

# 4. Moving Forward

## Vision Statement

*Watkins Regional Park will continue to nurture and promote its signature outdoor experiences to attract people from far and wide, further making the park a key contributor to Prince George's County's culture and economy. The park's exceptional natural resources will continue to be protected from development, while being utilized to provide greater opportunities for environmental discovery and understanding. The park's historic agricultural and cultural landscapes will become a new centerpiece for education and innovation, and better connections will make these experiences more accessible. New leisure activities and refreshed existing activities will fully embrace an accessible and multi-dimensional leisure environment. Integrating play, recreation, and exploration will foster community ties and learning. Watkins Regional Park will remain a jewel in the Department of Parks and Recreation system and a great outdoor place within Prince George's County.*

## Shaping the Plan

Watkins Regional Park is a complex and significant natural, cultural, and recreational resource for Prince George's County and the larger metropolitan area. It attracts more than one million visitors to its many programs and site activities. As the surrounding area continues to grow, demand will also increase at the park.

To shape the plan's proposed program and site features, the comprehensive data collection and site conditions assessment were synthesized, and recommendations for the park's future were generated. A park as geographically large as Watkins Regional Park, with its extensive natural and cultural resources and active and passive recreation opportunities, attracts visitors from throughout the county and the larger surrounding communities. Generating a plan that directs future growth and reinvestment in existing resources is key to park's continued stature as a jewel of Prince George's County's park system.

One of the first steps in formulating the recommendations for the master park development plan was to generate guiding principles that recall the guiding documents, specifically the *Formula 2040: Functional Master Plan for Parks, Recreation, and Open Space*. Formula 2040 recommends strategies and actions on the three pillars, which sets up a framework that assures the Department of Parks and Recreation will meet the county's future needs. The three pillars: Connectivity, Health and Wellness, and Economic Development work to balance the equity of park facilities and demonstrate their value to the county. How do these county-wide goals tie to those for Watkins Regional Park? A simple word association exercise in the following table demonstrates the connections. From these word associations, a vision statement was formed, and guiding principles generated, to shape the content within the recommended master park development plan.

**Table 4-1. Vision Word Chart**

<b>2040 Goals: Connectivity</b>	<b>2040 Goals: Health and Wellness</b>	<b>2040 Goals: Economic Development</b>
Stewardship	Stewardship	Stewardship
		Middle School
		Education
		Sustainability
		African-American
Heritage Farmlands	Heritage Farmlands	Heritage Farmlands
Active Recreation	Active Recreation	Active Recreation
	STEM	STEM
	STEAM	STEAM
	Environmental Science	Environmental Science
	Agriculture Science	Agriculture Science
Water Play	Water Play	Water Play
Cultural Landscape	Cultural Landscape	Cultural Landscape
History	History	History
Natural Resources	Natural Resources	Natural Resources
	Wellness Zone Park	
Events and Programs	Events and Programs	
Socializing Places	Socializing Places	
Healthy Food and Drink	Healthy Food and Drink	
Family Fun	Family Fun	

## Guiding Principles

Drawn from the extensive public engagement process that incorporated public meetings, stakeholder group workshops, interviews, and focus groups, coupled with extensive physical site assessment and level of service analysis, the following guiding principles were generated to inform the development of the plan:

- CREATE A SENSE OF PLACE**

A compelling mix of destinations will enhance the comfort, ambiance, and choice of activities at Watkins Regional Park. The plan recommends several new features and experiences that will entice and engage new and existing visitors who have long enjoyed the park and its many offerings. Many of these improvements build on the pillars of the guiding principles and bolster visits to resources that were already in place, but were under performing or not used to their potential.

- EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING**

Nature and landscapes will be more central to the visitor experience. Some of the park's most significant assets – namely a native woodland of exceptional quality and several acres of heritage farming landscape – have been largely untapped because of the lack of park programming that would encourage visitors to experience these places. Several recommended changes will allow visitors, especially kids, to connect with nature and agriculture, including co-locating the Watkins Nature Center and the Old Maryland Farm in the southern half of the park. This move will establish a

synergistic relationship between the two activities, launching kids into creative exploration of Prince George's County's farmlands and woodlands heritage. The new area will be known as the Watkins Discovery Center.

- **INFRASTRUCTURE EXPANSION**

It is essential to maintain and expand the capacity of the park to accommodate larger numbers of visitors as the park continues to grow as a regional destination and attracts new diverse audiences. New programs and improvements to the core of the developed portion of the park will achieve better connectivity, safety, and function. With the activation of the southern portion of the park, the plan prioritizes stronger internal and external neighborhood connections to provide safer access to and within the park. Improved infrastructure will knit the northern and southern portions of the park together, creating opportunities to rediscover Watkins Regional Park.

- **FAMILY FUN**

Watkins Regional Park is already one of the most popular parks in the county, however its current offerings cater mostly to young families with children and/or older adults. The plan recognizes the current and future demographic trends, and recommends an expansion of activities and amenities that involve the whole range of family dynamics by engaging middle and high school aged kids, and young adults without children. The park will be rebranded as a place for activities, spaces, and features that support family togetherness and fun for a whole day in the park—rain or shine.

- **PERSONAL HEALTH AND FITNESS**

The plan recommends the expansion of the existing trail network for running, walking, and leisure. Fitness and health programming will be available at hours that respond to the schedule constraints of the busy professionals who desire to use the park regularly.

- **HABITAT AND WILDLIFE**

Special and unique environmental and historic features in the park will be protected, including the Western Branch, the intact mature forest, and historic farmlands. The preservation of the landscape, stewardship and sustainability, and incorporation of cultural elements that express Prince Georges County's character and identity are one of the plans priorities. Recommendations are to educate, celebrate, capitalize, and support the rediscovery of the park's natural resources through special preservation areas in combination with enhanced active recreation opportunities.



Photo Credit: ESA

Visitors at Watkins Nature Center



## Themes of Key Recommendations

### Creating a Sense of Place Through Signature Features

To create sense of place, it is essential to think of the park as more than a collection of facilities. This relies on developing a program that starts with identifying potential users and then developing a rich set of destinations that will engage those users throughout the day, during the week, and on weekends. The park will not only continue to cater to young families with children and adults, but will also attract middle school and high school aged kids and young adults. Clustering activities and amenities to create these attractive destinations are an essential part of the plan.

As the park becomes a more popular destination, crowding and parking will need to be addressed. The plan recommends several solutions to mitigate this issue.

### Rediscovering Watkins Regional Park—Signature Features

The Watkins Regional Park Master Park Development Plan identifies several new features and experiences that will be sizable improvements to both new and existing visitors. Many of these improvements build upon guiding principles and bolster resources that were already in place, but were under performing or not used to their potential. The following improvements support a rediscovery of resources unique to Watkins Regional Park.

- An expansive view of how nature and landscapes can be more central to the visitor experience. Some of the park’s most significant assets—namely a native woodland of exceptional quality and several acres of heritage farming landscape—have been untapped by visitors because there was no park programming that empowered them to enjoy these places. Several dramatic moves in the plan will change this including:
  - A new Watkins Discovery Center (WDC)/Old Maryland Farm (OMF) complex that will run creative programs in the adjacent woodlands and heritage fields in the southern portion of the park will promote a closer connection to nature. Co-locating the two destinations will allow for shared facilities, including classrooms and event spaces. WDC will have room to expand programming for middle school students and adults. OMF will be able to expand its traditional programs with farm animals and add programming in the adjacent heritage farmlands and barns.



Beaver dam in southern portion of the park

Photo Credit: ESA

- A new nature play zone will connect children to nature, launching kids into creative exploration, building on the new playground's nexus with the heritage farmlands, woodlands, WDC, and OMF. Unstructured play in natural areas encourages increased creativity and imagination. This deep immersion into a world of their own creation enables children to imagine alternative worlds and to develop problem-solving capacity, both of which are essential life skills. Many recent studies show that unstructured outdoor play improves school performance, reduces stress and aggression, and promotes happier children. From this emerging trend, there is also a new breed of playgrounds with a focus on complex, integrated environments. These playgrounds may include:
  - Natural elements, including landscape materials, rocks, logs, woods, sand and water tables, and hills for rolling or tumbling.
  - Play and climbing equipment that looks and feels natural—not employing bright colored plastics that are successfully in place elsewhere in the park—but an alternatively styled playground with realistic boulders to climb, oversized acorns, rope courses, etc. Many of these concepts also address concerns about obesity and encourage physical activity challenges through climbing, jumping, or balancing.
  - Imaginative play—by providing “loose parts” and private hiding places for kids to engage in fantasy play. Loose parts are bits and pieces they can manipulate and create their own games with, like sand, sticks, leaves, balls, even tools to put things together. Hiding places could be in hedges, woods—some natural and some orchestrated, like a hedge maze or a tree house.
  - Educational environments, with outdoor classrooms and elements where children learn about friction, hydraulics, water wheels, and so on.
- Unique venues for events, parties, weddings, concerts, and retreats. This includes old barns and a catered terrace facing the views of the historic farmlands.



Photo Credit: MIG

Example of an active playground



- Opportunities for food and drink, a much-needed amenity that will permit families to stay longer and offer new audiences a reason to come to the park.
- Adventure-oriented sports and play that serve older children (tweens through high school) who have not been frequent users of the park. These include a skate park, BMX bike track, sledding hill, and ropes course.
- A much-enhanced children's hub comprising the *Wizard of Oz* playground, carousel, and train. The parking lot and roadway that divides these destinations will be relocated and replaced by a large green so that parents and their children no longer need to weave through cars to get from one side to the other. The plan also extends the train tour to the northwest.
- Several new upgrades will be made to sports and recreation facilities, including a new tennis bubble, new multi-purpose fields, and a tournament-grade softball complex and concession stand.
- A more robust paved and natural trail network, with strong connections to adjacent neighborhoods, incorporation of farm lanes in the south, and realignment of problem sections of existing trails.



Class activity in the stream at Watkins Regional Park

Photo Credit: MIG



Rope playground feature

## ENHANCED OUTDOOR RECREATION EXPERIENCES

The master park development plan recommendations are meant to celebrate and capitalize on the site's natural resources through special preservation areas in combination with enhanced active recreation opportunities including:

- An expanded and improved trail system with clear wayfinding and signage, accessible by foot or bike rental.
- Activities such as an adventure ropes course, mountain bike skills course, or a teen club room, should be considered for addition to the park as attractions for tweens and young adults.
- Curated camping events that combine some education, good food, and socializing have been very popular among young people around the country, and this can be a program offering of the WDC, and does not require that the existing campground remain open to support such activities.

## EXPANDED SPORTS AND LEISURE ACTIVITIES

There are many events that have the potential to draw young adults, including concerts and festivals, as well as yoga and fitness.

A wider variety of sports, including basketball, softball, soccer, football, and bike course will raise the park's profile among all ages, from tweens to seniors.

## ENHANCED FOOD AND EVENT OFFERINGS

Food and drink will be provided at different locations and at different price points. Currently, food trucks have been assembled in an area near the Pepco property on a gravel pad with easy access from the Chesapeake Children's Play Area and the Northern Athletic Complex.

Permanent food and beverage offerings are strongly desired by park users. Their viability, however, may be dependent upon a public subsidy. The vending machines located at the train station replaced a former concession stand that was not financially viable.

Quick foods like sandwiches and ice cream should be available at a central location within the Chesapeake Children's Park, catering to families on a budget. This should be accompanied by an outdoor plaza with movable seating, shade, and restrooms nearby. A joint WDC/OMF complex could incorporate a catering kitchen with an attractive indoor/outdoor dining terrace that looks out over

Photo Credit: MIG



Outdoor dining terrace feature

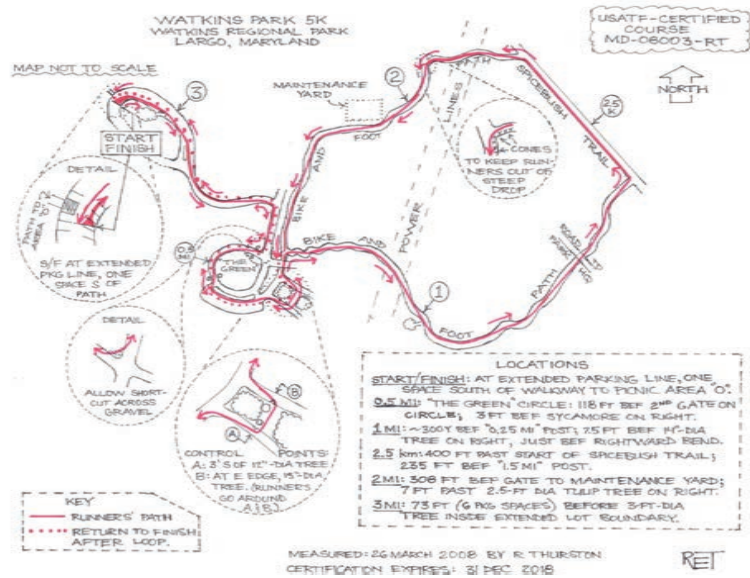


one of Watkins' signature views, such as one of the agricultural fields or the barns. An outdoor dining terrace paired with a catering facility may make it a more viable business and destination for special events and retreats.

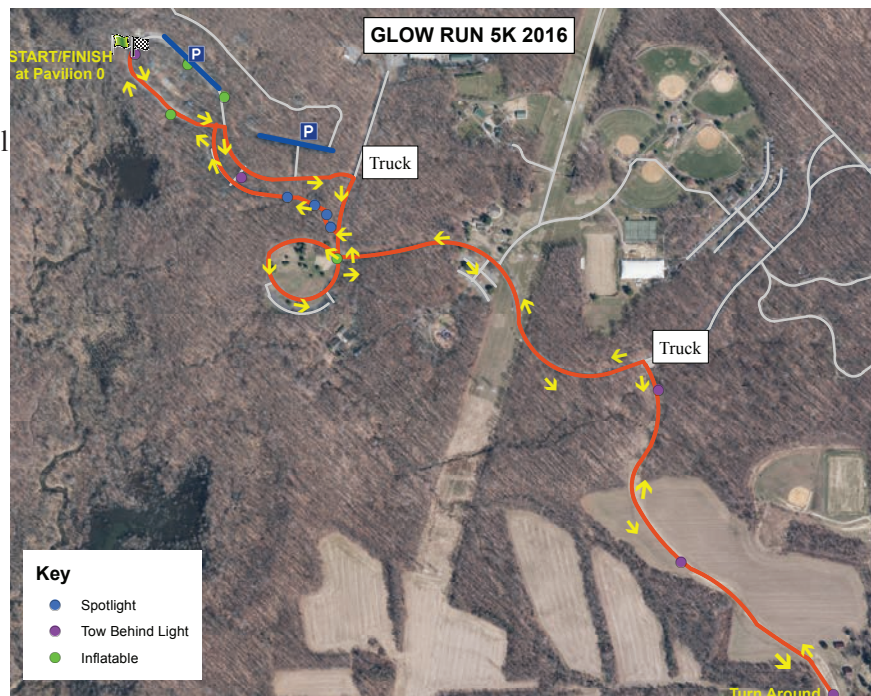
The plan also expands accommodations for casual picnicking at tables and shelters for smaller groups without a reservation. A common visitor complaint is that every shelter must be reserved in advance and that they cater exclusively to large groups, leaving out couples and smaller groups who did not plan ahead. The diagram below identifies areas that are capable of accommodating a range of events.

With the expansion of the OMF and related agricultural activities in the southern portion, a market garden could be tied into future programming. From community gardens, to community orchards, to larger scaled plantings that are harvested and sold at a farmer's market located at Watkins Regional Park, many opportunities exist to expand the provision of food and beverages within the park, while tying their source to the park's enhanced programming and activities. Similarly, establishing a partnership with Prince George's Community College and its culinary program, through the availability of a new on-site kitchen and dining facility at Watkins Regional Park, could serve both as an educational tool and a service for park visitors.

The park currently hosts a variety of runs and walks, with a 5K Glow Run traversing the entire park and 5K and 10K (double loop) routes through the northern portion of the park. The expansion of activities to the southern portion of the park creates additional programming opportunities making use of these established routes or others.



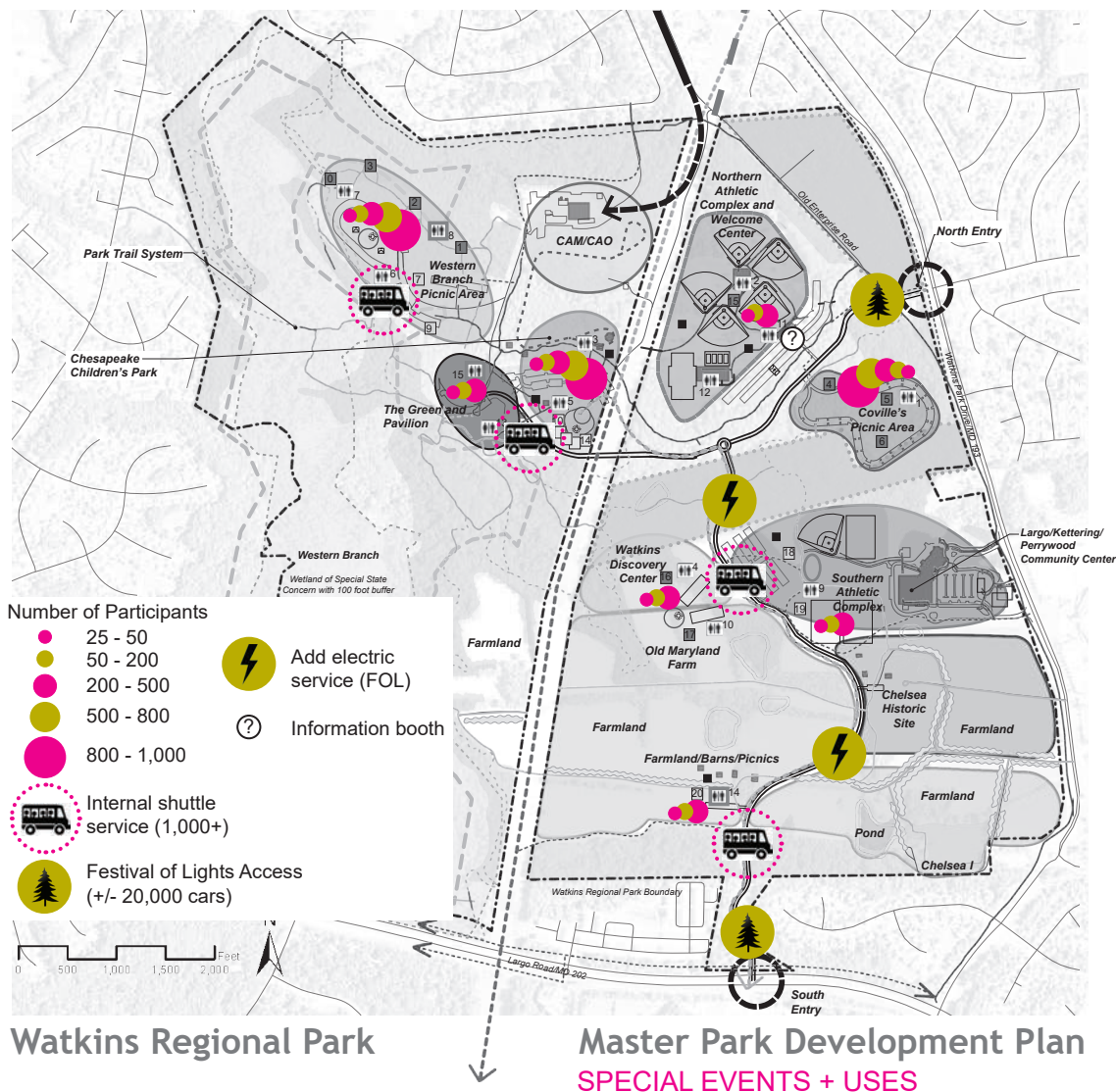
5 and 10K routes at Watkins Regional Park



Glow Run route at Watkins Regional Park

High quality events are of great interest to park users. The master park development plan creates several new settings for events of different scales. The historic fields in the southern part will have parking and restrooms for large crowds in two locations: adjacent to the new WDC and at the barns west of the entrance road. For medium-sized crowds, there is the option of The Green or a new Outdoor Pavilion at the site of the old nature center. Events can also happen at the new Coville's Picnic Area (in the location of the existing campground). This site can easily be gated and controlled if there happen to be events like loud concerts that potentially could disturb visitors in other parts of the park.

The diagram below illustrates a way the park can host existing and expanded events. The plan proposes extending the Festival of Lights throughout the entire park while incorporating two access points (the tree symbol). The diagram indicates where additional electrical service is needed to support event expansion (the lightening flash symbol). The various sized colored dots indicate the number of people that could be accommodated in each area of the park, based on infrastructure, restroom capacity, and available parking. These areas are linked with four stops from an internal shuttle: Western Branch Picnic Area; Chesapeake Children's Park, WDC/OMF; and Farmland.



Special events accommodation overlay on WRP Master Park Development Plan



## Desired Visitor Experience

The plan's recommendations strive to improve and amplify the overall visitor experience of Watkins Regional Park. One of the most significant changes is to reduce crowding at the park's treasured facilities while re-purposing (rediscovering!) underutilized areas of the park, such as the transformation of the campground into a new group picnic area and activating the southern portion of the park by embracing its agricultural and environmental legacy.

### OVERLOOKS

Overlooks will invite the public to enjoy some of the park's best vistas. For example, the WDC will look out over the farmlands and should provide comfortable places where people can sit and enjoy the view. A new picnic area will be located at the historic barns with meadow views, restrooms, a trail head, and information about the historic farmstead.

### RESTROOMS AND DRINKING FOUNTAINS

Water and restrooms need to be provided in more locations, especially for people who are exploring the park on its trails, and for the many kids who will be dispersed more widely throughout the park.

### REDISCOVER HISTORIC RESOURCES

The historic barns are important elements within the farm landscape. They also contribute to the park's sense of place and should become the centerpiece for special events like concerts, rustic weddings, and art openings. Lighting effects or other temporary artistic installations will also help highlight what is distinctive about Watkins Regional Park.



Barn near Chelsea Historic Site



Barn could become an event space

Photo Credit: MIG



## CIRCULATION

A key plan component is the clarification of the visitor arrival sequence, particularly at the northern entrance to the park. The plan creates a greater variety of destinations distributed over a greater area of parkland. This helps solve the problem of parking and traffic that is currently concentrated in one place—at the heart of where children and parents are trying to enjoy the park.



Shuttle van in use at the Bronx Botanical Garden

The plan offers a greater variety of options for people to move between destinations, encouraging more walking and biking. Some of these options include:

- An expanded trail network, with bike rentals, to connect destinations and provide a viable alternative to driving
- Trail loops that are well-signed for distance walker/runners
- Nature trails marked with interpretive signage
- Use of farm lanes as bike trails with information stops about farm heritage
- A small shuttle between the northern and southern portions of the park
- New connections to adjacent neighborhoods and the Largo/Kettering/Perrywood Community Center through paved trails
- A boardwalk and pedestrian bridge across the Western Branch to connect the park with its western neighbors

## ORIENTATION AND WAYFINDING

Navigation, wayfinding, and signage is an effective way to create a sense of place for the park and to help visitors explore and discover its various points of interest. Wayfinding uses both prominent navigational signs and subtle design elements that provide directional cues about the surrounding environment.



Existing welcome sign at southern entrance to the park

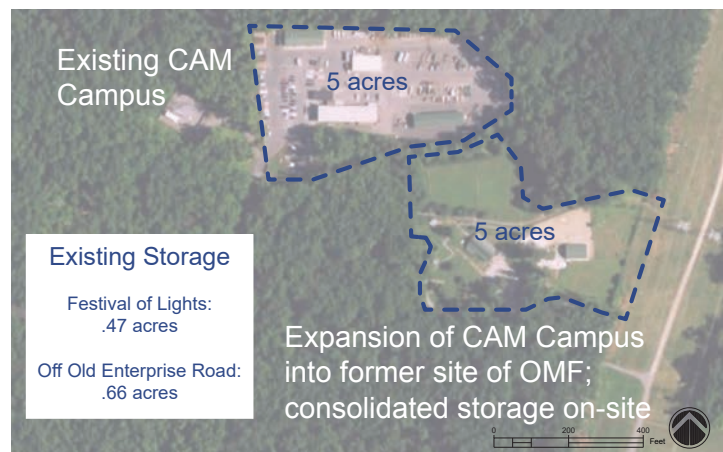
Watkins Regional Park has recently installed an attractive series of wayfinding signs, ranging from entrance to site specific signs, primarily in the northern portion of the park. Expanding this system to the southern portion of the park, building on the existing sign vocabulary, makes the best use of existing resources and investments. The recently installed signage achieves the

intent of a good wayfinding system—it is designed for a variety of different users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers. It creates an identifiable brand, a sense of place, and a welcoming environment for all people to enjoy.

## WORKING PARK FUNCTIONS

Separating the siting and access for Central Area maintenance (CAM) and administration (CAO) from park visitors will assist in reducing the current congestion experienced in the northern core of the park.

- Establish an alternative route for maintenance and park vehicle use only, connecting the CAM to the northern edge of the park via Old Enterprise Road and the Pepco easement.
- Expand the CAM into the former site of the OMF in the northern section of the park, consolidating the Festival of Lights storage and the mulch storage within the new expanded footprint. Close and reclaim for park use the two sites currently used for storage.
- Relocate the CAO elsewhere in the park or off-site and re-purpose their current building near the softball fields as a park Welcome Center and Ranger Station.



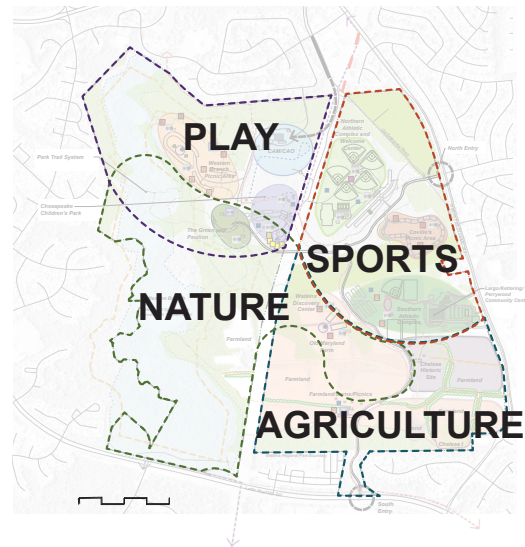
CAM expansion potential

## Park Programming and Recommendations

### Quadrants and Activity Nodes

Largely based on existing park features and conditions, four primary quadrants organize the park geographically in the master park development plan for Watkins Regional Park: **Play, Sports, Agriculture, and Nature**. Nine activity areas were also identified within the four quadrants:

- **Play**
  - Chesapeake Children's Park
  - The Green and Pavilion
  - Western Branch Picnic Area
- **Sports**
  - Northern Athletic Complex and Park
  - Welcome Center
  - Coville's Picnic Area
  - Southern Athletic Complex
- **Agriculture**
  - Old Maryland Farm (OMF)
  - Chelsea Historic Site
- **Nature**
  - Watkins Discovery Center (WDC) formerly known as Watkins Nature Center (WNC)



Four quadrants as applied to Watkins Regional Park

A full program was generated for Watkins Regional Park's future—looking out over a 15 to 20 year time period. The program was created from studying each activity area and using the findings from an existing conditions assessment, level of service analysis, and revenue capture potential. The appropriate type, scope, and number of park amenities and recreational experiences to be provided were also influenced by the extensive public outreach and internal park staff member review process.

Recommendations for the Watkins Regional Park Master Park Development Plan are both global and specific. The program celebrates Prince George's agricultural history with the expansion of family activities and outdoor education opportunities in the southern portion of the park. Most importantly, the plan knits the northern and southern portions of the park together, making stronger neighborhood connections, providing for safer access to the park, and creating opportunities to rediscover Watkins Regional Park. Overarching and all encompassing plan recommendations are noted, and followed by specific discussions of activity nodes within each of the four quadrants.



## Implementing the Plan

A full program was generated for Watkins Regional Park's future—looking out over a 15 to 20 year time period. The program was created using the findings from the existing conditions assessment, the level of service analysis, and revenue capture potential. The appropriate type, scope, and number of park amenities and recreational experiences to be provided were also influenced by the extensive public outreach and an internal park staff review process.

The program is organized into three implementation phases that corresponds to the Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission's (M-NCPPC) Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The CIP is a six-year program that encompasses planned capital expenditures. The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) will use the master plan and the phasing strategy to guide and prioritize recommendations that will require substantial capital funding.

### Phase 1: Improving the Core

Phase 1 addresses the congestion currently found in the northern section of the park and recommends the addition of infrastructure and facility upgrades and improvements, including new parking areas, redesigned circulation, and improved water service. It proposes a conceptual layout for the southern portion of the park, incorporating appropriate features within a rich natural and cultural landscape. The plan also addresses physical concerns—how big a space is required to accommodate the use and its supporting infrastructure such as parking—referred to as footprint. For the plan to be successful, decisions related to footprint locations and the relationship between adjoining uses need to consider programming and operational issues. A draft plan was circulated to Watkins Regional Park staff for review in conjunction with current events provided at the park and desired future uses.

### Phase 2: The Big Move

Phase 2 includes the biggest transformation of Watkins Regional Park - the relocation of the Old Maryland Farm (OMF) and the Watkins Nature Center (WNC) to the southern portion of the park, and renaming WNC the Watkins Discovery Center (WDC). Both are beloved park features and both need room for expanded programming and updated facilities. Rather than reconfiguring each at its current site, due to topography, opportunities for increased programming and much discussion with public and staff, moving both resources to larger sites is the most appropriate way to move forward.

The southern portion of the park will become a showcase of agrarian uses, retelling the history and complex stories of Prince George's County agrarian culture. Development of agricultural related programming will bring this history alive while providing contemplative spaces for residents to recreate, walk, and bike.

Both venues will be relocated to an area of the park west of Chelsea Historic Manor, immediately south of the high quality forest lands and north of the actively farmed lands. The two sites are to be developed and staffed independently, with their physical proximity providing the opportunity to operate synergistically, sharing some resources and features, as appropriate. Potential programming for tweens, teens, and adults includes agricultural and environmental science, sustainable farming, and experiential learning, giving new purpose to the agricultural lands and expanding the audience.

The historic barns in the park have not all been renovated or stabilized. A renovated barn or collection of out buildings could support more casual events. Consideration should be given to undertaking a feasibility study to examine if there is a place within the county's current rental event facilities market for a more

informal, low-key facility that would not adversely compete with facilities like Newton White Mansion and the Camelot banquet facility.

Both the WDC and the OMF will require support facilities. School groups arriving in buses will require supporting infrastructure for safe bus drops and storage, restrooms, picnic facilities, and play areas. The facilities currently used for such purposes are in the northern portion of the park which is too far away to serve this new location.

Event programming may include festivals featuring the antique farm equipment and live demonstrations of their use, harvest festivals, market gardens and farmer's market days, and symposiums on the history of agriculture practices in Prince George's County. In addition, the new combined facility will offer unique venues that capture the charm of the agrarian setting, including a terrace, facing the views of the historic farmlands, and a catering kitchen suitable for events and rentals.

### **Phase 3: Knitting it All Together**

Phase 3 completes the plan by improving pedestrian and vehicular infrastructure. With the development of amenities in the southern portion of the park, improved access and circulation throughout the park is needed. The trail network is extended to link the new southern facilities to the north, and to neighborhoods bordering the western edge of the park. The vehicular drive that splits the Wizard of Oz Playground and the Summer Operations areas is rerouted south around the playground to promote pedestrian friendly

## Play Quadrant

The concept of “Play” and Watkins Regional Park are integrally related. This area of the park is the most well known and visited, home to the park’s core and the location of activities built in the park beginning in the 1970s. This area of the park is also the most congested, with pedestrian and vehicle conflicts, parking challenges, and aging facilities. Three activity nodes fall into the **PLAY** quadrant.

- Chesapeake Children’s Park
- The Green and Pavilion
- Western Branch Picnic Area

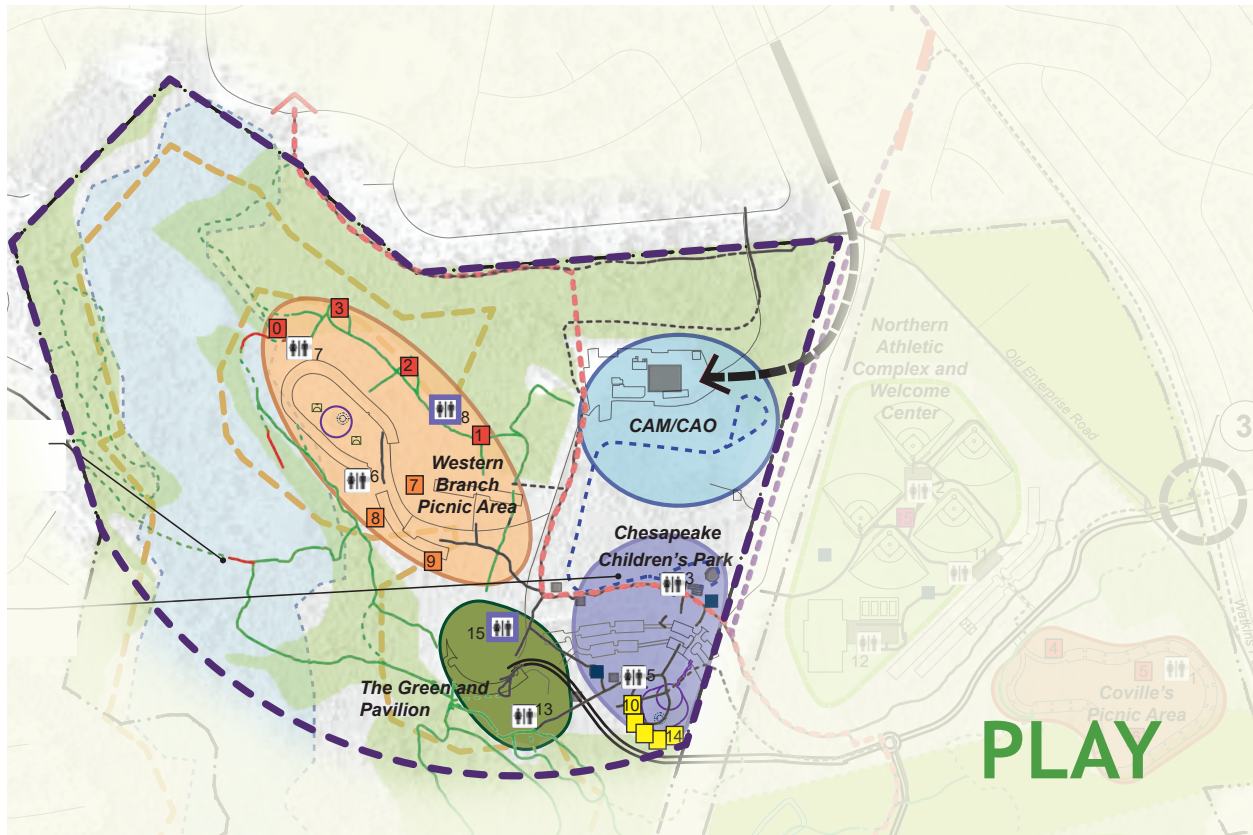


Diagram emphasizing the final recommendations for the PLAY quadrant

Although this area receives the bulk of park visitors, there remains an opportunity to expand programming to reach more age groups, including middle schoolers, young adults, and adults. Due to the recommendation to relocate Watkins Nature Center and Old Maryland Farm to the southern portion of the site, land is available to expand the remaining activities and provide supporting infrastructure such as parking.

During the public engagement process support was voiced for the addition of adult fitness equipment to the playgrounds, its presence encouraging adults to move and exercise (play) while their children run and climb on the equipment. The planned pavilion, replacing the Watkins Nature Center, can serve as an additional upscale performance space or a rental, affording the opportunity to expand programming and small to mid-sized events on The Green.

The concept of ‘Play’ also incorporates expanded event programming and classes. The following chart summarizes current park activities (highlighted in blue) and proposed activities (highlighted in green) found in the ‘Play’ quadrant of the park. Age targets for each activity are noted, demonstrating, as stressed in the 2040 plan, the expanded outreach to a wide variety of users and audiences.

<b>Table 4-2. Who Served - Play: Existing and Proposed Activities</b>						
<b>PLAY</b>	<b>Young kids</b>	<b>Middle school</b>	<b>High school</b>	<b>Young adults</b>	<b>Adults</b>	<b>Seniors</b>
<b>Chesapeake Children’s Park</b>						
Carousel	x					
Expanded train ride	x					
Mini-golf (upgraded)	x	x				
<i>Wizard of Oz</i> playground	x					
Adult fitness				x	x	x
Bike share/rental program	x	x	x	x	x	x
Carousel Café	x	x	x	x	x	x
Games and performance plaza	x	x	x	x	x	x
Water play and misters incorporated within existing playground	x	x	x	x	x	x
Open lawn for play	x	x	x	x	x	x
Casual use family and individual picnic area	x	x	x	x	x	x
<b>The Green and Pavilion</b>						
Expanded Concerts and festivals	x	x	x	x	x	x
Expanded Outdoor classes	x	x	x	x	x	x
Expanded Casual play	x	x	x	x	x	x
Pavilion for rental use, events and performances in coordination with events at The Green	x	x	x	x	x	x
<b>Western Branch Picnic Area</b>						
7 Picnic shelters	x	x	x	x	x	x
2 half-court basketball courts (relocated from parking lots)	x	x	x	x		
Watkins Downs playground	x					
Ropes Course or similar activity		x	x	x		
Splash Pad/water play/misters within existing playground	x	x	x	x	x	x
Legend	Existing			Proposed		

## CHESAPEAKE CHILDREN’S PARK

This area has historically been the heart of the park and the hub of all children’s activities. Home to the miniature train, the carousel, the mini-golf range, five picnic shelters, the development of the *Wizard of Oz* themed playground has pushed demand far beyond the site’s capacity. Overflow parking on the adjacent Pepco property is common on an informal basis when the small paved lots are full. No accommodations



exist for bus drop-offs or parking, and with the attraction drawing many daycares, school groups and camps, bus traffic is significant. Pedestrian circulation is under developed and the core attractions are split into two different areas separated by the only park drive in the north, also used by CAM vehicles and visitors. The current configuration mixes pedestrians and vehicles and is too busy, making it unsafe for visitor use.

Additional parking is the biggest and most pressing need in this area of the park. The plan recommends that before building new parking in currently wooded areas of the park, the potential to expand the informal overflow parking on the Pepco property should be pursued for permanent, paved surface parking. This option avoids tree removal and formalizes an ongoing use. Pepco recently was acquired by Exelon, and is in discussions with the county regarding the use of their high voltage power line corridors for publicly accessible trails. If unapproved, a second location for future parking is west of the existing parking lot, which will require the removal of woodlands. Per the specimen tree survey performed, 77 specimen<sup>1</sup> trees were identified in the area of impact—63 tulip poplar and 14 other hardwood types.

The new parking lot, whether on the Pepco property or west of the current parking lot, should be configured to allow through flow between parking bays and the existing and new parking lots, at least for the first several phases of implementation of the master park development plan. The current lot is a series



Close up of proposed reconfiguration of parking and core area between the *Wizard of Oz* playground and train station; Chesapeake Children's Play Area—splash pad; new road alignment; new parking; new green (split between parking lots with dashed interim road connection)

<sup>1</sup> Specimen tree = 30" diameter at breast height (DBH)

of dead ends with only one access point, complicating vehicle movement when the lot is full. The new design must also incorporate bus drop-offs and parking areas, out of the line of through traffic. When the current park access drive is realigned, the two lots can be separated by a pedestrian-only green space, creating a new lawn and pedestrian plaza and connecting the train and carousel to the playground without vehicular crossings.

Expanding the parking lot to the west requires the removal of restroom 4, which is in poor condition, not heated, and not fully ADA accessible. Three other restrooms are located in the general area: restroom 5 at the playground; restroom 3 at the train station, which is fully ADA accessible, heated and has the potential to be open year-round; and a new restroom, 13, at the pavilion site that replaces the WNC.

The popularity of the Chesapeake Children's Park among families demands a higher level of amenities that will round out the experience and allow people to extend their stay in comfort. First among these improvements is better food and drink options, such as a "Carousel Cafe" or kiosk serving sandwiches and ice cream to families on a budget. This should be accompanied by an outdoor plaza with movable seating and shade, where games and performances like music and puppet shows can happen on weekends.

Recognizing the increasing interest in bicycling, a bike share or rental facility, headquartered in the Chesapeake Children's Park, is an important addition to the park. A range of bikes and vehicles could be made available for rental, including four-seater bikes, bikes with electric assists, and traditional bikes.

The plan recommends that the mini-golf course be replaced and renovated as an ADA accessible, 18-hole course. Typically, an 18-hole mini-golf course requires one-half acre of area to accommodate the course layout. As shown on the plan, there is adequate space available to accommodate the renovated course in its current location.

The recently installed *Wizard of Oz* playground has room for expansion. The addition of a small splash pad or mister will provide appreciated cooling in hot summer months. Much of the playground is not shaded, although it is surrounded by mature woodlands. In addition to a small water feature, adding shade structures and additional shade trees is recommended.

The popularity of Watkins Regional Park for group picnicking results in few opportunities for informal, casual, drop in picnicking for individuals or families as most, if not all, of the shelters are permitted year-round for the permit holder's use only. The addition of picnic tables, in single installations or in groups of one to three tables, scattered throughout the park, will fulfill the desire expressed by park users. An opportune place to add singles or groups of two or three tables is along the path between the existing WNC and the *Wizard of Oz* playground. The key to success is to ensure that the small groups of tables are not so close together that a group can come and informally aggregate them all for their use alone. This pattern does occur in the large groupings of individual tables east and west of the Central Area Office building unless policed by Park Rangers.



## THE GREEN AND PAVILION

The Green serves as the art and performance heart of the park, hosting small events, concerts, outdoor movies, and classes on yoga and similar activities. The Green provides a calming respite within the park, with a shaded bench and lawn for relaxing. The plan does not recommend any physical changes to The Green or to its operation as an arts activity space. Its use for movies and small events, yoga and other classes, and free play are appropriate and should continue.

The Green's role as the art and performance heart of the park can be strengthened with the addition of a 200-person pavilion on the site of the former WNC. Built as an attractive structure—perhaps with a large stone fireplace wall, an outdoor kitchen with running water, and public year-round restrooms—the infrastructure should be sized to support the electrical, lighting, and sound demands of small-scaled programs and events to create a synergistic relationship with The Green and its arts performances. This investment will provide an opportunity to extend programming opportunities beyond The Green. Both The Green and pavilion will continue to anchor the Festival of Lights and other events that circulate throughout the park.



Photo Credit: MIG

The Green will remain the center of arts and performance space

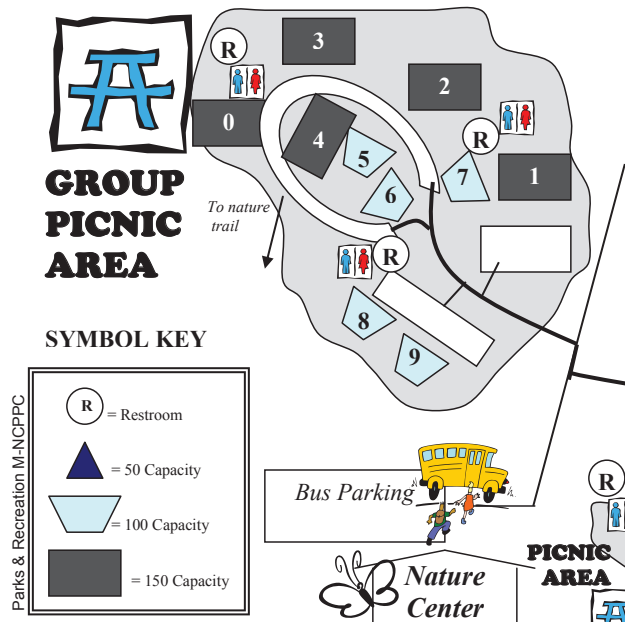
Parking at The Green should remain in place, as it serves the WNC and The Green today. Overflow parking for special events can be accommodated at the Western Branch Picnic Area or the Chesapeake Children's Park. The Green is currently served seasonally by several porta-potties placed on the northern edge of the site. If the pavilion's facilities are inadequate to serve the needs of The Green and its events, consideration should be given to placing an attractive, permanent trail-type model toilet, such as a compost facility that does not require sewer and water connections, in an area on the northern side of the perimeter road surrounding The Green.

## WESTERN BRANCH PICNIC AREA

This group picnic area has served the park since the 1970s. During the season, the shelters are heavily used, often accommodating visitors beyond their permitted capacity. Fine dust, exposed tree roots, and surfaces without any leaf litter or ground cover indicate the heavy use of the shelters that experience the highest demand. In testimony to the richness of the site's natural conditions, wildflowers continue to populate the edges of even the most popular picnic shelter sites. But, the ground conditions support the permit data and the park operations anecdotal experience that too many people at one time attempt to enjoy the park and its picnic shelters. At peak use times, park rangers have had to address parking shortages and misunderstandings that rental of a shelter immediately adjacent to the playground came with exclusive access to it and its use. In its current configuration, The Western Branch Picnic Area absorbs over 1100 picnickers on a summer weekend day. The circulation system, parking, and shelters do not have adequate capacity to accommodate this number and pushes operations and management beyond its carrying capacity.

Clearly, group picnic shelters are a major attraction in the park and provide an important service to county residents, as well as revenue for the park. Although this plan recommends removal of three shelters in this tightly constricted area (shelters number 4, 5, and 6), the plan recommends three new shelters at the

former campground site and five new shelters in the southern portion of the park. Removal of the picnic shelters located within the loop road and parking circle will create space for additional recreational activities serving the remaining picnic shelter users. The Watkins Downs playground remains within the loop road and parking circle and is supplemented by the addition of a splash pad or mister and the relocation of two half-court basketball facilities. Relocating the two basketball half-courts from the front of shelters 8 and 9 will return parking spaces to full availability. The addition of a ropes course (constructed with or without the incorporation of standing trees), adult fitness equipment, or a parkour-styled playground equipment piece will broaden the play features to appeal to tweens, teens, and adults. The intention is not to make the additional recreational activities a new and separate attraction, but to augment and provide passive recreational amenities for shelter users of all ages within the Western Branch Picnic Area.



Existing location of shelters 4, 5, and 6 within the picnic shelter circle slated for removal



Close up view of proposed reconfiguration of the picnic shelter circle at Western Branch Picnic Area

The area is served by three public restrooms, one that is open year-round and appears to be ADA accessible<sup>2</sup> (restroom 7) and two (restroom 6 and 8) that are not accessible nor open year-round. The plan recommends renovation or replacement of the nonaccessible restrooms so that they are both accessible and available for use year-round. Restroom 8 is currently on a septic system. Rather than supplying public sewer (it is across the creek from the main picnic area), consideration should be given to replacing the facility with an ADA accessible compost toilet facility, with or without water service.

No change to the current parking configuration or number of spaces is recommended, with the exception of reclaiming spaces currently dedicated to the two half-court basketball facilities near shelters 8 and 9. Long-term consideration should be given to replacing some or all of the actual parking spaces with pervious or porous pavement or pavers.

## PLAY PARKING SUMMARY

Summary of Parking Space Supply and Demand			
	Existing	Needed/Required	Total Available per MPDP
<b>Chesapeake Children's Park</b>			
	94	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>83 spaces for 5 picnic shelters (1)</li> <li>Additional space demand to support playground, carousel, train, mini-golf, general access uses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>83 spaces (existing)</li> <li>Add 80-100 paved spaces on Pepco property to the east or new lot west of the existing lot</li> <li>Continue informal overflow parking</li> </ul>
<b>The Green and Outdoor Pavilion</b>			
	89	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>66 spaces for the 200 person pavilion</li> <li>40 spaces for The Green</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>89 spaces (existing)</li> <li>Overflow use Chesapeake Children's Park and Western Branch Picnic Area</li> </ul>
<b>Western Branch Picnic Area</b>			
	446	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>300 spaces for 7 picnic shelters (1)</li> <li>Additional spaces for use by hikers, playground and splash pad use, overflow from picnic shelters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>446 spaces (existing)</li> </ul>
(1) Picnic shelter ratio determined by shelter capacity - assume 3 passengers per vehicle			

2 L/KLA did not perform an ADA assessment as a part of this project. Work in this area for portions of the park has been completed by Rose Harris, CPSI, ICC Certified Accessibility Inspector/Plans Examiner, Project Manager for M-NCPPC in 2016.



**PLAY PHASING SUMMARY****Phase 1A**

Action	Cost	Details
<b>Chesapeake Children's Area</b>		
1. Add family picnic areas	\$	Individual tables, in small groups of 1-3, will provide opportunities for informal individual and family use
2. Renovate 18-hole mini-golf course	\$	Upgrade needed for player interest; make facility ADA accessible
3. Close and remove restroom number 4	\$	Facility in poor shape, close to restrooms that are ADA accessible
4. Add 80-100 additional parking spaces	\$\$	Severe shortage of formal parking spaces in park core
5. Add bike share/rentals	\$	Increase non-vehicular mobility in the park
<b>Western Branch Picnic Area</b>		
1. Close and remove 3 picnic shelters (numbers 4, 5, and 6)	\$	Reduce and better distribute use demand for picnic shelters throughout entire park; reduce impact on facilities and ground near playground
2. Relocate basketball half-courts and reclaim parking spaces	\$	Concentrate activity offerings in center loop at Western Branch Picnic Area to make clear that facilities are for all park users, and not reservable in conjunction with a single shelter reservation
3. Develop rope course, parkour course, or similar outdoor activity	\$	Provide outdoors activity to attract tweens and teens
4. Replace restroom number 8	\$	Replace septic-served facility with a more environmentally- friendly system and make facility ADA accessible

Key: \$ - Under \$250,000; \$\$ Between \$250,000–\$500,000; \$\$\$ Between \$500,000–\$1,000,000; \$\$\$\$ Over \$1,000,000

**Phase 1B**

Action	Cost	Details
<b>Chesapeake Children's Park</b>		
1. Add water feature to existing playground	\$\$	Add splash pad or mister to <i>Wizard of Oz</i> playground (scale as addition to playground and not unique feature)
<b>Western Branch Picnic Area</b>		
1. Add water feature to existing playground	\$\$	Add splash pad or mister to Watkins Downs playground, (scale as addition to playground and not unique feature)
2. Renovate/replace restroom number 6	\$	Renovate/replace restroom number 6 to meet ADA standards (may require full replacement)

Key: \$ - Under \$250,000; \$\$ Between \$250,000–\$500,000; \$\$\$ Between \$500,000–\$1,000,000; \$\$\$\$ Over \$1,000,000

**Phase 2B**

Action	Cost	Details
<b>The Green and Pavilion</b>		
1. Add Pavilion to site of former Nature Center	\$\$\$	Construct large group covered pavilion, capacity 200, with stone fireplace wall on site of former WNC for rental and event use and extension facility for art-oriented activities held on The Green (requires extra electrical and other service supports)
2. Add restroom numbers 13 and 15	\$	Incorporate public restrooms in the pavilion structure to serve both the pavilion and activities at The Green

Key: \$ - Under \$250,000; \$\$ Between \$250,000–\$500,000; \$\$\$ Between \$500,000–\$1,000,000; \$\$\$\$ Over \$1,000,000

**Phase 3A**

Action	Cost	Details
<b>Chesapeake Children's Park</b>		
1. Add new park drive	\$\$\$	Reroute park drive south of existing alignment, separate vehicular and pedestrian activities
2. Close existing park drive	\$\$	Truncate existing park drive to serve parking
3. Add open lawn for play	\$\$	Establish new green/open lawn area pedestrian only area between playground and train station and parking lots
4. Expand train track	\$\$\$	Expand train track alignment to the northwest

Key: \$ - Under \$250,000; \$\$ Between \$250,000–\$500,000; \$\$\$ Between \$500,000–\$1,000,000; \$\$\$\$ Over \$1,000,000

## SPORTS Quadrant

**SPORTS** and athletic facilities will be upgraded to support more use by area leagues, but also enhanced with amenities that provide enjoyment for family and friends. New facilities like pickleball courts and a bike skills park will enhance the sports options for all age groups.

- Northern Athletic Complex and Park Welcome Center
- Coville's Picnic Area
- Southern Athletic Complex

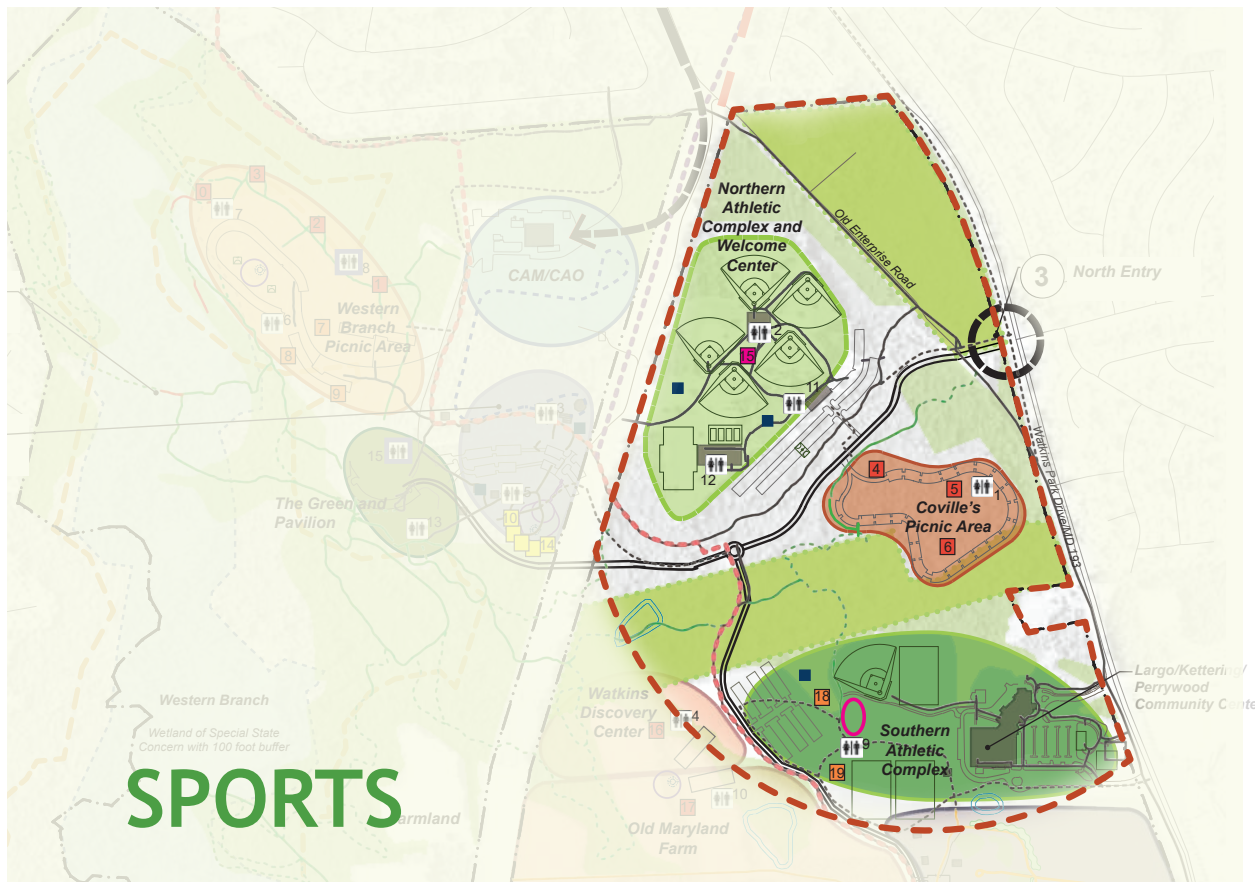


Diagram emphasizing the final recommendations for the SPORTS quadrant



<b>Table 4-3. Who Served - Sports: Existing and Proposed Activities</b>						
<b>SPORTS</b>	<b>Young kids</b>	<b>Middle school</b>	<b>High school</b>	<b>Young adults</b>	<b>Adults</b>	<b>Seniors</b>
<b>Northern Athletic Complex &amp; Park Welcome Center</b>						
Replace tennis bubble (same location)			x	x	x	x
Upgrade softball fields for tournament use			x	x	x	x
Basketball dual use of end of parking/replace outside of football when parking is expanded						
Park Welcome Center	x	x	x	x	x	x
Full Concession Stand	x	x	x	x	x	x
Teen Club Room		x	x			
Pickleball or QuickStart Tennis	x	x	x	x	x	x
Casual use family and individual picnic area	x	x	x	x	x	x
<b>Colville's Picnic Area</b>						
Add 3 large capacity picnic shelters	x	x	x	x	x	x
Open lawn for play or special events	x	x	x	x	x	x
<b>Southern Athletic Complex</b>						
2 Picnic shelters	x	x	x	x	x	x
Casual use family and individual picnic area	x	x	x	x	x	x
Bike skills park/Pump Track/other similar activities	x	x	x	x		
2 Multi-purpose rectangular fields	x	x	x	x	x	x
Legend	Existing			Proposed		

## NORTHERN ATHLETIC COMPLEX AND PARK WELCOME CENTER

Home to five softball/baseball fields, the Boys and Girls Club operated football field, the tennis bubble, and the Central Area Office (CAO), this area of the park dates back to the park's origin.

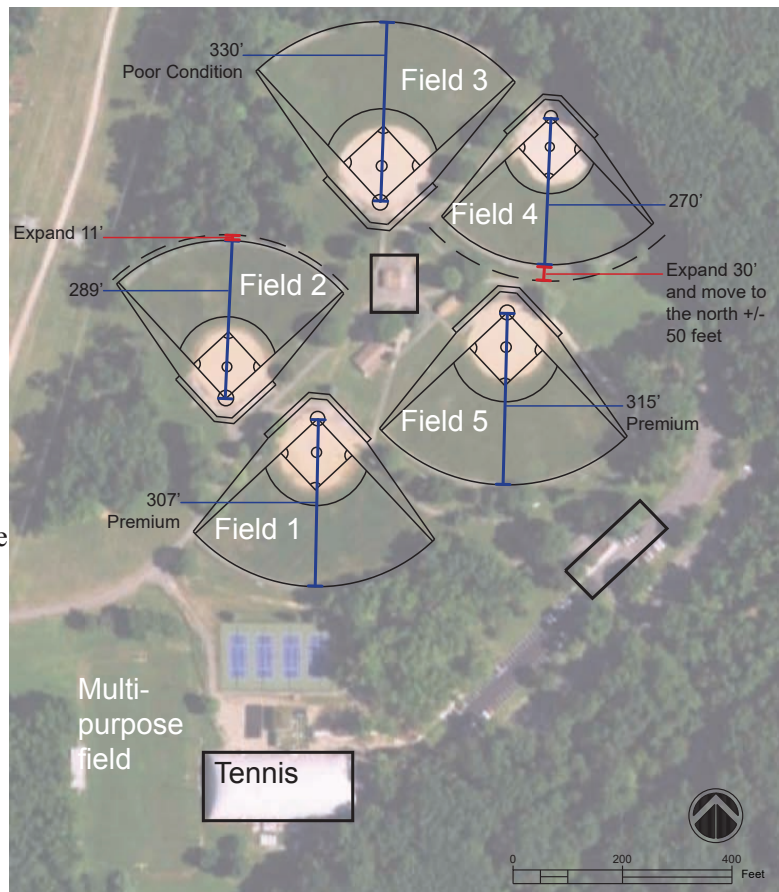
The softball/baseball complex is highly valuable as a tournament facility. Unlike most field groupings across the county where fields are clustered in groups of one to three, having five full-sized fields in one place presents a great opportunity for tournament space. Most of the current fields meet tournament dimensions, those that are not compliant with tournament standards should be expanded. Building the facility to specifications for adult softball tournaments—300 foot distance to fence<sup>3</sup>—builds in flexibility as the outfield fence line can be moved in to accommodate youth softball and baseball games as well as fast pitch and slow pitch softball. As the fields are currently irrigated (with well water) and lighted, only minor modifications to the existing infrastructure may be required for the field components. The condition of the existing restrooms and the lack of a concession stand, or any electronic scoreboards should be addressed. Restroom 2 is out of date, in poor condition, and is not ADA accessible. Replacing the current

3 At 300 feet, distance can accommodate all games per minimum and maximum fence distances per USA Softball Facility Specifications Guide. March 2017. [www.athleticbusiness.com](http://www.athleticbusiness.com)

facility with a larger one, combined with a concession stand and located near the large existing picnic shelter will support league and tournament use of fields. As shown in the sidebar, a Level III field must have five of seven attributes to meet the criteria. The fields at Watkins all qualify, although they will benefit from upgraded existing facilities.

Parking shortages exist on tournament days. Fields are permitted seasonally due to the lack of available parking—the football field is permitted for use in the fall and so the softball/baseball fields lie dormant. The opposite occurs in the spring/summer season, with the football field lying dormant. All the fields have natural turf, so some field resting is required. However, the extent of the rest is longer than necessary for turf management and is due to the lack of parking infrastructure. The plan recommends two areas for parking expansion to serve these uses—the existing paved parking lot in front of the CAO can be extended toward the west, and additional overflow parking can be added to the former campground site across the main park drive.

The tennis bubble partially collapsed several years ago during a heavy snow event and was temporarily repaired. It was replaced in kind in 2018. The facility cannot be expanded until the water system in the northern portion of the park is replaced or upgraded and adequate pressure is obtained to operate additional sprinklers for additional square footage.



Required geometric reconfiguration of softball fields for tournament use

The administration building, added to the tennis complex in 2015, came perilously close to not having adequate water pressure to operate its fire sprinklers. While the current data says that Prince George's County continues to have a strong demand for tennis facilities, the flooring used in the replacement should accommodate alternative uses to ensure the facility can operate as a multi-purpose facility. Similarly, should use of the outdoor courts diminish, they and/or the indoor courts can be multi-programmed for use as both pickleball and tennis courts.

Long term, the CAO operations, the current occupant of the building at the core of the Northern Athletic Complex, should be relocated elsewhere in the park—perhaps in conjunction with the CAM, or offsite. It occupies the most visible building which is more valuable to park operations if it is re-purposed as a park Welcome Center, Ranger Station, and public restroom and information center. Park visitors currently

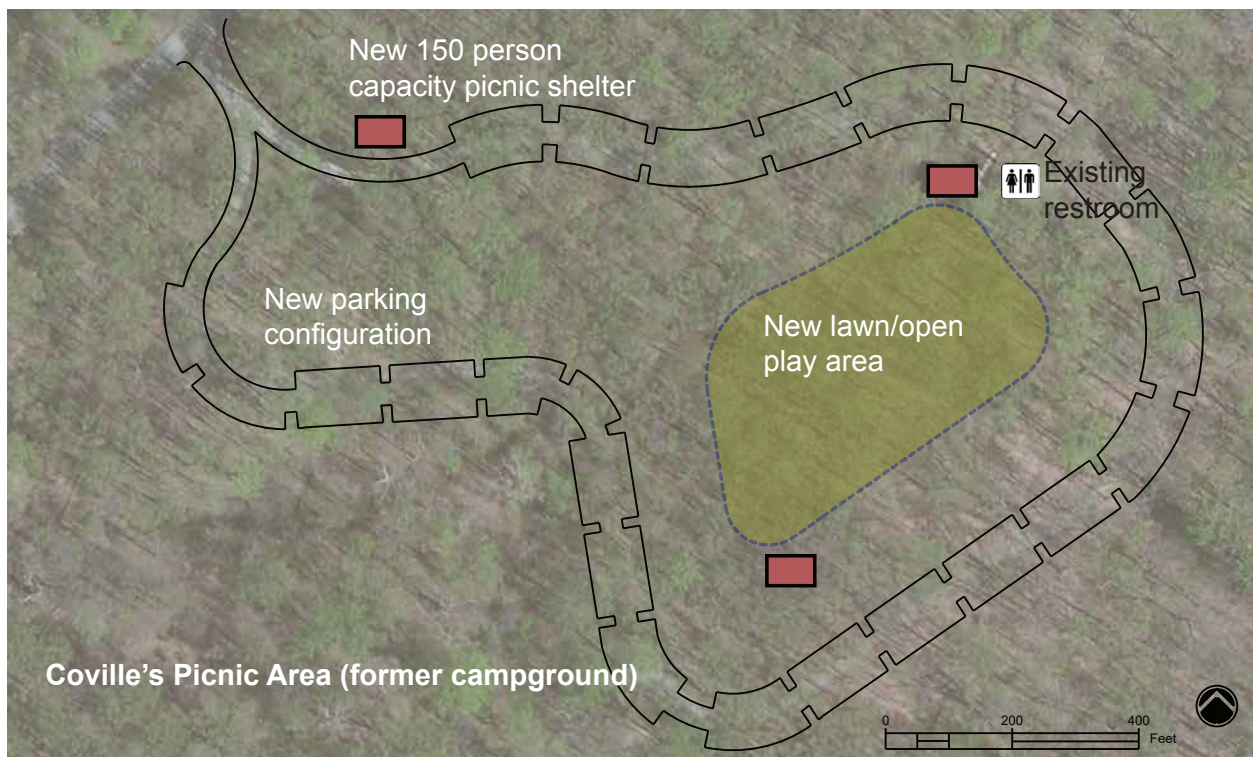
mistake this office for a Welcome Center. Porta-potties for public use are located just west of the building. They should be removed and replaced with ADA accessible public restrooms within or adjacent to the new Welcome Center.

### COVILLE’S PICNIC AREA

The campground is permanently closed, as its rental figures did not support the consumption of developable park acreage for such little use—under 3% over the past five years. Better campground operations and outdoor experiences are available within a short distance of the park.

An annual user of the campground has been the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) MDA Softball Tournament, who use the facility for a long weekend in early September. In the past, the tournament has brought more than one hundred teams of firefighters and paramedics to Watkins Regional Park at one time. Coming from all over the country, some camped on site. The 2015 event was billed on the organization’s website as providing the following features: “a Maryland crab feast, live entertainment, and a 2,000 square foot sports bar, with 15 big screen televisions, where players and guests can unwind between and after the games.” Although this plan closes the campground officially, camping could be allowed under a special use permit for both this group and others.

In the master park development plan, the campground is transformed into a picnic glade with three new, permitted group shelters, each with a capacity of 150 attendees. These new shelters replace the three shelters removed from the overcrowded Western Branch Picnic Area. These three shelters could be operated for adult groups, limiting the issue of alcohol permits to picnics held in this area. The proposed design retains the existing drive configuration and locates the new shelters in locations already disturbed for campsites, minimizing the construction and future use impact on the heavily wooded grounds. Parking spaces are configured perpendicular to the existing drive, similar to their layout at the Western Branch



Close up view of proposed reconfiguration of the campground site to create the Coville’s Picnic Area



Picnic Area. Spaces to accommodate the three new shelters and for some casual users can easily be accommodated with the current road configuration. Additional spaces can be added as needed for overflow use from the Northern Athletic Complex.

Restroom 1 is one of the most recently renovated facilities in the park. Consideration should be given to removing the showers in the facility and replacing them with family changing areas or additional restroom stalls. An open, undefined play area and green can be inserted at one or more of the former campsites, creating additional space for casual picnics and free play by park visitors.

### SOUTHERN ATHLETIC COMPLEX

This area of Watkins Regional Park currently has a single rectangular field and a triangle field just west of the Largo/Kettering/Perrywood Community Center. East of the community center, along Watkins Park Drive, is a basketball court, tennis courts, and four separate playgrounds. The Southern Athletic Complex provides the link that can better integrate the Largo/Kettering/Perrywood Community Center and its activities into the park. The plan recommends strengthening this athletic focus by adding two lighted rectangular fields, recreational activities attractive to tweens through adults, two permitted picnic shelters, family picnic tables, and a public restroom. Parking to support the additional uses are added with access from the center park drive. Additional rectangular fields are needed in this area of the county, preferably sized for 7x7 soccer games with dimensions of 50 yards by 80 yards. This field size is used for youth soccer and flag football.

Approximately 14 1/2 acres will be taken out of current agricultural use and developed for athletic uses and the infrastructure required for their support. An additional five acres of existing woodland could be incorporated in this site and developed for use as a ropes course, or a skate park or other supportive sports-oriented use. Classes offering bike riding skills, rope course work, skate boarding, yoga, or many other options can be offered at the Community Center and make use of the park's facilities.



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Example of a skate park



Photo Credit: M/G

Ropes styled course with posts in lieu of trees



Potential configuration of Southern Athletic Complex



"Firecracker Mountain Bike Race – Juniors 4" is copyright © 2014 Jerome Rauckman and made available under an Attribution 2.0 license.

Mountain biking

The plan commits to a larger footprint than required for 7 x 7 games, retaining the opportunity for a larger field should field needs change in the future. Prior to development, further evaluation may suggest a different configuration or combination of field types in the Southern Athletic Complex. Accommodating additional field construction in this area is challenged by also providing adequate parking—this plan assumes each athletic field requires 80 parking spaces, 40 for the two teams on the field and 40 additional spaces for the two teams playing before or after the teams on the field. Consideration should be given to a formal agreement with the Community Center regarding shared parking.

The field features—whether it is a natural turf and irrigated field or a synthetic surface—is a decision to be made by the Department of Parks and Recreation. Synthetic turf, although more expensive to install, can be lined for up to three different sports. Overlays with triangle field use - baseball and softball - can be done on rectangular fields - soccer, lacrosse, football. Regardless of field surfacing, it does make sense to light the fields as they are removed from established residential neighborhoods and adjacent to already active, lighted fields.



All athletic fields at Watkins Regional Park should be classified as Level III, as described in the sidebar discussion ‘Level III Fields’.

There are several possible recreational activities attractive to tweens through adults that should be considered for installation in this area, ranging from skate parks, to a mountain bike course or pump track, to a ropes course or other similar activities that fit the site constraints.

Skate parks can range in size from 5,000 square feet to 25,000 square feet. Separate “skate spots or dots” can be added in other areas of the park at about 2,000-4,000 square feet<sup>4</sup>. Skate parks today can be designed to be sculptural, a form of public art, and can accommodate users, depending upon design, of varying skills. Some parks in California are now designed to accommodate wheelchair users and scooters, as well as traditional skateboarders.

A mountain biking<sup>5</sup> or pump track, with features that cater to beginners, novices, and families, may be a good addition to the park. It is a fun way to introduce biking and to hone biking skills. The bike park features may vary to accommodate riders at every age and skill level.

Although disc golf advocates asked for a new disc golf course in the park, site conditions are not the most suitable for such use. The course layout for disc golf is similar to traditional golf, with greens and tees, and is best sited in an open, loosely wooded area. Much of the Watkins Regional Park landscape is heavily wooded, with dense stands of trees and a robust understory. Forested lands adjacent to the Southern Athletic Complex are also considered to be of high quality, with many specimen trees and stands that are over 100 years in age. The adjacent farmland is too spartan, and does not provide enough challenge for a course. Given these resource parameters, Watkins Regional Park is not the most suitable place to locate a course.

Supporting these improvements are an additional public restroom, parking for over 250 vehicles, and two permitted picnic shelters. Individual picnic tables can be placed for use by individuals or families, not at a permitted shelter.

<sup>4</sup> Information provided by Spohn Ranch, Inc. in e-mail dated 07/17

<sup>5</sup> The name mountain biking can be misleading; anyone riding a bike on a dirt trail can be identified as mountain biker—mountains are not required.

### Level III Fields

- Multiple fields within a park
- Often include rectangle and diamond fields which offers the ability to accommodate multiple game activity simultaneously
- Generally designated as game-only and also has the ability to accommodate tournament play and sports clinics
- It is recommended that field lighting should be near 50 fc intensity
- Generally located within a Regional Park or Athletic Complex setting which offers a variety of facilities that may include playgrounds, picnic areas, pavilions and walking trails
- The sole purpose of these fields is to provide a sporting venue and should not be used for other purposes, particularly ones that would compromise the field integrity and/or safety

Level III fields receive the highest level of maintenance. Field surfaces can be made from natural turf or synthetic turf.

A Level III field must have five of the following seven attributes to qualify:

- Comfort station
- Defined parking spaces
- Backstop/Outfield fence for diamonds; Goals onsite for rectangle fields
- Spectator seating
- Lighted fields - 30-50 fc
- Irrigated fields
- Perimeter fencing

**SPORTS PARKING SUMMARY**

Summary of Parking Space Supply and Demand			
	Existing	Needed/Required	Total Available per MPDP
<b>Northern Athletic Complex and Park Welcome Center</b>			
	293	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>475-545 spaces for athletic fields, tennis courts, Welcome Center and general use (number assumes full use of all fields at field capacity use, appropriate for tournament use)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>293 spaces (existing)</li> <li>Extend existing lots to the west and add 80-100 spaces</li> <li>Add up to 100-150 overflow spaces at former campground</li> </ul>
<b>Coville's Picnic Area</b>			
	N/A (former campground)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>150 spaces for 3 picnic shelters</li> <li>Overflow parking for Northern Athletic Complex</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add 150-300 spaces</li> </ul>
<b>Southern Athletic Complex</b>			
	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>80 spaces for athletic fields</li> <li>67 spaces for 2 picnic shelters</li> <li>25 spaces for other activities such as bike track, ropes course, or similar</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add 250- 260 spaces</li> </ul>
(1) Picnic shelter ratio determined by shelter capacity - assume 3 passengers per vehicle			

**SPORTS PHASING SUMMARY****Phase 1A**

Action	Cost	Details
<b>Northern Athletic Complex and CAO</b>		
1. Replace tennis bubble	\$\$\$\$	Replace with similar size due to infrastructure restrictions—inadequate water pressure for sprinkler operation; use flooring to allow for multi-purpose use of the facility
2. Add family picnic areas	\$	Individual tables, in small groups of 1-3, will provide opportunities for informal individual and family use
<b>Coville's Picnic Area</b>		
1. Close campground	\$	Close campground
2. Add new picnic shelters numbers 4, 5, and 6	\$\$	Add 3 (150 capacity) picnic shelters at former campground site
3. Add open free play area	\$	Add new 'green' in former campground area
4. Add parking for picnic shelters	\$\$	Develop 150 parking spaces along existing drive or on former camp sites to serve new picnic shelters
5. Renovate restroom number 1	\$	Retain restroom number 1; replace shower stalls with family changing area and additional toilet stalls
<b>Southern Athletic Complex</b>		
1. Add bike facility, skate park, or similar outdoor activity	\$	Add bike facility, skate park, or similar activity west of Largo/Kettering/Perrywood Community Center
2. Add temporary parking	\$	Provide 5-10 temporary parking spaces with access from park drive (consider gravel or permeable pavers) at site of future athletic field parking

Key: \$ - Under \$250,000; \$\$ Between \$250,000–\$500,000; \$\$\$ Between \$500,000–\$1,000,000; \$\$\$\$ Over \$1,000,000



**Phase 1B**

Action	Cost	Details
<b>Northern Athletic Complex and CAO</b>		
1. Renovate and upgrade Softball Complex	\$\$\$	Ensure all fields provide tournament grade facility and dimension (300 foot field depth)
2. Add concession stand	\$\$	
3. Replace restroom number 2	\$\$	Replace restroom number 2 with new ADA accessible restroom facility
4. Add parking	\$\$	Extend existing parking lot to the west in front of tennis bubble to gain approximately 80-100 spaces
<b>Coville's Picnic Area</b>		
1. Add overflow parking for Northern Athletic Complex	\$\$	Develop up to 150 parking spaces along existing driveway in former campground to serve as overflow parking for the Athletic Complex
Key: \$ - Under \$250,000; \$\$ Between \$250,000–\$500,000; \$\$\$ Between \$500,000–\$1,000,000; \$\$\$\$ Over \$1,000,000		

**Phase 2A**

Action	Cost	Details
<b>Southern Athletic Complex</b>		
1. Add group picnic shelters numbers 18 and 19	\$\$	Add 2 new 100-person capacity rental picnic shelters, near the Community Center athletic fields, new multi-purpose fields, and trail connection
2. Add lighted multi-purpose fields	\$\$\$	Add 2 lighted rectangular fields (soccer, football, field hockey, lacrosse) west of Community Center athletic fields
3. Add restroom number 9	\$\$	Add ADA accessible restroom near new fields and picnic shelters
4. Add parking	\$	Add 250-260 parking spaces
Key: \$ - Under \$250,000; \$\$ Between \$250,000–\$500,000; \$\$\$ Between \$500,000–\$1,000,000; \$\$\$\$ Over \$1,000,000		

**Phase 2B**

Action	Cost	Details
<b>Park Welcome Center</b>		
1. Renovate former CAO offices as Park Welcome Center	\$\$\$	Renovate the CAO building to serve as a Park Welcome Center, potential site for Park Ranger offices; consider the addition of specialty display gardens at new Welcome Center (For example, a children's garden, pollinator garden, or native plant display)
2. Renovate restroom number 11	\$	Publicly accessible ADA compliant restrooms
Key: \$ - Under \$250,000; \$\$ Between \$250,000–\$500,000; \$\$\$ Between \$500,000–\$1,000,000; \$\$\$\$ Over \$1,000,000		

## AGRICULTURE Quadrant

**AGRICULTURE** and related activities will draw new audiences to the park through its expanded offerings like teen programs, catering facilities, and an outdoor dining terrace that takes advantage of the beautiful farmland views.

- Old Maryland Farm (OMF)
- Chelsea Historic Site

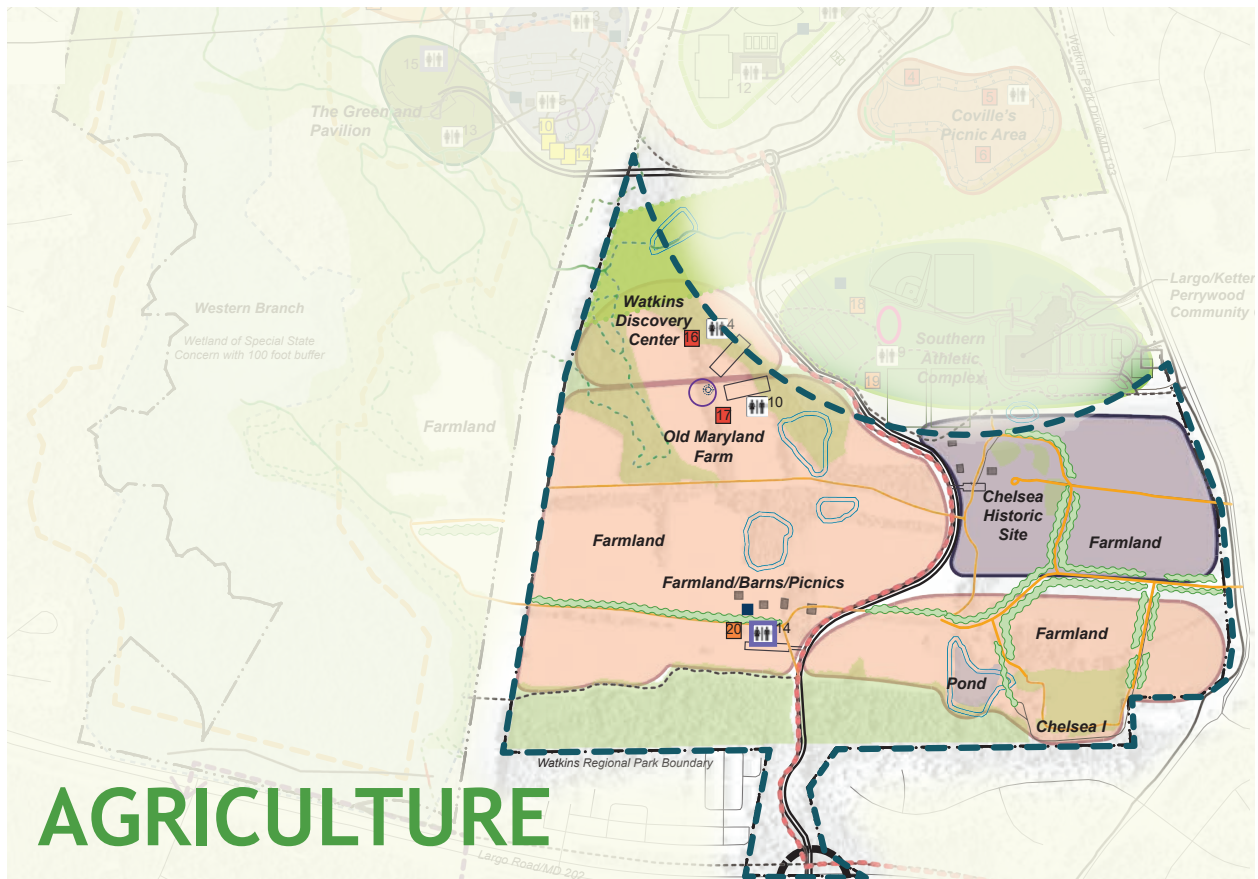


Diagram emphasizing the final recommendations for the AGRICULTURE quadrant

<b>Table 4-4. Who Served - Agriculture: Existing and Proposed Activities</b>						
<b>AGRICULTURE</b>	<b>Young kids</b>	<b>Middle school</b>	<b>High school</b>	<b>Young adults</b>	<b>Adults</b>	<b>Seniors</b>
<b>Old Maryland Farm</b>						
Active agriculture and educational programming	x	x	x	x	x	x
2 Picnic shelters	x	x	x	x	x	x
Woodland Nature Play environment	x	x				
Catering/event facility/dining terrace				x	x	x
Joint teen programs		x	x			
Demonstration farming	x	x	x	x	x	x
Antique farm equipment	x	x	x	x	x	x
Re-purpose farm lanes for bike and walking use	x	x	x	x	x	x
Casual use family and individual picnic area	x	x	x	x	x	x
<b>Chelsea Historic Site</b>						
Historic interpretation of house and landscape	x	x	x	x	x	x
Re-purpose barns	x	x	x	x	x	x
Legend	Existing			Proposed		

## OLD MARYLAND FARM

Moving OMF to the southern portion of the park will provide physical space to expand its programs and to better house its animals. Policies to preserve agricultural lands in Prince George's County have been developed, but they do not have the same regulatory framework as the tree conservation plans. From a natural and cultural resource protection perspective, land preservation and protection of agricultural lands is a key opportunity to retain unique activities and programming in the county. Actively programming the farmlands in the southern portion of the park in support of OMF, WDC, Chelsea Historic Site, and recreational activities ensures that the land preservation action also serves the recreational mission of the park.

An expanded footprint for the OMF will enhance the farm's offerings and create efficiencies in terms of reducing the need for supplemental feeding of grazing animals, who instead can graze on the expanded pasture land. Rotating pastures and using more of the site for animals will require additional security fencing and observation but will also make the animals and resources more visible to the general public. An area 8–10 acres in size has been designated in the southern portion of the site to house OMF and WDC buildings and parking. An additional 37 acres for pasture is available for OMF's use. Other potential uses of the farmland and its surrounding environs include:

- Market gardens
- Leased farming (need minimum of 100 acres to address concern regarding dust and drift from spraying)
- Demonstration gardens (pollinators, native, children's)
- Formal gardens at Chelsea Historic Site (long-term project—leased to Boys and Girls Club)
- Tobacco heritage



### Potential OMF Central Building

The central OMF building at one or two stories (two level will require elevator service) requires a minimum footprint for a two story building of 100 feet x 60 feet. The same components could be accommodated in a single story building by doubling the footprint—200 feet x 60 feet.

#### Potential two-story building program Ground Level

- Exhibit area for agriculture display, such as antique farm equipment, agriculture education; set up like a visitor center
- Multiple purpose room: meeting, classroom, rental room, with accessible sink and counter space: 50-70 person capacity. Possible dividable room to host two activities at once (this is preferred to be an addition off the main portion of the building, so not to take away space from visitor center portion with displays)
- Office (For administrative staff and/or greeter)
- Public bathrooms<sup>1</sup>
- Galley kitchen
- Gift shop

#### Second Level

- Support staff offices (enough space for 2 full time and 4 part time staff)
- Storage for program materials, medical supplies, exhibit materials

<sup>1</sup> Potential number of stalls (further research to meet code and need requirements needed - minimum 2 stalls & 2 urinals for men's room; minimum 5 stalls for women's room)

- Race, History and Agriculture Symposium spin-off (Accokeek)
- Re-use/display of antique farm equipment in Farm Museum
- Re-purpose \$175,000 marked for storage facility to free up Billingsley for other purposes—barn renovation/construction at Watkins to store and display equipment
- Pasture for OMF animals (reduce supplemental feed needs)
- Host farm heritage festival at Watkins
- The farm/ag the garden is the showpiece of the park and for the overall park system

Educational programming can be expanded in a larger complex that has additional classroom space, multi-purpose rooms, and a small auditorium. While some teen and adult programming is provided at the current site, most of the programs are for young children. Programs in conjunction with the University of Maryland Extension Service could be offered for credit, training, and general interest.

The plan accepts the recommendations for OMF facilities generated by park staff, and provides enough guidance for planning purposes, but will require more careful evaluation prior to actual site development.

### OMF Central Building and Visitor Center

A ten acre site is needed to house the core facilities and main OMF buildings. A one- or two-level building serving as the OMF central building could house an exhibit area for rotating agricultural displays, such as antique farm equipment or an agricultural education display, a visitor center, multi-purpose room, public restrooms, and support facilities.

### Animal Shelters

The new location for OMF also provides an opportunity to address the need for improved and expanded animal shelters. The site in the southern portion of the park is on better soils and is better drained than the existing site, which is often wet during the year and contributes to building deterioration and increased animal care demands. At least five small lean-to-like structures for chickens, rabbits, waterfowl, and other bird species replicates what exists in the north and will provide new homes for the existing stock. As part of the more detailed program development, consideration should be given to modifying or expanding

the number and species of featured birds and animals at the new site. Necessary support features include a pond that can be drained periodically for maintenance.

Two medium-sized lean-to-like barns with inside pens are needed to support a small ruminant population such as goats or sheep and swine - pigs. Each structure should be sited with direct access to fenced outdoor area approximately 1/2 to 3/4 of an acre in size.

One large livestock barn is required to provide support housing for large livestock such as cows, horses, donkeys, and camels and storage for materials. Within the structure, a climate-controlled animal health and support room with a storage area, refrigeration, and running water is needed. Additional space for tack room, a staff office, and hayloft are also recommended.

### ***Paddocks***

Paddock space is used to support animal well-being and health when not on pasture. Paddocks are used as ground sacrifice lots (secure areas where horses can be kept while stalls are cleaned, or horses are trimmed or clipped, or when pasture is unavailable), training, segregating, and sorting. Good pasture management will always provide long-term all-weather lots on soft and/or durable surfaces to handle daily wear and four-season weather conditions. Common materials include sand (concrete grade), stone dust, and durable grazing grass.

Several paddocks should be constructed with 20' x 11' lean-tos for use when segregating animals from the general population upon initial arrival at the site, or when in need of rehabilitation.

### ***Support Structures***

#### **Greenhouse**

The current OMF has a small greenhouse attached to its main building. In the new location, a larger greenhouse or multiple greenhouses, dependent on demand, can be co-located and shared with the WDC (the relocated Watkins Nature Center). At a minimum size of 35' x 20', the space can be used to over-winter plants and grow plants for enrichment programs. It also can support OMF farming needs, supporting a fodder feeding system with an aquaponics or similar system, and be used to grow supplemental feed for some or all of the animals. Most importantly, a greenhouse is a key tool in conducting

### **Paddocks**

Four specific paddock configurations are proposed, pending more in-depth evaluation. They include:

#### **Paddock One**

- Purpose—general usage
- Location—adjoining livestock barn
- Estimated size—200' x 100'
- Ground surface—sand

#### **Paddock Two**

- Purpose—general usage for feeding and daily activities and for use during wet weather conditions
- Location—adjoining livestock barn, off of Paddock One/sand paddock
- Estimated size—70' x 60'
- Ground surface—stone dust
- Layout to incorporate lean-to structure

#### **Paddock Three**

- Purpose—conducting education class, animal management
- Location—connected to lean-to structure
- Estimated size—70' x 60'
- Ground surface—durable grass area

#### **Paddock Four –Training Paddock**

- Purpose—animal training and education class, animal interaction area, programmed for riding area
- Estimated size—70' x 100'
- Ground Surface—sand (grade concrete)

### Acres Required for Grazing

#### Large Stock—Equine, Cattle

- 1.5 to 2.0 acres per animal

#### Small Stock—Sheep, Goat, Camelids (Llama, Alpaca)

- .25 to .5 acres per animal

#### Common to All

- Pasture will be divided with fencing to support rotational grazing practices
- Some pasture can be maintained outside perimeter fencing.



Photo Credit: MIG

Special events could focus on farm to table and dining outdoors near the agricultural fields



Photo Credit: MIG

Active “nature” play and playground facilities can be incorporated in the southern portion

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education programs related to agricultural science and plant and soil science.

### Storage and Equipment Sheds and Workshops

A working farm needs a number of support structures, including a craftsman workshop with support equipment, project space, work tools, and a safe space to conduct work such as carpentry. Large equipment also needs storage space. A pole barn could provide space for large equipment, hay wagons, and materials. In addition, an undetermined amount of building space for storage is required, provided either in a single building or in multiple smaller storage sheds.

### Chelsea I, Residential Housing for Sustainable Agriculture Specialist and Farm Manager

A residential, two-story, brick structure in the southeastern corner of the park could be recycled to serve as a residence for a farm manager or staff member. Recently the home of the NHRD’s Museum and Exhibits Support office, it has been vacant with its future undefined. At the time of the plan’s writing, there was not a determination as the property’s historic significance, or established criteria for its demolition.

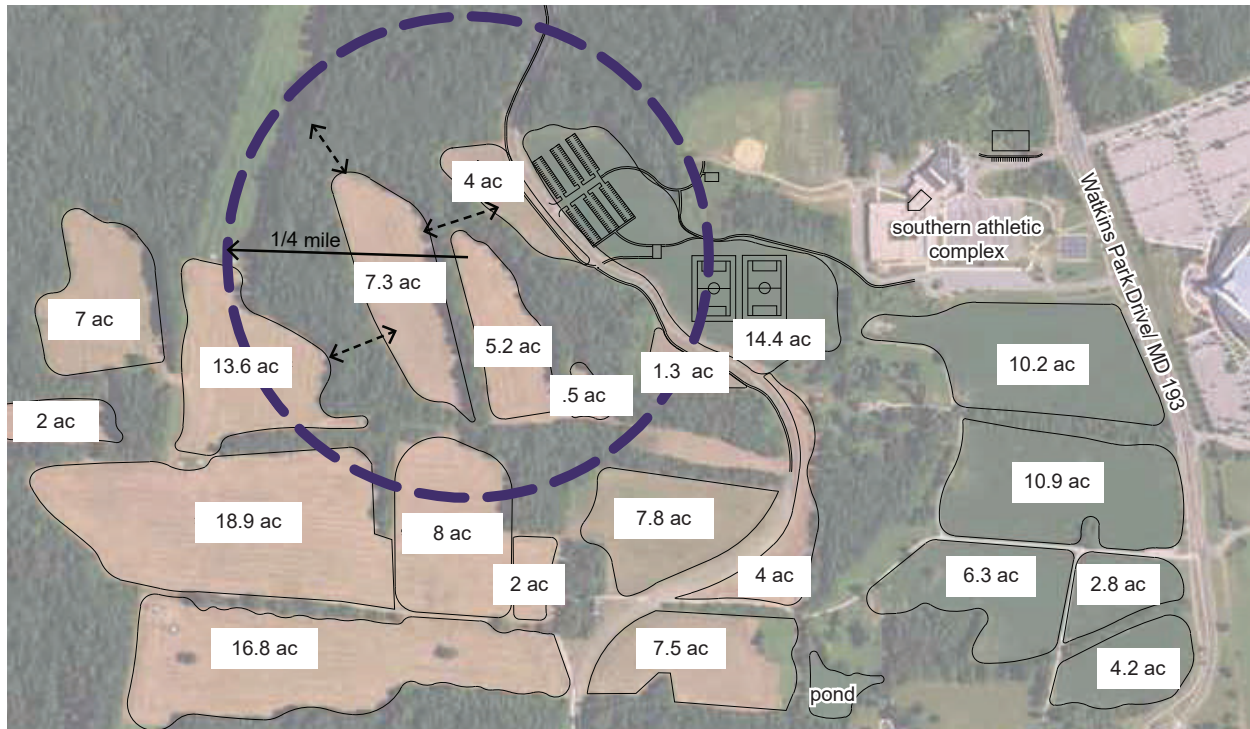
Rather than demolishing the structure (its historic importance is unknown and requires further research), it could be a marketing tool and an incentive for attracting a recent sustainable agriculture graduate to live and work at the park, using the agricultural lands in the southern portion of the park as a laboratory for sustainable agriculture demonstrations, gardens, and educational programs. Evaluating the house and its surroundings for reuse should be undertaken prior to making decisions on the disposition of the property.

### Fields and Pasture Lands

The southern portion of the park has 154.7 acres under current cultivation. From that total, approximately 14 1/2 acres have been removed for development as athletic fields adjacent to the Largo/Kettering/Perrywood Community Center and 8–10 acres for development of the OMF and WDC complex. Advisors have recommended retaining a minimum of 100 acres if commercial or leased farming activities are to continue.

As an initial estimate, OMF will need to manage 37 acres of this land as pasture for support of their livestock. Grazing pastures provide feed and quality of life to livestock.





Available acreage, currently under cultivation at Watkins Regional Park

Different stock require differing amounts of pasture per animal, so calculations on the final acreage demand is dependent on the OMF census. Rotational grazing is an important pasture management practice, allowing lands to rest between grazing opportunities. Providing for such increases the total amount of acreage required for OMF operations.

### Fencing

Watkins Regional Park is located in a developed area of the metropolitan region. Many residents are unfamiliar with farm practices. A perimeter fence that can be secured at night and at other times when staff is not on site must be established around the core of the facility, similar to the configuration at the current Old Maryland Farm site. Fencing also will assist with animal well being and health management between the OMF animals and wildlife, and secure equipment. Perimeter fencing is required to protect both the animals and the residents, serving as a:

- Buffer to liability risks
- Buffer to trespassing
- Buffer to predatory wildlife behavior
- Buffer to wildlife conflict for maintaining horticulture specialty projects
- Safety zone for animal containment

### Agriculture and Horticulture Programs

The extensive farmlands in the southern portion of the park present a real opportunity to incorporate agricultural science and farming activities within the OMF programs, extending the program offerings beyond young children to tweens, teens, and adults.

A strong horticulture program, potentially shared with the Watkins Discovery Center (WDC), could incorporate raised garden beds with vegetables, Maryland heritage crops, and habitat and pollinator plants attractive to butterflies, bees, and migratory birds.

### Farm History for the Southern Portion of Watkins Regional Park

Mr. Eddie Toney<sup>1</sup> is a farmer at Watkins and at two other farms, both of which are scheduled for development within the next several years. “At one time my family farmed over 2,500 acres of which 1,800 acres was within a few miles of Watkins Park. Development has now taken almost all the farm ground in the area.”

Mr. Toney points out that there are protections for forest and wetlands, and endangered species but none for the very little bit of farmland left in this part of Prince George’s County. If the southern portion of the park is to be developed, Mr. Toney recommends keeping new development in close proximity to lands already developed, saving the bulk of the farmland as land for agricultural and educational purposes. Suggested activities include pumpkin patches, corn mazes, a garden area, and hiking trails. If the land is to be commercially farmed or leased, a minimum area of 100 congruent acres should be preserved, protecting adjacent uses from dust or spray drift generated by farming activities.

“I believe this would be good for agriculture and wildlife as well as the community. Over the years it seems that the connection of farming with M-NCPPC and the community is growing further apart.”

<sup>1</sup> Drawn from an e-mail dated 2/22/17, written by Mr. Eddie Toney.

The WDC can add plantings supportive of butterflies and especially monarchs in the southern portion of the park, expanding on concept of the gardens at the WNC in the north and its participation in the Monarch Waystation and research program.

The extensive farmlands can be reprogrammed for more intense use as gardens and crop fields with plants attractive as feed for OMF animals, bee keeping, and small orchard development for fruit trees such as apple, pear, and peach. Additional land can be managed for hay production, also in service to the operations of the OMF. Opportunities to expand programming and agricultural activities are extensive. Initial ideas include adding more farm animals, developing an equestrian program and offering riding lessons, and reinforcing an existing landscape that is treasured by many with uses that support and enhance its preservation.

### Supporting Infrastructure

Much of the OMF’s current activities involve organized groups of young people, school groups, or day camps. Offering public facilities such as restrooms, picnic areas, and parking to support this type of visitor use is required. Additional users come alone or with small family groups and they too require support, resting spaces, and parking.

A new playground, Woodland Nature Play environment, for use in conjunction with the WDC is proposed. Located near these two facilities, its theme can reinforce their missions. A nature/science/agricultural based theme is recommended for a playground that is experiential, offers hands-on learning and manipulatable features, and incorporates climbing towers and water features in the form of a splash pad, running water feature, or hand pump for irrigation. This playground may take the form of a children’s garden with playground features incorporated throughout. Examples include the Children’s Garden at the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden and the Morton Arboretum in Illinois.

The trail system is extended throughout the southern portion of the park, repurposing without changing or expanding the existing network of gravel farm lanes to serve as hiking and biking trails.

Immediately adjacent or incorporated within the OMF structures, the plan locates a 150-person capacity permitted picnic shelter (permit could be held by OMF for its

programming needs when useful), individual picnic tables available on a first-come, first-served basis for small groups and individuals, public restrooms, and parking for private vehicles, bus drop-off, and bus storage. All of these infrastructure supporting features can be shared between the OMF and the WDC.

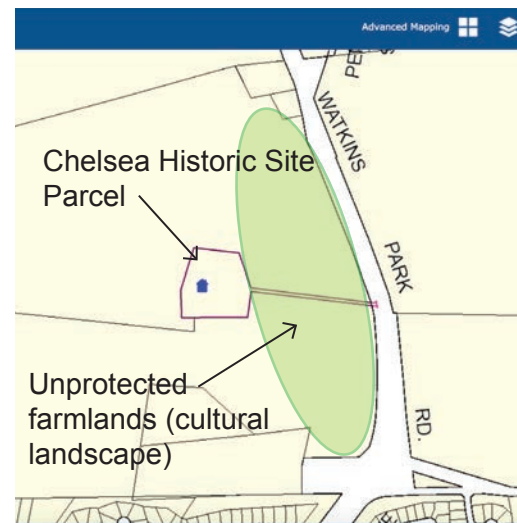
Further to the south, in proximity to the existing barns, a second permitted 150-person capacity picnic shelter, individual picnic tables, a restroom (consider the use of compost facilities in lieu of extending sewer or using a septic system), and a small parking area will support the use of the extended trails system throughout the southern portion of the park.

### CHELSEA HISTORIC SITE

The Chelsea Manor and its outbuildings, entry drive, and immediate property parcel comprise the Chelsea Historic Site that is protected by its designation as an environmental setting of an historic site. Established through Planning Department Master Plans, or Council action, or the Historic Preservation Committee, the default environmental setting is typically the entire parcel and applies only to the land within the parcel of the historic resource. The Chelsea Manor sits within a parcel boundary as shown in the diagram on the right that encompasses the house itself and the driveway to Watkins Park Road. Importantly, the agricultural lands to the north and south of the driveway between the house and Watkins Park Drive are not protected as they are not a part of the parcel containing the designated historic resource - Chelsea Manor. In discussions with staff and the community during the planning process for this project, preservation and protection of the agricultural fields along Watkins Park Drive and in particular east of Chelsea Manor was of high importance as preservation of the Manor's cultural landscape.

The plan does not address the current and near-term use of the building itself as it is currently leased to the Boys and Girls Club. The driveway from Watkins Park Drive is a single lane, lined with trees, located within the parcel that is governed by the restrictions associated with the environmental setting of a historic site.

The outbuildings and the agricultural landscape are not party to the lease agreement with the Boys and Girls Club and present a number of opportunities for enhancement, educational, and recreational opportunities.



Parcel surrounding Chelsea Manor noted in red



Chelsea Manor site visit with Department of Parks and Recreation staff members, 8/2016



Photo Credit: M/G



Example of an refurbished barn as an event space

Preservation planners expressed a desire to retain the open farmland between the historic house and Watkins Park Drive, saying that was the most important viewshed associated with Chelsea Historic Site. These lands do not fall within the protected parcel with its environmental setting restrictions. Either these lands should be added to the restricted property parcel, or a commitment to retain and maintain farming and agricultural activities between the house and the road should be made by the Department of Parks and Recreation.

There are two barns, one for livestock and one for tobacco, and three other structures adjacent to the main house. M-NCPPC has an extensive collection of antique farm equipment currently stored at Billingsley. Bringing that resource to Watkins Regional Park will enhance the

interest and educational opportunities for the planned improvements in the southern portion of the park. Stabilizing, renovating, and repurposing the barns to house antique farm equipment—a Farm Museum—will help to preserve the setting of the historic site and bring new life and activity to the park. A small parking lot with access from the park drive will provide easy access to the site.

The Chelsea Historic Site (located on the former Seton Belt Farm) potentially could be linked with other nearby historic sites such as Ridgely Farm.<sup>6</sup> The two sites are separated by the beltway, a potentially challenging barrier to overcome.<sup>7</sup>

## AGRICULTURE PARKING SUMMARY

Summary of Parking Space Supply and Demand			
	Existing	Needed/Required	Total Available per MPDP
<b>Old Maryland Farm</b>			
	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 33 spaces for 1 picnic shelter</li> <li>• 50-75 for initial OMF operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add 85-120 spaces</li> </ul>
<b>Chelsea Historic Site Outbuildings</b>			
	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15-20 spaces for hikers, picnickers, bike riders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add 15-20 spaces</li> </ul>
<b>Farmland/Barns/Picnic Complex</b>			
	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 33 for 1 picnic shelter</li> <li>• Drop-in visitor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add 50 spaces</li> </ul>
(1) Picnic shelter ratio determined by shelter capacity - assume 3 passengers per vehicle			

<sup>6</sup> A good resource is Mrs. Susan Pearl, a former M-NCPPC employee who now works at the Prince George's County Historical Society Library at 11 Crescent Road in Greenbelt. She can be reached at 301-262-3367.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Buchheister, whose family once owned Chelsea works at Marietta Manor in Glenn Dale (an M-NCPPC property) and can be reached at 301-464-5291. Mary Amen can also be reached at this number, and also knows a lot of county history.

**AGRICULTURE PHASING SUMMARY****Phase 1A**

Action	Cost	Details
<b>Old Maryland Farm</b>		
1. Re-purpose Chelsea I	\$	Evaluate Chelsea I for re-use as on-site residence for farm manager, (perhaps a recent Sustainable Agriculture graduate) or demolish
2. Retain approximately 100 acres for active agriculture/farming activities	\$	Preserve cultural landscape and view of Chelsea Historic Manor from Watkins Park Drive and surrounding landscape (fields are not within parcel subject to protections from Environmental Historic Setting)
3. Add beehives, gardens at future OMF site	\$	Use agricultural fields for demonstrations, add farm gardens and bee hives; develop pasture fencing
4. Establish pasture associated with relocation of OMF	\$\$	Develop new, extended pasture area in the southern portion of the park in support of OMF; ensure visibility of farm from Watkins Park Drive; expand pasture along Watkins Park Drive road frontage
<b>Chelsea Historic Site</b>		
1. Establish Farm Museum in repurposed barns associated with Chelsea; stabilize outbuildings near Chelsea Historic Site	\$\$	Move antique farm equipment to Watkins from Billingsley storage barn for display and use on site; re-purpose, stabilize, and renovate tobacco barn and livestock barn near Chelsea for use as storage and display of antique farm equipment moved to site
2. Add parking	\$	Provide 15-25 parking spaces (consider gravel or permeable pavers) near outbuildings for access to farm equipment and site

Key: \$ - Under \$250,000; \$\$ Between \$250,000–\$500,000; \$\$\$ Between \$500,000–\$1,000,000; \$\$\$\$ Over \$1,000,000

**Phase 1B**

Action	Cost	Details
<b>Old Maryland Farm</b>		
1. Begin relocation and expansion of Old Maryland Farm activities in the southern portion of the park	\$\$\$\$	OMF to be located adjacent to future location for the Watkins Discovery Center to keep activities on same side of park drive. Build OMF complex (barns, shelters, fencing, exhibit areas, multi-purpose room, office, and paddock space west of South Entry Drive for OMF use)
2. Add picnic shelter number 17	\$	Add new group rental picnic shelter (150 person capacity)
3. Add restroom number 10	\$	Free-standing or include as a part of OMF building
4. Add parking	\$	Add 85-120 new parking spaces (gravel) for OMF use; circulation to be configured for bus drop-off and pick-up/storage

Key: \$ - Under \$250,000; \$\$ Between \$250,000–\$500,000; \$\$\$ Between \$500,000–\$1,000,000; \$\$\$\$ Over \$1,000,000

**Phase 2A**

Action	Cost	Details
<b>Old Maryland Farm</b>		
1. Continue to expand agricultural programming and activities in southern portion of the park	\$-\$\$\$	The southern portion of the park is a showcase of agrarian uses, history, and the complex cultural history of Prince George's County. Development of ag-related programming will bring this cultural history alive while providing contemplative spaces for residents to recreate, walk, and bike. Expand bee keeping, develop orchard planting, crop growing, agricultural research opportunities, add farm animals, expand and develop equestrian program and riding lessons, adult programming via Extension Service.
2. Incorporate existing barns into OMF activities	\$\$	The barns have been stabilized and are in current use for farm equipment storage. They provide a valuable resource for OMF operations. Renovated barns on the west side of the entry drive, currently used by ag-land leaseholder, should be eventually incorporated in OMF programming and operations.
<b>Farmland/Barns/Picnics</b>		
1. Family picnic area	\$	Individual tables, in small groups of 1-3, will provide opportunities for informal individual and family use
2. Picnic shelter number 20	\$	Permitted picnic shelter with capacity of 100 persons
3. Add restroom number 14	\$	To avoid incurring the costs of installing infrastructure for sewer, consideration should be given to the use of a compost facility or septic system. Installation for water is optional.
4. Add parking	\$	Parking provided (could be gravel) for 50 spaces, 33 which are for picnic shelter use
Key: \$ - Under \$250,000; \$\$ Between \$250,000–\$500,000; \$\$\$ Between \$500,000–\$1,000,000; \$\$\$\$ Over \$1,000,000		



## NATURE Quadrant

**NATURE** is the core resource of Watkins Regional Park. Much of the western portion of the park falls under various local and state protections. Trails wind through heavily wooded landscapes, offering visitors a view of an active beaver colony, great blue heron rookeries, and a rich display of ephemeral wildflowers.

The joint development of a new Discovery Center with Old Maryland Farm will create a much richer destination that has something for every age group, interpreting and educating the park visitor on the vast natural resources that surround them.

- Watkins Discovery Center (WDC) formerly known as Watkins Nature Center (WNC)

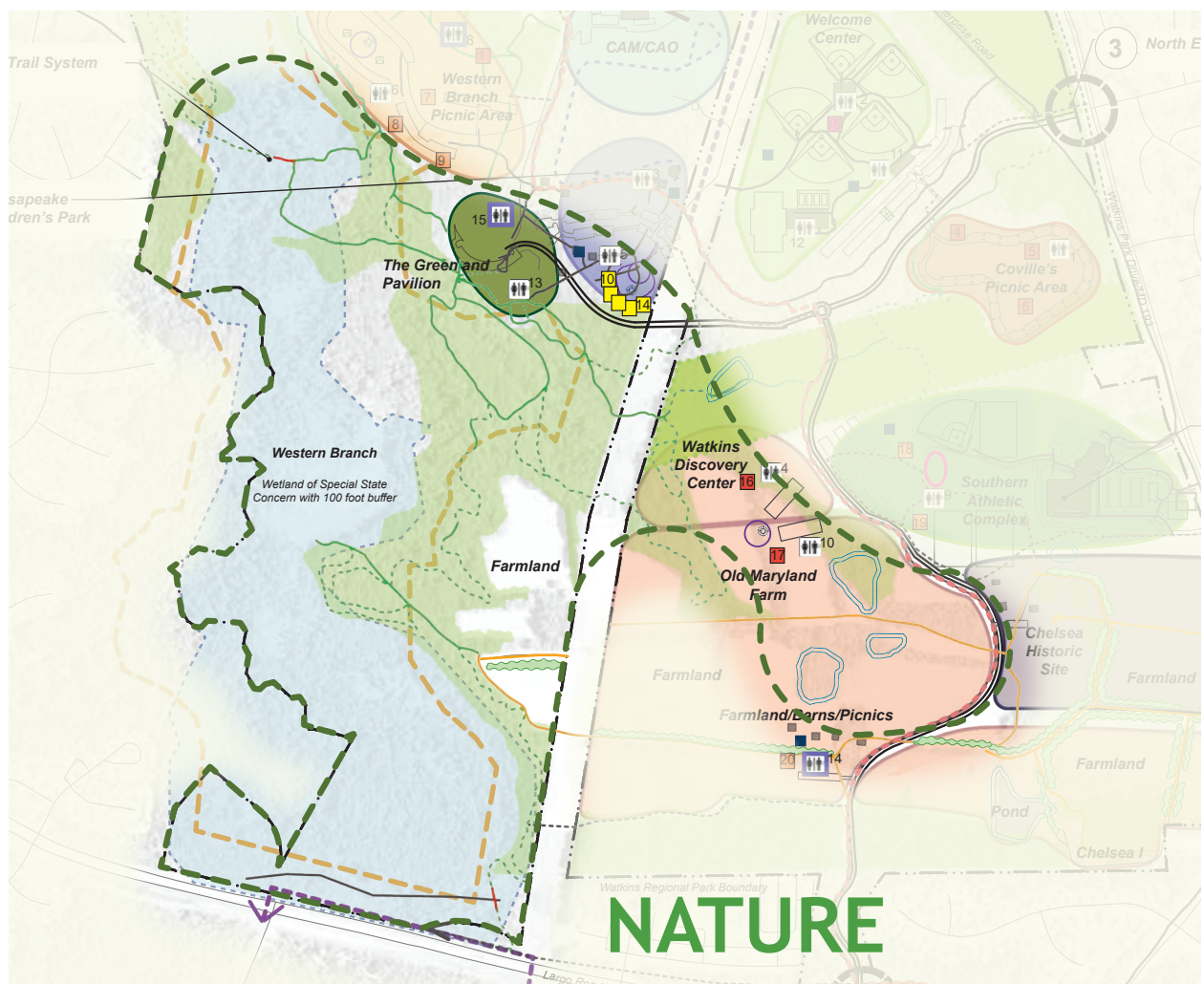


Diagram emphasizing the final recommendations for the NATURE quadrant

<b>Table 4-5. Who Served - Nature: Existing and Proposed Activities</b>						
<b>NATURE</b>	<b>Young kids</b>	<b>Middle school</b>	<b>High school</b>	<b>Young adults</b>	<b>Adults</b>	<b>Seniors</b>
<b>Watkins Discovery Center</b>						
Active nature and educational programming	x	x	x	x	x	x
1 Picnic shelter	x	x	x	x	x	x
Exhibit space	x	x	x	x	x	x
Classrooms	x	x	x	x	x	x
Multi-use spaces (for meetings, special events, training, rentals)	x	x	x	x	x	x
Kitchen	x	x	x	x	x	x
Offices						
Wet/dry lab	x	x	x			
Craft/birthday camp	x	x				
Auditorium	x	x	x	x	x	x
Gift shop	x	x	x	x	x	x
Animal care (cakes, raptors, etc.)	x	x	x	x	x	x
Woodland Nature Play environment	x	x				
Catering/event facility/dining terrace				x	x	x
Joint teen programs		x	x			
Legend	Existing			Proposed		

## WATKINS DISCOVERY CENTER

Watkins Nature Center (WNC) is one of the most treasured features within the park, for those who can find it. Located in the western portion of the park, it is not visible from any park drive. Some attendees at the public meetings and the stakeholder meetings, held in the park at WNC, had never been to or known of the WNC until they attended a Watkins Regional Park planning meeting. One of the individuals had been visiting the park for over thirty years. Even hidden, WNC is one of the most popular features in the park. Much discussion regarding relocating it to the southern portion of the park took place. Unlike the rapid consensus on the value of relocating OMF, the relocation of WNC discussion, although ultimately supported, was met with mixed feelings.

A new center needs to be more than a traditional nature center, expanding its programming and educational offerings to tweens, teens, and adults, while still successfully serving young children. The current WNC has very limited indoor exhibit area and classroom space and its infrastructure is undersized for its needs. Prince George's County has 4-5 nature centers; Watkins being one of the most successful. The public school system offers an extensive outdoor and environmental education program. As the Watkins Discovery Center (WDC) program and facilities are solidified and developed, care must be taken to ensure that what is proposed is distinct from other county offerings, both within the Department of Parks and Recreation system and the public schools.

### *What is the New Watkins Discovery Center (WDC)?*

The new WDC, relocated to the southern portion of the park, is an expanded facility serving families, tweens, middle and high schoolers for day activities with a complex of classrooms, multi-use spaces, conference rooms, and special event space, that can be shared with OMF and made available for general rental when not used by WDC or OMF.

The proposed location for the new WDC is adjacent to a wealth of natural resources. Immediately south of high priority forest land<sup>8</sup> and a stream, the new location is closely associated with a range of ecosystems that can be incorporated into programming and activities. Just south of the former campground and west of the new park drive, the location is within walking distance of the developed core of the northern portion of the park. An extensive trail network of paved and natural trails is proposed to link to this area of the park and its existing trail system. Its new location offers an array of outdoor environments for outdoor education and interpretation, introducing the visitor to the park's rich resources.

### *Tie to Surrounding Landscape and Cultural History*

The location for the WDC was thoughtfully chosen, integrating with the surrounding agriculture and connecting thousands of park users each year to the beauty of nature. It is imperative that the new WDC tie into the architecture of existing buildings as well as the landscape, with minimal impact to the land.

### *Who Served and Why Needed*

The Watkins Discovery Center will serve adjacent neighbors, school children, and park users. The WDC serves as a knowledge base, a place where park users can visit and obtain information about the history of the park, agriculture, and its importance to the history and the future of Prince George's County. Programs should be offered that educate park users about wildlife and the environment and provide exhibits of wildlife while conveying their role and the importance of retaining undisturbed habitat. WDC will educate users about the vulnerability of the landscape, yet promote a sustainable and resilient future. There is immense value in making nature accessible, showcasing

<sup>8</sup> Images of extensive, mature forest canopy cover for this area are visible on the 1937 aerial photos.

### **Recommendations to Ensure a Clear Differentiation between the**

### **Watkins Discovery Center**

### **and the**

### **William Schmidt Center**

Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS)

- Focus on day users
- Focus on family use
- Establish vision of southern portion by integrating farmland, history, natural setting with expansion of current programming
- Incorporation of live animals at OMF
- Continued partnership with Schmidt Center and current Watkins Nature Center for classroom/activity use for first graders from northern portion of Prince George's County (bus ride too long otherwise for a day trip) participating in Schmidt Center led activities
- Renovation of existing pond in south



environmental initiative, educating park users on environmental issues and benefits, and connecting them to wildlife. Through the use of hands-on experience and interpretive media, the mission of the WDC is to foster good environmental stewardship in the park through conducting a variety of on-site and outreach activities for people of all ages.

### *Character and Style of New Facility*

The character and style of the new facility shall be modern and functional and integrate the surrounding historic architecture and landscape. The three images on this page illustrate three existing facilities, all approximately the size and construction cost envisioned for the WDC at Watkins Regional Park. These illustrations are meant to provide examples of three different ways communities have created a facility with a similar program. The Watkins project will differ, of course, and reflect the values and dreams of the community. A separate planning and design process to develop a concept and building design for the center will occur when the project is closer to being funded.

The facility should have state-of-the-art infrastructure, yet provide affordable and attractive multi-purpose rooms, usable space for programs and field trips, interactive exhibits, and outdoor play space. The



Knoch Knolls Nature Center, Naperville, Illinois



Aldo Leopold Nature Center, Monona Campus, Monona, Wisconsin



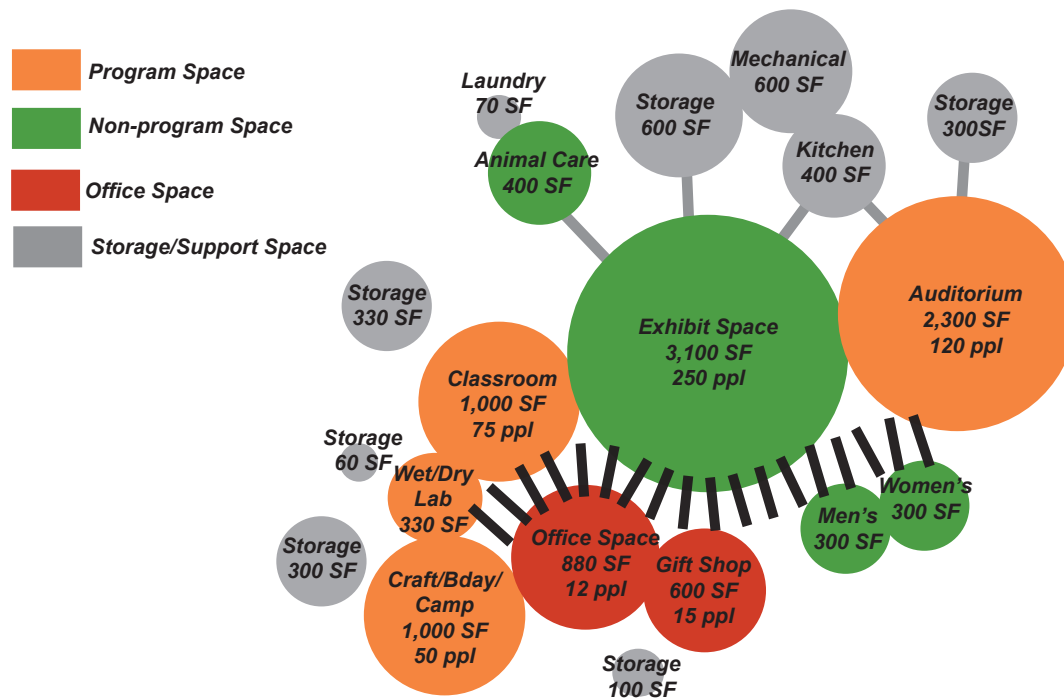
Indian Creek Nature Center, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

facility should be accessible to people with disabilities. Consideration should be given to achieving the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold standard for education buildings. LEED provides a framework to create healthy, efficient, and cost-saving green buildings.

The overall image of the new Watkins Discovery Center should be semi-transparent, built with high quality, fire resistant materials, and incorporate simple silhouettes recalling local tobacco barns and wood and glass facades that create a dynamic aesthetic directly relating to the surrounding landscape. Use of local building materials will compliment the local character of the structure.

### *Draft Proposed Program for the Watkins Discovery Center*

Park staff have developed a proposed building program, as summarized below. This program was used to test the viability of the site and to identify potential building styles and arrangements. Further refinement of the program and site plan will be required as the idea moves from a plan recommendation to a fully developed and functional new center of activity within the park.



Space planning diagram for proposed Watkins Discovery Center indoor program per suggested program

Hands on, experiential learning is prized in the current WNC. This approach is reflected in the building style and its indoor and outdoor exhibits. The plan recommends that this character be incorporated when the facility is relocated to the south. Examples of other facilities around the country, with construction costs in the range of 3.5 million to 7 million dollars, were sought during the planning process.

### Indoor Area Program Rooms

At a minimum, five rooms of varying sizes are needed to serve the new facility with an expanded mission to serve a full range of park visitors.

- Large room with kitchen for programs/meetings/trainings/rentals—room to hold up to 120 people (large storage area for tables, chairs, and audio/visual equipment) with an attached full kitchen with refrigerator/freezer, sink, microwave, stove/oven, and plenty of counter space

- Classroom to hold up to 75 people auditorium style (large storage area for program supplies, tables, and chairs)
- Craft/birthday party/camp/rental room—to hold up to 50 people with tables and chairs and a sink area (storage area for craft supplies, table, and chairs)
- Combination Wet/Dry Lab—to hold up to 30 people with 6 computer workstation setups inside the lab and water access (wet labs require proper ventilation for chemicals); includes a storage area for science experiment equipment
- Laundry facilities (could be shared with OMF)

#### Non-program Room Space

- Large exhibit hall area, at a minimum twice its current size at the WNC—holds up to 250 people with animal tanks and 3 indoor bird cages with proper electric infrastructure for animal care (exhibit hall area must provide enough room to put in museum quality hands-on educational exhibits, taxidermy displays, and live animal displays; with immediate access to outdoor pond and bird feeding areas)
- Large animal care room, at a minimum twice the size of the current facility, with plenty of storage space (cabinets) for supplies and food including sink area, large chest freezer, refrigerator, washer/dryer, and lots of counter space
- Restrooms adequate to serve the visitor population<sup>9</sup>

#### Storage Space

- Large indoor storage area for exhibit and program supplies
- Storage space for tools, bird seed storage, utilities (bulbs, power cords, etc.)
- Utility closet with sink (for cleaning crew) and drain

#### Miscellaneous Rooms

- Office for Director (with storage)
- Administrative staff (greeter)
- Office supply room
- Large office area for 2 full time naturalists and 6 part time naturalists to share
- Office support equipment (copier, at least 2 computer workstations, filing cabinets, and book shelves for professional field guides and reference books)
- Gift Shop—able to hold 10-15 people at a time

#### Outdoor Area

##### Program Areas

- Outdoor classroom—fenced in pavilion to hold up to 80 people with tables and storage cabinet for wetland study supplies, chalkboard, etc.
- Large amphitheater area to sit 120 people with stage and one large fire pit (include electric and running water)
- Outdoor, fenced in space for an accessible sensory garden and space for a native plant hummingbird/butterfly garden with benches

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<sup>9</sup> Potential number of stalls (further research to meet code and need requirements needed - minimum of 3 stalls and 3 urinals for men's rooms; minimum of 6 stalls for women's)



### **Park Supporting Features**

- Outdoor dining terrace overlooking the best view of the farmlands; located directly adjacent to the kitchen

### **Exhibit Areas**

- Large raptor mew to house at least 8 birds of prey (double door system with private back area for treatment—include running water, electric and storage area)
- One flight aviary
- Permanent structures
- Outdoor pond area

### **Miscellaneous**

- Large outdoor storage shed for larger tools for trail work and garden work
- Shared spaces with OMF—like leisure area, greenhouse, lunch area for schools, etc.

### **Supporting Infrastructure**

Similar to that of OMF, the WDC will require a new 150-person capacity picnic shelter for use in conjunction with its programming and for its visitors. Parking for passenger vehicles, as well as passenger vans and buses is required.

A new playground, Woodland Nature Play environment, for use in conjunction with the OMF is proposed. Located near these two facilities, its theme can reinforce their missions. A nature/science/agricultural based theme is recommended for a playground that is experiential, offers hands-on learning and manipulatable features, and incorporates climbing towers and water features in the form of a splash pad, running water feature, or hand pump for irrigation. This playground may take the form of a children's garden with playground features incorporated throughout. Examples include the Children's Garden at the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden and the Morten Arboretum in Illinois.

**NATURE PARKING SUMMARY**

Summary of Parking Space Supply and Demand			
	Existing	Needed/Required	Total Available per MPDP
<b>Watkins Discovery Center</b>			
	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 33 spaces for 1 picnic shelter</li> <li>• 50-75 for initial WDC operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add 85-120 spaces</li> </ul>
(1) Picnic shelter ratio determined by shelter capacity - assume 3 passengers per vehicle			

**NATURE PHASING SUMMARY****Phase 2B**

Action	Cost	Details
<b>Watkins Nature Center (WNC)/Watkins Discovery Center (WDC)</b>		
1. Relocate and reframe Watkins Nature Center into the Watkins Discovery Center with an expanded mission and outreach effort (incorporate restroom 4 in building)	\$\$\$\$	Develop new, extended facility in the southern portion of the park to serve families, tweens, middle, and high schoolers for day activities (no overnight facilities), complex of classrooms, multi-use spaces (use for meetings, conferences, special events, and training workshops and classrooms) and made available for general rental when not in use by WDC and OMF
2. Add picnic shelter number 16	\$	Add 1 new group rental picnic shelter (150 person capacity) WDC use primarily, with rental option
3. Add parking	\$	Add 85-120 parking for picnic shelter and WDC; with space allocated to accommodate total buildout of 250+
4. Nature/Agriculture/Science based experiential playground with water feature/splash pad/running water	\$\$\$	
Key: \$ - Under \$250,000; \$\$ Between \$250,000–\$500,000; \$\$\$ Between \$500,000–\$1,000,000; \$\$\$\$ Over \$1,000,000		

## Central Area Support Facilities

### CENTRAL AREA MAINTENANCE (CAM)

Central Area Maintenance serves all of Prince George's County Department of Parks and Recreation's Central Region properties. CAM handles all maintenance projects, including large-scale, technical work involving the trades such as carpentry, electrical, HVAC, masonry, painting, plumbing, and welding. Currently located in the northern end of Watkins Regional Park, additional room is needed for its expansion—estimated at 348,480 square feet or 8 acres<sup>10</sup> to accommodate indoor facilities and outdoor storage. The combination of the existing campus of the CAM and the former site of OMF will yield the desired 8 acres of space. The Watkins Regional Park Master Park Development Plan proposes the expansion of the CAM facility into the OMF site following the relocation of OMF to the southern portion of the park.

### CENTRAL AREA OFFICE (CAO)

Currently the CAO is located in the administrative building in the Northern Athletic Complex. Located in the first park building that many visitors encounter, many park believe the building is a Watkins Regional Park information center. However, the CAO serves the entire central region of Prince George's County and most of its staff are occupied with work and projects outside of Watkins Regional Park.

The park will be better served by using the site as a true information center, relocating the staff currently housed in its cramped environment elsewhere, either within the park or outside of it. Several options within the park are worth consideration. One, building in tandem with the expansion of the CAM facility in the far north of the park; or two, building a facility in conjunction with improvements in the southern portion of the park. The CAO will require 8,000 square feet to accommodate 20 current staff positions and space for a conference room, copy room, storage, restrooms, kitchenette, and lobby seating.

### Central Region Support Facilities Located in Watkins Regional Park Phasing Summary Phase 2B

Action	Cost	Details
<b>CAM</b>		
1. Expand CAM	\$\$\$\$	Re-purpose former OMF site for use with CAM facility; Consider partial relocation to Walker Mill Park (approximately 8 acre site)
2. Close Festival of Lights storage facility	\$	Close Festival of Lights storage facility at park entrance at Watkins Park Drive and consolidate with outdoor storage found throughout park at CAM site (approximately 20,000 sf)
3. Close outdoor storage in northeastern corner of park	\$	Consolidate with other storage at expanded CAM site (approximately 28,000 sf)
<b>CAO</b>		
1. Relocate CAO	\$\$\$\$	Relocate CAO to expanded CAM complex or off-site
Key: \$ - Under \$250,000; \$\$ Between \$250,000–\$500,000; \$\$\$ Between \$500,000–\$1,000,000; \$\$\$\$ Over \$1,000,000		

<sup>10</sup> Email from Edward Wheeling, 4/28/17



## Circulation

The ease that visitors find, arrive, and enter the park, and then find their destination, is dependent upon a clear circulation system. The master park development plan makes recommendations to improve and expand the circulation system for visitors on foot, on bike, or scooter, or by vehicle.

### EXTERNAL PARK ACCESS

Greeting the park visitor, and then orienting them with attractive signage and clear directions to get them easily to their destination, establishes their initial impression of the park's offerings. Park entry drives and arrival zones will benefit from better definition and clarity.

### *Vehicular Park Entrances for Park Visitors*

The original entrance to the park is located on MD 193 (Watkins Park Drive). It provides direct access to the northern portion of the park. The entry drive's alignment has shifted over the years, absorbing the route employed during the annual Festival of Lights. This configuration has resulted in a series of early decision and ninety degree turns as one enters the park. The park's northern entry drive should be reconfigured to better improve internal circulation and to provide bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The new two-way drive should follow the alignment of the current exit only lane, with a planted median separating traffic.

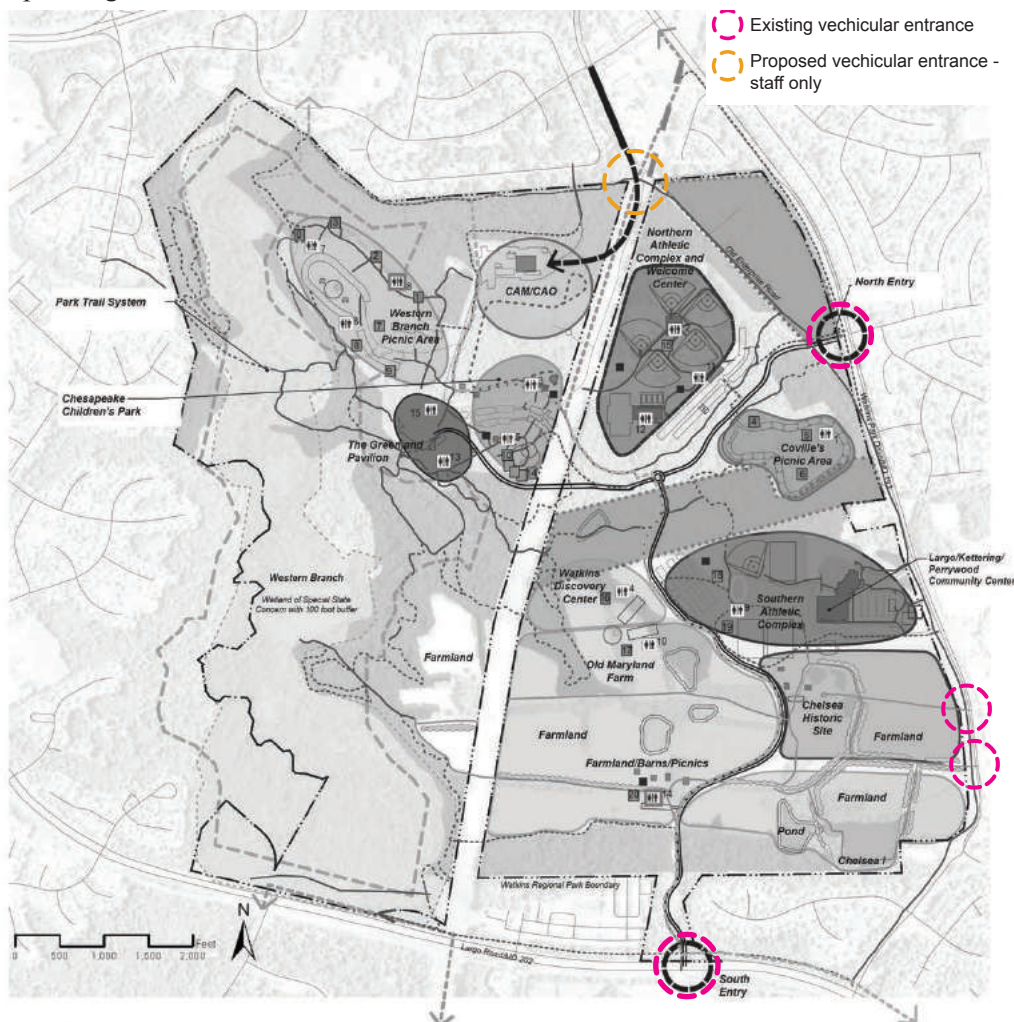


Diagram illustrating vehicular entrances to park

This plan recommends that improvements to the intersection with Watkins Park Drive and the entry drive's alignment be evaluated. Maryland State Highway Administration (MD SHA) should explore and evaluate further improvements to the two primary vehicular entrances to the park, both located on state controlled roads. In particular, SHA should be requested to evaluate further improvements to the existing Watkins Regional Park northern entry off of Watkins Park Drive/MD 193 to improve safety and increased vehicular and pedestrian movements that will result due to planned enhancements to the park. This plan recommends that SHA include the provision of a two-lane roundabout among the options to be evaluated.

The southern portion of the park is served by a new major park entrance that was opened in 2015, connecting the park to MD 202 (Largo Road). Additional driveways in the southern portion of the site provide direct access between Watkins Park Drive and the Chelsea Historic Site, Chelsea I, and Largo/Kettering/Perrywood Community Center.

### *Central Area Maintenance (CAM) Access*

Watkins Regional Park is home to the Central Area Maintenance (CAM) facility along with a county fuel station. Traffic to and from the CAM shares the park drive with passenger vehicles, and maintenance vehicles occasionally use the Old Enterprise Road stub that is a segment of the paved loop trail. Emergency access/egress connects to Wimbledon Street in the single family neighborhood to the north of the CAM. Portions of the emergency access drive also serve as a segment of the paved loop trail.

The plan recommends rerouting the CAM traffic away from the park visitor drive and improving CAM access. Two options are proposed, each will require further study. The first is to exit the CAM to the north and travel north on the Pepco property, connecting and using the existing right-of-way (row) of the Old Enterprise Road<sup>11</sup> segment northwest of the Pepco property. Intersecting with Chesterton Drive, CAM traffic will then exit onto MD 193 (Watkins Park Drive) at an existing traffic signal. Alternatively, another option is to continue north on the Pepco property until intersecting with Watkins Park Drive. This route presents more some topographic challenges that need to be addressed and does not have a signal at the intersection with MD 193 (Watkins Park Drive) to more easily enable left turn exits. Either of these alternatives enable the removal of all CAM related vehicles from internal park drives. The new alignment will also provide maintenance vehicle access to a signalized intersection on Watkins Park Drive.

### *Pedestrian Park Entrances*

In addition to sidewalks connected with the vehicular entrances, pedestrian and bicycle access is provided at multiple trail connections. These should be made more visible, and additional connections created, in order to link adjacent neighborhoods with the park. Western Branch, located in the western third of the park, forms a barrier to easy park access from the west and northwest. Two potential trail connections are proposed by the plan—a paved trail connection north of the Western Branch Picnic Area that connects the park to the Kettering neighborhood and a boardwalk and bridge system that crosses the Western Branch, connecting to the neighborhoods west of the park. Existing park entrances, all indicated by colored circles on the trail diagram, are to remain in place.

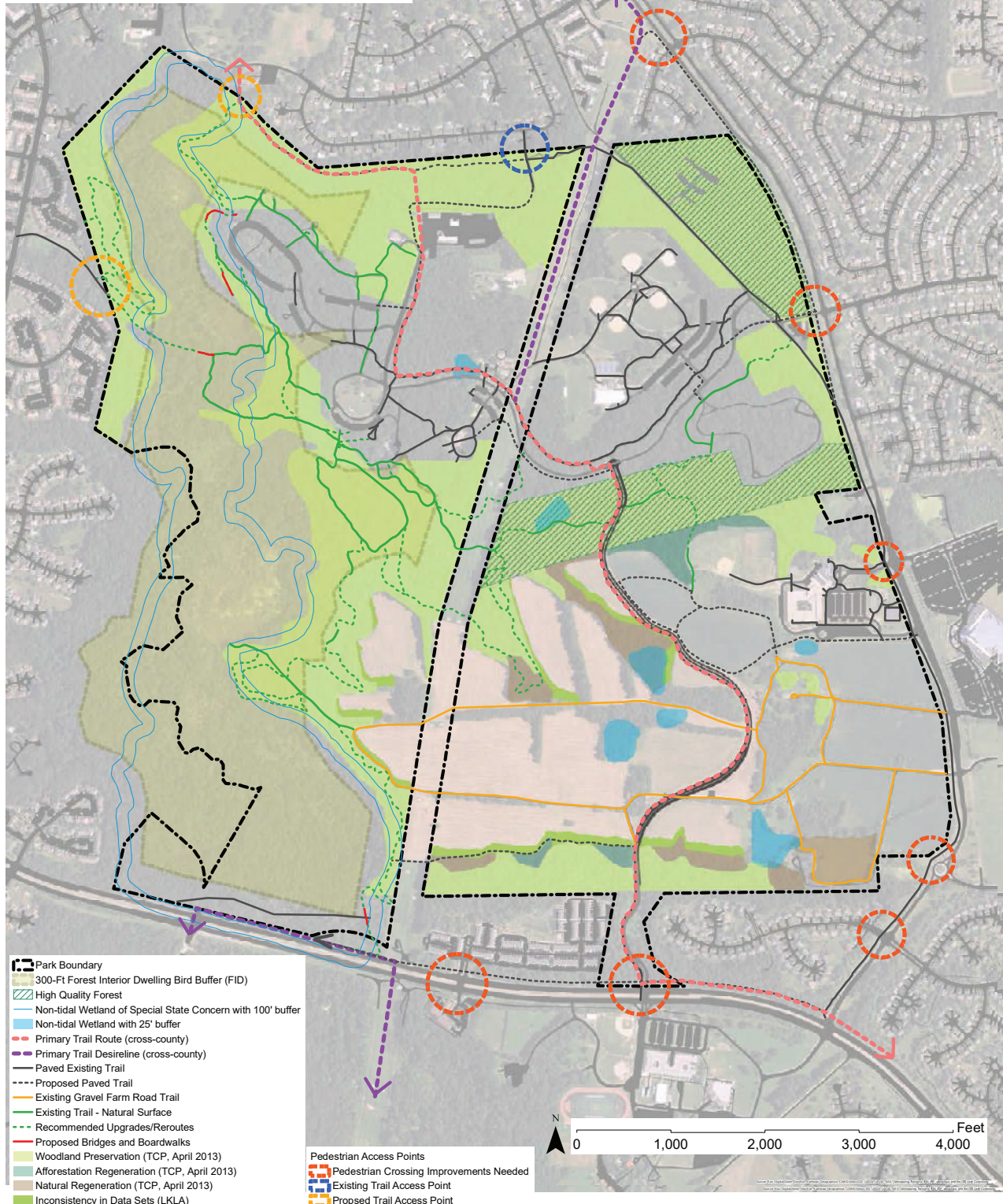
<sup>11</sup> Department of Parks and Recreation staff conversation with Tom Masog at the Planning Department's Transportation Section conversation confirmed the viability of pursuing reopening Old Enterprise Road as a maintenance vehicle road (not a public access road) access to the park. Old Enterprise Road is still considered to be a transportation right-of-way, even though it is not in use. Permission from Pepco for use of their property for such an alignment is required.



# WATKINS REGIONAL PARK MASTER PARK DEVELOPMENT PLAN

## Proposed Trail Adjustments

### Draft 10/05/17





## INTERNAL PARK CIRCULATION

Watkins Regional Park has grown organically since its inception in the 1960s. As a result of that growth pattern, there are conflict points between pedestrians and vehicles. There are not any designated bus pull-offs are located at high volume activity areas such as the *Wizard of Oz* playground. The trail system has grown in popularity, substantiated by the trail counter that was put in place in the summer of 2016.

### *Paved Trails*

Paved trails within the park are one of the best tools to introduce visitors to the other resources found within the park. Most of the paved trails meet ADA standards and are wide enough to accommodate walkers, bikers, and hikers. There is an established paved loop in the northern portion of the park, partially built from the former Old Enterprise Road stub that, per the plan recommendations, will be closed to vehicular use upon construction of a secondary vehicle access to the CAM to the north. The paved loop continues, encircling the Chesapeake Children's Park and the Northern Athletic Complex.

Heavily used by visitors, the plan extends the paved trail system to the south as well. The existing paved loop in the north should remain much the same as its current configuration except where it is relocated to accommodate the closure and relocation of the OMF and the expansion of CAM. The paved trail is rerouted to the north and west of the current CAM location.

Remnant gravel paved trails are a legacy of the site's current and past use for agriculture purposes. The network of farm lanes, one lane wide, are re-purposed as biking and hiking trails, and could also be used intermittently for farm equipment and maintenance vehicles to access fields and pastures.

### *Natural Surface Trails*

Watkins Regional Park has an extensive system of natural surfaced trails, threaded throughout the northern and southern portions of the park. The master park development plan recommends some new alignments to address erosion, standing water, and slope concerns to the existing trail network. In addition, new trails and extensions to the existing system are included in the plan. In particular, the relocation of WNC requires the development of a robust sub network of trails, connecting the new WDC to the adjacent natural resources of the nearby stream, the high quality forest, and the nontidal wetlands. Adding trails in this area requires a balance between providing access for educational and experiential purposes and the protection of those resources.

A more extensive natural surface trail system has been added to the western edge of the park, better connecting the west side neighbors to the park. Again, the challenge is to not damage the very resource that is attracting the visitor—in this case a Wetland of Special State Concern and a FID. This trail network will provide park access and a park activity for the communities bordering on the western side of the park, linking to the park's natural surface trails system with a natural surface loop trail in an upland area outside of the floodplain. A potential trail alignment on the



Chelsea Manor driveway to Watkins Park Drive

west side of the park could follow the recently cleared WSSC sewer line right-of-way. A bridge could connect this route with the Wetland/Spicebush Trail.

Access to nature within the park, including for those with varying physical disabilities, is provided by an accessible loop natural surface trail near the *Wizard of Oz* playground. Accessible trails are available for use by all park visitors. If the surface materials meet specific ADA guidelines for degree of firmness and stability, the trails can be surfaced with a variety of materials ranging from crushed stone or gravel, boardwalks or dirt.

### *Separate Pedestrians and Vehicles*

New development should separate pedestrian activity from vehicular use. Park roads should not cut between parking and pedestrian and activity areas. Dedicated pedestrian spaces should connect parking areas with all activity areas. In existing areas of the park, particularly near the Chesapeake Children's Park, the existing park drive should be relocated to the south of the existing five picnic shelters, removing it from bifurcating the heavily used area.



Diagram illustrating realignment of park entry drive to avoid bisecting active pedestrian area



### ***Bicycle Rental/Bike Share program***

A park the size of Watkins Regional Park will benefit from alternative ways of moving people within the park, other than by private vehicles or on foot. Bike shares or bike concessions offer an alternative and potential revenue producing source for the park. A bike share program, which provides short-term shared use for individuals, could be provided in multiple locations within the park—with riders checking bikes out at Point A and returning the bike to Point B. A robust bicycle livery or rental program could offer a range of bicycles from standard to tandem, to three-wheeled and four-wheeled jitneys that can carry four or more passengers. As the park expands and its activities fill its entire 839 acres, bicycles or similarly wheeled vehicles can help keep activities within a short pedal of each other.



Four-wheel bike rental in Hancock, MD

### **PARKING**

In 2016, the park provided approximately 930 parking spaces for the public and staff use throughout the entire park, excluding the parking provided at the Largo/Kettering/Perrywood Community Center, the CAM, and the Festival of Lights storage area. The shortage of parking is of concern to park users and staff. However, unlike shopping centers or office uses that make use of parking formulas in zoning ordinances to determine parking requirements, parking ratios for park activities are less clearly defined. Some activities, such as athletic fields, have standard rules of thumb based on team size and use. For example, tournament fields assessed at 80 vehicles per field accounts for four teams, two on the field and two teams playing before or after the current game. Similarly, a ratio for permitted picnic shelters can be generated by accounting for the permit number divided by three, the assumed number of passengers used with vehicle counts by park staff. For other uses such as playgrounds or the carousel, parking needs are more difficult to predict. A chart noting the assumptions for parking ratios used in this plan are included in Appendix 3.

Most importantly, visitors come to a park to visit the park, not to see a sea of parking lots. It is difficult to find a balance between providing enough parking to reduce or eliminate parking friction without providing so much permanent parking that is underused. Making use of informal overflow parking areas and internal people movers, such as shuttle buses or bike rentals, will reduce the number of permanent parking spaces needed. The plan spreads parking lots throughout the entire park, making the argument that a number of well-placed smaller parking lots are more appropriate than large, centrally-located parking lots.

The chart on the following page summarizes the existing and proposed number of parking spaces in specific areas within Watkins Regional Park.



Summary of Parking Space Supply and Demand			
	Existing	Needed/Required	Total Available per MPDP
<b>Western Branch Picnic Area</b>			
	446	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>300 spaces for 7 picnic shelters (1)</li> <li>Additional spaces for use by hikers, playground and splash pad use, overflow from picnic shelters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>446 spaces (existing)</li> </ul>
<b>Chesapeake Children's Park</b>			
	94	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>83 spaces for 5 picnic shelters (1)</li> <li>Additional space demand to support playground, carousel, train, mini-golf, general access uses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>83 spaces (existing)</li> <li>Add 80-100 paved spaces on Pepco property to the east or new lot west of the existing lot</li> <li>Continue informal overflow parking</li> </ul>
<b>Northern Athletic Complex and Park Welcome Center</b>			
	293	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>475-545 spaces for athletic fields, tennis courts, Welcome Center and general use (number assumes full use of all fields at field capacity use, appropriate for tournament use)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>293 spaces (existing)</li> <li>Extend existing lots to the west and add 80-100 spaces</li> <li>Add up to 100-150 overflow spaces at former campground</li> </ul>
<b>The Green and Outdoor Pavilion</b>			
	89	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>66 spaces for the 200 person pavilion</li> <li>40 spaces for The Green</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>89 spaces (existing)</li> <li>Overflow use Chesapeake Children's Park and Western Branch Picnic Area</li> </ul>
<b>Old Maryland Farm</b>			
	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>33 spaces for 1 picnic shelter</li> <li>50-75 for initial OMF operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add 85-120 spaces</li> </ul>
<b>Watkins Discovery Center</b>			
	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>33 spaces for 1 picnic shelter</li> <li>50-75 for initial WDC operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add 85-120 spaces</li> </ul>
<b>Coville's Picnic Area</b>			
	N/A (former campground)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>150 spaces for 3 picnic shelters</li> <li>Overflow parking for Northern Athletic Complex</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add 150-300 spaces</li> </ul>
<b>Southern Athletic Complex</b>			
	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>80 spaces for per athletic field</li> <li>67 spaces for 2 picnic shelters</li> <li>25 spaces for other activities such as bike track, ropes course, or similar</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add 250- 260 spaces</li> </ul>
<b>Chelsea Historic Site Outbuildings</b>			
	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15-20 spaces for hikers, picnickers, bike riders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add 15-20 spaces</li> </ul>
<b>Farmland/Barns/Picnic Complex</b>			
	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>33 for 1 picnic shelter</li> <li>Drop-in visitor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add 50 spaces</li> </ul>
(1) Picnic shelter ratio determined by shelter capacity - assume 3 passengers per vehicle			

## CIRCULATION PHASING SUMMARY

## Phase 1A

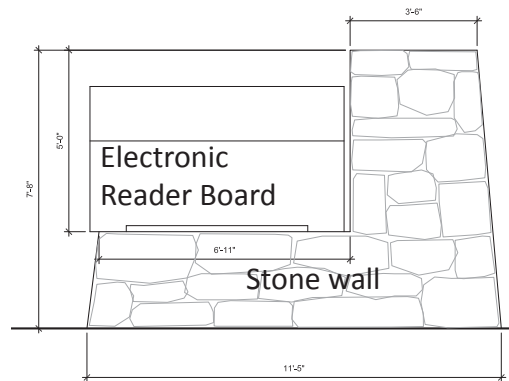
Action	Cost	Details
<b>Southern Portion of the Park</b>		
1. Incorporate trails on existing farm roads and add links to existing system	\$\$	Create a slow stroll learning/looking sequence of paths and trails woven through the farmlands in the southern portion of the park—treat some trails more formally and others informally to appeal to all kinds of hikers and bikers; Re-purpose the existing gravel drives in the southern portion of the park for walking and biking and connect to adjacent neighborhoods per the Trail Master Plan
2. Add Wayfinding System	\$\$	Add Wayfinding to southern portion of the park
Key: \$ - Under \$250,000; \$\$ Between \$250,000–\$500,000; \$\$\$ Between \$500,000–\$1,000,000; \$\$\$\$ Over \$1,000,000		

## Phase 3A

Action	Cost	Details
<b>Improve Circulation in Northern Portion of the Park</b>		
1. Enhance Watkins Park Drive Entry	\$\$\$	Realign park entry drive to improve circulation and to provide bicycle and pedestrian facilities
2. Add pedestrian bridge over Western Branch	\$\$\$\$	New pedestrian bridge with stream access adjacent to piers to serve WDC needs and to provide stream access to visitors
Key: \$ - Under \$250,000; \$\$ Between \$250,000–\$500,000; \$\$\$ Between \$500,000–\$1,000,000; \$\$\$\$ Over \$1,000,000		

## Phase 3B

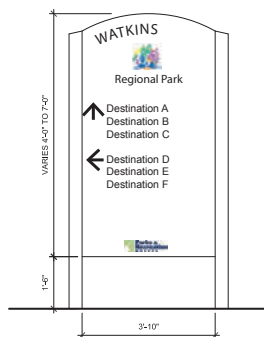
Action	Cost	Details
<b>Improve Circulation in Northern Portion of the Park</b>		
1. Improve North Entry to park with MD 193 (Watkins Park Drive)	\$\$\$\$	MPOT recommended that the Master Park Development Plan request that the SHA explore and evaluate further improvements to the existing Watkins Park access road intersection with MD 193 to improve safety and increased vehicular and pedestrian movements that will result with planned enhancements to the park. It is further recommended that SHA includes provision of a two-lane roundabout among the lists options to be evaluated.
Key: \$ - Under \$250,000; \$\$ Between \$250,000–\$500,000; \$\$\$ Between \$500,000–\$1,000,000; \$\$\$\$ Over \$1,000,000		



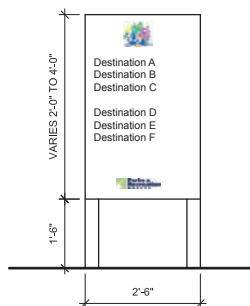
Park entrance sign



Park welcome sign



Park vehicular directional sign



Park pedestrian/trail directional sign

## Wayfinding

There are seven broad categories of sign types currently found within the park. They are:

- Entrance Sign - Park entrances provide the first impression of the Watkins identity. Located at the two primary park entrances, electronic reader boards make available current and upcoming events within the park.
- Welcome Sign - Located at key vehicle and pedestrian intersections upon entering the park, welcome signs reinforce the 'you are here' message in a friendly and attractive manner. The signs may also display websites and phone numbers for more information.
- Directional Sign—Vehicular - Directional signs are placed along roadways and at intersections. Some may incorporate a large map, or snapshot descriptions with photos of key attractions.
- Directional Sign—Pedestrian/Trail - Similar in style and messaging to those for vehicular orientation, the pedestrian and trail directional signs are placed at trail entries, pedestrian paths and at major decision points for walkers.
- Destination Sign - These signs identify facilities and destinations, significant features like Old Maryland Farm or the Watkins Discovery Center. These may have specific logos or branding reinforcing that particular destination and its character.
- Informational Sign - Park interpretation should be provided along trails and at places of special interest such as the historic landscapes and barns.
- Regulation Sign - Park rules such as no parking or no turn-around should be placed in appropriate locations.



## Infrastructure

Watkins Regional Park is a large and complex park with aging infrastructure in need of significant upgrade or replacement. Its southern portion, approximately 200 acres, is currently undeveloped and will require significant investment in infrastructure to support the proposed uses in this area of the park.

As described in the assessment of the existing site conditions, investment in the sewer, water, and electrical service will require a significant commitment of public dollars.

## PUBLIC WATER

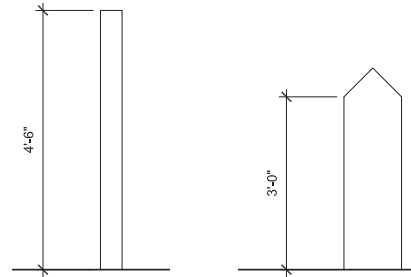
The water system in the northern portion of the park is inadequate and will either require full replacement or significant upgrades. Adequate pressure to operate sprinkler systems in buildings and to serve code-required fire hydrants is marginally available. Any additions to the system will require additional service. Depending on the extent of the work—continued use of current distribution lines, or full replacement of all lines—costs could reach \$2,000,000 for engineering, new main construction, and replacement of distribution lines.

There is no public water service available in the southern portion of the park. Existing buildings, other than the Largo/Kettering/Perrywood Community Center, are served by private wells at each building site. Public water will need to be provided to the recommended improvements in this plan. Depending upon whether there is available capacity from service on Watkins Park Drive or if service needs to be drawn from Largo Road, costs could run to more the \$2,000,000 for both sewer and water service to the southern portion of the park.

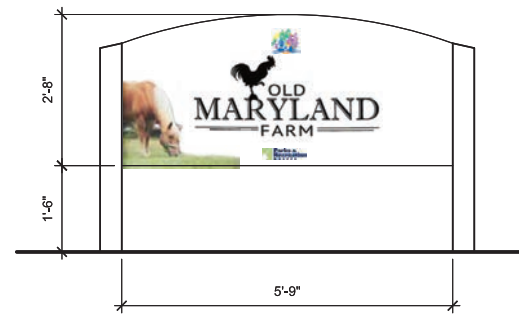
## PUBLIC SEWER

The northern portion of the park is served by public sewer, with the exception of one existing restroom north of the Western Branch Picnic Area.

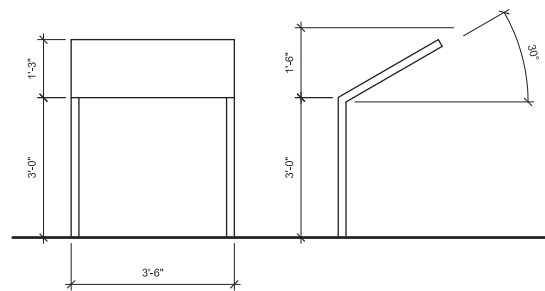
The southern portion of the site does not have access to public sewer. Any recommended improvements will require the extension of public sewer lines, or the use of compost facilities or similar alternative services.



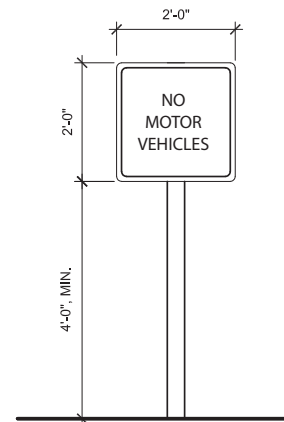
Park pedestrian/trail directional sign



Park destination sign



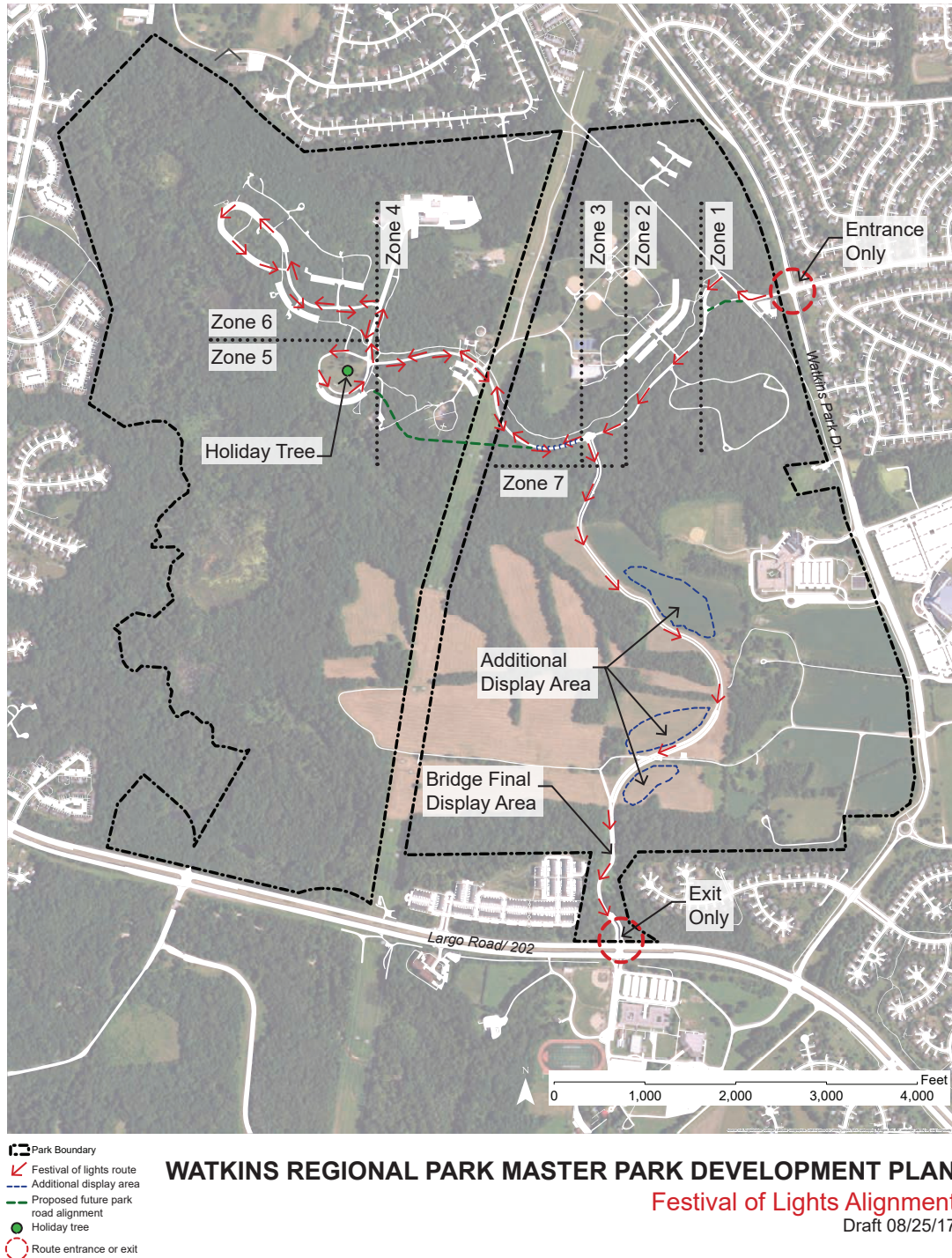
Park informational sign



Park regulation sign

## ELECTRIC

Electrical service is adequate in the northern portion of the park. There is no current service provided to the southern portion of the park with the exception of several residential buildings—Chelsea I and Chelsea Historic Site—and the Largo/Kettering/Perrywood Community Center. An initial estimate of \$250,000 will bring electric service to the southern portion of the park, and allow the Festival of Lights display to grow in this area of the park.



**CAUTIONS*****Understand Cost of Increased Maintenance***

As the park grows and expands, it is important that the increased maintenance costs for new and renewed facilities is evaluated. For example, the addition of splash pads or misters, highly desired by summer park users, will create new maintenance demands for leaf removal, seasonal cleaning and draining, and continual monitoring of water quality. Increased costs will be associated with such facilities even if the new feature is added to an existing site.

**Phase 1A**

Action	Cost	Details
<b>Park Infrastructure</b>		
1. Upgrade park utilities/water system in northern section of park	\$\$\$\$	Current system is very low on water pressure and likely 'leaks' throughout; evaluate whether repair or full replacement is warranted to address need for additional service and water pressure
2. Extend park utilities/electrical service to the south	\$\$	Extend electrical service to southern portion of park, in particular to provide service along new entryway for use with Festival of Lights expansion
3. Expand Festival of Lights driving loop and display to the southern portion of the park	\$\$	Incorporate the southern portion of the park in the Festival of Lights display
4. Add family picnic areas	\$	Individual tables, in small groups of 1-3, will provide opportunities for informal individual and family use
5. Add tree banks	\$	Incorporate for necessary screening and buffering uses within the park
Key: \$ - Under \$250,000; \$\$ Between \$250,000–\$500,000; \$\$\$ Between \$500,000–\$1,000,000; \$\$\$\$ Over \$1,000,000		

**Phase 1B**

Action	Cost	Details
<b>Park Infrastructure</b>		
1. Expand sewer, water and electric system to serve future needs in southern portion of park	\$\$\$\$	
2. Provide new, nonpublic CAM vehicle access	\$\$\$\$	Access to CAM from Watkins Park Drive (northern end); separate from public drive
Key: \$ - Under \$250,000; \$\$ Between \$250,000–\$500,000; \$\$\$ Between \$500,000–\$1,000,000; \$\$\$\$ Over \$1,000,000		



## Tying the Pieces Together

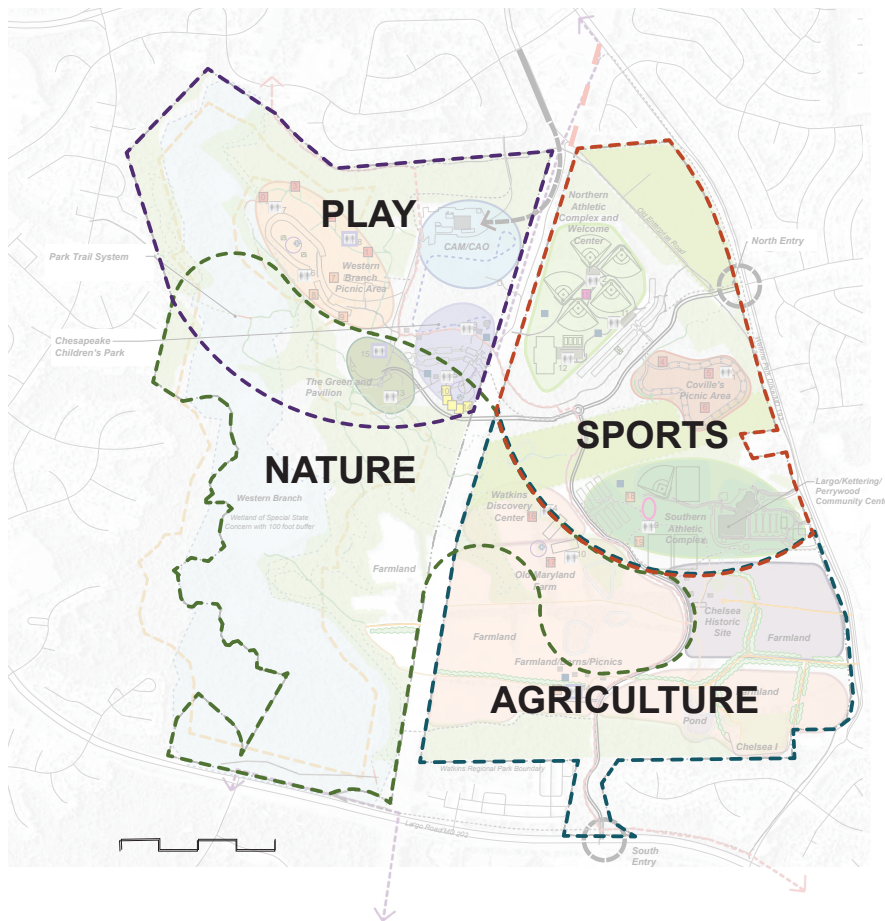


Diagram of four park quadrants

The combination of the four quadrants: **PLAY**, **SPORTS**, **AGRICULTURE**, and **NATURE** with the larger site components of circulation, infrastructure, and wayfinding creates the Watkins Regional Park Master Park Development Plan.

A complex framework of recommended actions, defined in three major phases, moves from the vision and planning stage to the improvement and expansion of the amazing resource known as Watkins Regional Park. This project has many parts, some of which are costly investments. From improvement, replacement, or additions to the park's infrastructure, to relocating Old Maryland Farm and Watkins Nature Center, to upgrading and building new athletic fields, the realization of the plan's major recommendations will require deep allocation of capital funds. The phasing recommendations take this funding challenge into account and propose a choreography of park improvements and additions over a twenty year period, in a manner that is dependent on early phasing recommendations being implemented prior to later phasing recommendations. The phasing actions and their priority (as indicated by 1, 2, 3, etc.) as outlined in the phasing charts are not random, and do build carefully on prior actions.

Watkins Regional Park will be competing with other county parks and resources for funding. The actions noted in this plan are high priorities and reflect the analysis, evaluation, public outreach, and discussion amongst all involved.

## The Plan

The diagram illustrates Watkins Regional Park following the implementation of Phases 1, 2, and 3. It is followed by a high-level summary of each of the three phases.



## Watkins Regional Park Master Park Development Plan

### LEGEND

- Primary Park Road
- Secondary Park Road
- Park Road - Staff Access Only
- Parking - new and existing
- New Trail (paved)
- New Trail (soft/gravel)
- Existing Trail (hard)
- Existing Trail (soft)
- Primary Trail Route
- Primary Trail Desireline

- Train Route
- Building/Structure
- Picnic Table Area
- Picnic Shelter - 150 capacity
- Picnic Shelter - 100 capacity
- Picnic Shelter - 50 capacity
- Picnic Shelter - special
- Picnic Shelter - 150 cap removed
- Picnic Shelter - 100 cap removed
- Playground/water feature

- Restroom - sewer/water
- Restroom - no sewer
- Restroom - removed
- Basketball Court
- Half Basketball Court
- Softball/Baseball Field
- Multi-purpose Field
- Tennis
- New sport - pump track, skate park, other

- Forest Interior Dwelling Bird Buffer (FID) - 300'
- Wetland
- High Quality Forest
- Tree Conservation Area
- Tree Bank Opportunity

## **PHASE 1—A AND 1—B: IMPROVING THE CORE**

Phase 1 is focused on reinvesting and improving the core of the park—the northern portion which has been in existence since the 1970s. Although not flashy, investing in the park’s aging infrastructure—water service and parking—will allow other improvements that are far more visible to take place. Without improved water service, restrooms cannot be upgraded, misters or splash pads cannot be added to playgrounds, and the tennis complex cannot be expanded. Certain areas of the park have a severe parking shortage. For example, ball field use is limited due to parking constraints.

Phase 1 begins to address these needs through the expansion of existing, and the addition of new, parking lots.

Most exciting, the move toward incorporating the southern portion of the park into overall park programming begins in Phase 1 with the expansion and initial relocation of the Old Maryland Farm activities. Tied to this, the barns at Chelsea Historic Site will be repurposed as a Farm Museum, becoming the new home for the collection of antique farm equipment currently housed at Billingsley. Chelsea I is repurposed as a residential home for a farm supervisor or park ranger.

Tying the northern and southern areas of the park together is the expansion of the paved and natural trail network and with the incorporation of the old farm gravel drives as a key part of the network.



## Phase 1 Summary of Proposed Actions

### Western Branch Picnic Area

- Remove 3 picnic shelters from inner circle
- Relocate half-courts and add water feature (splash pad/mister) to playground
- Renovate/replace 2 restrooms (one w/no sewer access) to make ADA compliant
- Add new rope or parkour course or similar outdoor recreation activity

### Chesapeake Children's Park

- Add family and individual picnic tables
- Expand parking west of playground parking; remove restroom in parking lot
- Add water feature (splash pad/mister) to playground
- Renovate mini-golf and add bike share/rentals operation

### Northern Athletic Complex and CAO

- Upgrade softball fields; add concession stand and replace restrooms for tournament use
- Replace tennis bubble
- Expand parking in front of CAO/tennis bubble to west
- Add family and individual picnic tables

### Old Maryland Farm/OMF

- Begin move to southern portion of the park, fence pastures and fields, begin to build OMF complex, continue farming activities
- Support re-purposing of Chelsea Historic Site outbuildings use for Farm Museum
- Add parking, 150-person capacity picnic shelter, public restrooms and individual picnic tables
- Repurpose Chelsea I for residential use in conjunction with OMF for farm supervision or demolish

### Coville's Picnic Area

- Close campground and open 3 permitted picnic shelters
- Add parking for picnic use and for overflow from Athletic Complex
- Add open play/lawn area
- Renovate restroom

### Southern Athletic Complex

- Add pump track, skate park, or other similar activity
- Add small parking area

### Chelsea Historic Site

- Stabilize and refurbish Chelsea Historic Site outbuildings/barns for use for antique farm equipment storage and display
- Add small gravel parking area off of central park drive to serve trail users and visitors to barns
- Continue active farming between Watkins Park Drive/MD 193 and house

### Southern Portion of Park

- Expand and add paved and gravel trails throughout southern portion of park
- Add wayfinding system

### Park Infrastructure

- Add small, family picnic areas
- Upgrade water system in northern park
- Add sewer, water, electric service to southern park (portions)
- Add staff/maintenance vehicle entry with no public use allowed northeast of CAM
- Expand Festival of Lights to south entry drive

## PHASE 2—A AND 2—B THE BIG MOVE

Phase 2 is focused on aggressively moving park activities into the southern portion of the park. The relocation of OMF is completed in Phase 2, freeing the former site for expansion of the Central Area Maintenance (CAM) facility. Watkins Nature Center is also relocated to the south, assuming a new name—Watkins Discovery Center—and an expanded mission with programming for all ages. The former WNC is repurposed as an enhanced pavilion and performance space, tied to ongoing activities occurring at The Green, which is also available for use during special events or as a rental facility. The Central Area Office area is relocated, either in conjunction with CAM or offsite, allowing their current building to be recycled to serve as a Park Welcome Center and potential ranger station. In addition to the OMF and WDC establishment in the south, approximately 14 acres nearby are developed for two new, multi-purpose, lighted athletic fields with a restroom and picnic facility.

### Phase 2 Summary of Proposed Actions

#### Watkins Discovery Center

- Relocate Watkins Nature Center to southern portion of the park and re-establish as the Watkins Discovery Center (WDC)
- Add nature/agriculture/science oriented experiential playground with water feature (splash pad/mister/water channels)
- Add shared complex of classrooms, multi-use spaces to be shared between OMF and WDC and as event rentals
- Add rental picnic shelter
- Add restrooms in conjunction with building

#### Farmland/Barns/Picnics

- Family picnic area
- Picnic rental shelter for 100 capacity
- Parking for 50 vehicles - gravel
- Restroom (w/o sewer service)

#### Old Maryland Farm

- Continue expansion of farm activities
- Incorporate existing barns into OMF activities
- Add animal shelters, paddocks, support structures to OMF site

#### The Green and Pavilion

- Add restrooms in conjunction with pavilion for use for Pavilion and The Green events

#### Park Welcome Center

- Renovate former CAO offices as Welcome Center and Ranger Station

#### CAM/CAO

- Relocate the Central Area Operations (CAO) in conjunction with the Central Area (CAM) Maintenance Expansion or off-site
- Expand CAM Facility into former OMF site
- Close and consolidate on-site storage facilities (Festival of Lights at park entrance and mulch storage in northeast section of park) at CAM expansion site

#### Southern Athletic Complex

- Add 2 new multi-purpose lighted athletic fields
- Add 2 new group rental/use picnic shelters and restroom
- Add parking for picnic shelters, athletic fields and casual use

## PHASE 3—A AND 3—B KNITTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Phase 3 links and ties all the renewed and new facilities together into a coherent whole by investing in a pedestrian link across the Western Branch to neighborhoods to the west and reconfiguring problematic circulation patterns such as the northern park entry and the park drive that currently bisects the Chesapeake Children's Park.

### *Phase 3 Summary of Proposed Actions*

#### **Chesapeake Children's Park**

- *Reroute park vehicular drive around the Chesapeake Children's Park; truncate existing drive and parking lot and create a pedestrian friendly, open lawn area*
- *Expand train tracks to lengthen train tour to the northwest of the current configuration*
- *Add open lawn for play, non-permitted activities*

#### **Park Trail System**

- *Add pedestrian bridge over the Western Branch to connect neighborhoods west of the park with the park*

#### **North Entry**

- *Improve park access from Watkins Park Drive/MD 193, including consideration of a traffic circle*
- *Realign entry drive within park; incorporate bicycle and pedestrian accommodations*