. Develops communication protocols and internal meetings / interviews with staff. Attends in-person meetings to discuss the goals, concepts, guidelines, deliverables, and outreach strategies with stakeholders. Become familiar with relevant plans and policies, prior to finalizing the Assessment Report. **Approximately 4-months.**
- Task 2 – Existing Conditions & Trends: Develops a baseline of information regarding the existing conditions which may include key issues, opportunities, and long-range goals. Staff will provide necessary documentation to assist with these efforts, but the consultant is responsible for analyzing this data and conducting additional research to produce the deliverables. **Approximately 3-months.**
- Task 3 – Assessment Report (first deliverable): A report of findings that identifies the County’s short- and long-term needs and desires based on the existing conditions and trends. It expands and updates the steps / actions from the previous progress report (2019). **Approximately 3-months.**

PHASE II - Plan Initiation

- Task 4 – Internal Engagement: Coordinates and executes an internal stakeholder (including the executive team) engagement plan. Provides a stakeholder’s social network map or diagram (second deliverable) that demonstrates a deep understanding of public relations between internal and external coordination. The engagement plan includes an understanding of staff capacity to meet defined objectives, proposed revisions, and performance metrics to meet the Formula 2040 goals. **Approximately 2-months**
- Task 5 – Public Outreach & Engagement: Coordinates a community engagement plan (including municipal leaders, local organizations, etc.) to conduct targeted activities / events. With the support of Public Affairs and Community Engagement (PACE) Division to finalize the social network diagram (mentioned above) that emphasizes the importance of developing a plan that addresses racial equity and social justice issues. **Approximately 4-months**
- Task 6 – Master Plan Update & Final Report: Prepares the initial outline and draft of the Master Plan document, which includes an executive summary, data analysis, implementation plan, and task item deliverables (e.g., assessment report, social network diagram, etc.). **Approximately 8-months**

Project Description

Since the completion of the second progress report in 2024, this project will summarize key actions completed or underway to implement policy recommendations. The level of service (LOS) objective is critical when determining the need for adequate public facilities (APF). As a result of the entitlements process, the Department will reevaluate their current standards and methods for matching the provision of parkland, indoor recreational facilities, and outdoor amenities to the needs of residents. Refining strategies and analyzing alternative outcomes ultimately benefit the quality of park programs, the development of new park facilities, maintenance concerns, cost recovery, park usage, and participation.

Goals, Concepts, and Guidelines (GCG)

The following Goals, Concepts, and Guidelines for Formula 2040 are components in the framework that initiate the process of delivering an initial Staff Draft document to the Planning Board in the Spring 2027.

Goals

The project goal for Formula 2040 Plan is to assess and/or update the Functional Master Plan based on new information discovered through engagement. An updated plan advances the Countywide goals related to connectivity, economic development, health and wellness.

Connectivity Goal: This goal is about connecting residents to quality parks, recreation facilities and programs, and schools. Providing access to parkland reinforces the need to connect people to nature and each other.

Health & Wellness: This goal promotes a wellness ethic, such that our facilities and programs have a wellness component that supports the physical and mental health of patrons. The Department is also committed to adopting best practices associated with environmental health and sustainability. The other dimensions of health and wellness (including spiritual, emotional, intellectual, occupational, and social) are not explicitly tracked. However, access to nature inherently improves mental health and cognitive functions. Health and wellness programs also provide the opportunity to connect residents and strengthen social networks.

Economic Development: This goal is about continuing to make Prince George's County an economically vibrant and sustainable place to live. Investments in park facilities are used to stimulate private investment.

Concepts

The Department strives to provide comprehensive park and recreation programs and facilities services that meet the needs of an ever evolving, multigenerational, and culturally diverse community. By preserving, enhancing, and protecting our natural environment and open spaces, we improve the quality of life and strengthen our commitment to becoming better environmental stewards. The Department's mission is based on the following eight core values.

1. Leadership and Innovation - achieving excellence
2. Sustainability – protecting natural resources
3. Preservation of Open Space – protecting green space
4. Quality – maintaining a high standard of service
5. Equity - meeting a variety of needs and interests
6. Diversity – responding to cultural needs and inspiring learning opportunities
7. Healthy Communities – encouraging active participation and prioritizing wellness
8. Accessibility & Safety – focusing on usability

Guidelines

Our planning process to update the Master Plan is viewed from an equity lens that accounts for the following considerations and identifies where the original policy could incorporate current standards and best practices. The Department will follow these important guidelines:

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

1. Meaningful Connections and Culturally Diverse Networks: creating an equitable engagement strategy that is interactive, accessible, and educational. Building a social network that can be sustained over time and is consistent with the eight core values mentioned above.
2. Inclusive Practices: Meeting participants where they are with their understanding of the planning process. Briefing stakeholders on the purpose of this update. Expanding the conversations, while simultaneously providing background context for existing goals, objectives, and strategies of Formula 2040. Proactively eliminating barriers to entry. Intentionally responding to communication challenges. Encouraging active participation throughout the planning process, while providing information on changes to the approved schedule.
3. Data-Drive and Responsive: Being transparent, objective and fact-based with our interpretation of data analysis and relevant trends. Recommending actions based on a data-driven approach (e.g., collecting feedback from stakeholders), relevant trends, and defensible theories. Refining strategies and actions to spark discussions that more closely advance the core values, even in controversial conversations. The project website is one of many communication channels that makes information available to those that are unable to participate in-person. Other innovative tools (e.g., Survey Monkey) may be used to increase capacity and extend into the community and foster creative responses.

Plan Development

4. Feasibility: Reevaluating initial priorities, strategies, and possible outcomes whenever determining the feasibility of achieving long-term vision. We will measure and track opportunities to partner and performance metrics that get the County closer to achieving its goals and allow stakeholders to weigh trade-offs.

5. Consistent with County priorities and partnerships: The vision for parks, recreation, and open space aligns with other Countywide priorities such that connectivity, economic development, health, and wellness are measured over time. Performance metrics and action steps will happen in conjunction with the development of business plans and programs that target cost recovery.
6. Carrying Forward What Works: The process will not “start from scratch.” This plan will build upon the wealth of knowledge presented in previous feasibility studies, reports, and action plans (see Appendix). Since many residents and stakeholders participated in various community engagement and/or input exercises, this plan will update information and re-establish relationships within the community to solicit additional feedback.

Relevant and valid recommendations will be carried forward, while others will be updated or replaced. The primary focus will be on updating strategies based on current best practices, input, and anticipating possible needs.

Schedule

February 2025	INITIATION of GCG and PPP with the Planning Board.
March 2025	INITIATION of GCG and PPP with District Council.
March 2025	Launch Project Website, Announcements, and Initial Posts on Media Platforms - example: the 2024 Assessment / Progress Report and the project timeline.
April 2025	Community Kickoff Meeting & Engagement Plan - introduce the project team and establish rapport with external stakeholders by discussing our Engagement Plan.
April 2025 to November 2026 <i>(roughly 24-months, including an August break)</i>	Implementation of LISTENING: Community Outreach & Engagement – by virtual of the items listed in the PPP. The project team will convert the data /feedback received into a briefing summary (e.g., presentation) and begin composing the Staff Draft with justified recommendations.
December to March 2027 <i>(roughly 4-months)</i>	Implementation of SHARING & REFINEMENTS: The project team will share their findings / recommendations with key stakeholders to refine the Staff Draft.
March 2027	PERMISSIONS to PRINT the final Staff Draft
July 2027	First JOINT PUBLIC HEARING & CLOSE Record After a period of review <i>(legally required)</i> , Staff will work with decision-makers to schedule work sessions and drill down on the recommendations section by section.

October 2027	Planning Board WORK SESSIONS
November to December 2027	TRANSMIT and ADOPTION by PLANNING BOARD
January to April 2028	District Council WORK SESSIONS & DECISION
February to April 2028	Second JOINT PUBLIC HEARING (<i>if necessary</i>), WORK SESSIONS and/or final APPROVAL
April 2028	APPROVAL & PUBLISH Final Master Plan Update.

Request for Extension

Given the scale, significance, and complexity of a Master Plan Update (countywide), Staff is requesting a 6-month extension to ensure adequate time to engage with the public, review with key stakeholders (internally and externally), and prepare a thorough comprehensive plan.

Public Participation Program (PPP)

In completing this Master Plan Update, it is critically important that we stay connected and engaged with the community. Treating the public as partners (i.e., stakeholders) throughout this process means that we will provide background context that helps to ground each conversation, meets them wherever they are with their understanding of this process, and encourages them to share their diverse perspectives. We acknowledge that by establishing trusted channels of communication, we are also building a strong social network that reinforces an equitable relationship.

Section 27-3502(c)(2) of the Zoning Ordinance requires a public participation program (PPP) that utilizes various strategies to facilitate healthy dialogue. Our goal is to build a strong social network that taps into local expertise, extends our reach into uncharted territories, while also reignites a continued conversation. This PPP cultivates a deep understanding of more recent and complex issues resulting from the implementation of the vision and forecasts possible outcomes that minimize unintended consequences.

The Park Planning and Environmental Stewardship (PPES) Division, within the Department of Parks and Recreation, leads this Master Plan update with the support of a consultant team (LSG and BerryDunn). Henceforth, the project team is defined as the PPES staff and the consultant’s team. With the continued support of the project team, internal staff, and community stakeholders, we are focused on coordinating the following events, data tools, and meetings. These items are ongoing and may occur simultaneously through the planning process, as needed.

- A. **Key Stakeholder Interviews & Focus Groups:** The project team has already engaged with internal staff to conduct 67 internal interviews. These conversations were the basis for drafting the 5-year Progress Report, which is also a CAPRA requirement for reaccreditation. The project team will use their notes from these conversations to develop the framework for the Engagement Plan. The Progress Report is a useful tool to reengage

external stakeholders. Entering the second phase of this project, a series of interviews will be conducted with key stakeholders and partnered entities to gather additional information. A general list of some of the key stakeholders is provided below. However, this general list is just a sample and may be updated based on the guidance /feedback received during these interviews.

1. Program Coordinators
2. Facility Managers
3. Municipal Civic Leaders
4. Advocacy Groups (e.g., youth, seniors, and persons with disabilities)
5. Walker Mill Baptist Church,
6. Anacostia Water Society,
7. Park Police,
8. Planning Department in Prince George's County,
9. Maryland Building Industry Association (MBIA), and
10. Department of Economic Development,
11. Prince George's County Police,
12. University of Maryland Innovation Center,
13. Eco City Farms,
14. Soil Conservation Service, and
15. Prince George's Food Equity Council.

- B. **Data-Driven Approach with Surveys & Polling** – The project team has already used an online survey and live polling to gain insight from Parks staff. These data points indicate areas of improvement and maybe used to justify significant changes to the original Master Plan document. Moving forward, surveys and polling tools will be used to evaluate performance, LOS, and quality. They also allow the public to provide individual feedback to the project team.
- C. **Optimizing Media Channels** – The project team uses the following media channels to disseminate project information, solicit input from stakeholders, and to stay connected.
- a. **Project Website (virtual):** The website will go live in March 2025 and will include bilingual and accessible information pertaining to the project description, historical information wrapped into a timeline, methods and resources on community engagement, key documents presented at public meetings, and the project team contact information.
 - b. **Email:** Individuals will have the opportunity to sign up to an email list directly from the project website where they can receive project updates, public meeting information, and an E-newsletter.
 - c. **E-Newsletter:** An E-Newsletter will be published quarterly describing progress made, including information on milestones and upcoming engagement / volunteer opportunities.
 - d. **Social media:** The project team works with Public Affairs and Community Engagement (PACE) to keep the website up to date with key information, including community meetings, public hearings, and project milestones. The Department's social media channels also provide a method for engaging with youthful audiences.

- e. **Innovative and Virtual Applications:** The project team may also utilize ESRI Online Apps, street signs with QR Code, video recordings, online community platforms (e.g., Nextdoor), virtual town hall meetings, and listservs to build support, maintain presence, and encourage active participation throughout the process.
- D. **Partnered Community Meetings:** The project team will collaborate (more intimately and at a smaller scale) with the focus being on neighborhood specific community meetings that currently being held with smaller groups, workshops, and open-house style engagement.
 - a. **Municipal Meetings:** Staff will work with neighborhood civic leaders to engage and meet their constituents wherever they are with their understanding of this Master Plan Update. The project team may interview specific types of stakeholders (e.g., business owners, facilities and program managers, etc.) to gain detailed insight on the LOS and issues pertaining to the eight core values.
- E. **Partnered Park Events:** the project team will collaborate across divisions to “Pop-Up” and table at annual park events with give-a-ways. In attending these types of events, the primary emphasis is on community outreach - meaning having short conversations, introducing our team, sharing information about the plan, and signing attendees up to receive updates on this project.
- F. **Public Hearings:** The project team will continue to present updates and key milestones at public hearings. This type of community engagement is not only required throughout the public process but also holds the team accountable when discussing next steps and soliciting support or feedback on their process. The public will be notified well in advance (via the listed events and meetings mentioned above) and is encouraged to contact the project team should they need assistance with how to testify at these public hearings.

The project team understands the importance of having meaningful experiences/ conversations that demonstrate active collaboration. Public Participation is essential to the success of this planning process. Therefore, all stakeholders must have opportunities to provide input through multiple outlets to help identify key issues and assets, while contributing to the reevaluation of the original goals and objectives.

Appendix 1: Planning Context

Original Formula 2040 Master Plan

The original Formula 2040 Master plan was published in 2013. It is the Department's visioning and strategic policy document. The goal of this project is to provide an update to the original plan. The 2010 and Beyond Feasibility Studies are foundational to the needs assessment and implementation process.

[2040-Functional-Master-Plan.pdf \(pgparks.com\)](#)

County General Plan 2035

In 2014, the County approved Plan Prince George's 2035 Approved General Plan (Plan 2035), which set a new vision for Prince George's County that prioritizes "vibrant, mixed-use, transit and pedestrian-oriented communities with improved connectivity between the residential, recreational, commercial land uses". Plan 2035 provides a development policy framework for the county's long-term growth that includes policies and strategies to capitalize on local and regional strengths and assets.

http://mncppcapps.org/planning/publications/BookDetail.cfm?item_id=279&Category_id=1

Land Preservation Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP)

The LPPRP is a comprehensive planning document that the county uses to collect and evaluate parks, recreation, and land preservation data. These plans are required to be submitted to the State of Maryland Department of Natural Resources every five years. The most recent LPPRP was submitted to the state in 2022.

[2022 LPPRP Prince George's \(maryland.gov\)](#)

Comprehensive Recreation Plan

The Comprehensive Recreation Programming Plan (CRPP) is designed to advance the continuing effort to expand recreation and leisure activities across both Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. The most recent version of this plan was published in 2024 and guides the Department through FY25-FY30.

[FY25-FY30-Comprehensive-Recreation-Programming-Plan_Signatures.pdf \(pgparks.com\)](#)

Sustainability Plan

FY23-FY27 Sustainability Action Plan is the Department's ten principled guide on efforts and resources towards sustainability and conservation ("One Planet"). This guide focuses on three outcomes: providing mental health and physical well-being that connects residents to nature, increases diversity, equity and inclusion, and promotes connections to nature as essential elements for the betterment of both mental and physical health outcomes (i.e., quality of life).

[FY23-27-Sustainability-Plan-Prince-Georges-County.pdf \(pgparks.com\)](#)

Strategic Trails Plan

This action plan was published in 2018 for the purpose of providing specific project priorities and actions in the areas of trail planning, design, policy, management, maintenance and programming. This plan sets a specific course for achieving the trail-related goals established by the Formula 2040 Functional Master Plan for Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces.

[Part-1-Plan-Summary.pdf \(pgparks.com\)](#)