



STRATEGIC PLAN

2020-2023

ADOPTED BY THE CARROLL COUNTY RECREATION & PARKS ADVISORY BOARD
OCTOBER 21, 2020

MISSION STATEMENT

Connecting people, parks and programs in support of a strong, healthy community and natural environment.



VISION

We are committed to enhancing the quality of life, promoting a sense of community, facilitating lifelong learning for all ages and abilities and encouraging an appreciation of the natural environment and local history.

CORE VALUES

Excellence

We are responsive to our community's needs and expectations and continually strive to exceed them.

Creativity

We develop innovative, dynamic solutions, programs and projects.

Equity

We design policies and provide services in locations and through methods to be fair and accessible to all.

Integrity

We earn the community's trust through uncompromising ethics and honest communication.

Stewardship

We serve as responsible stewards of the community's resources, creating a legacy for this and future generations.

Innovation

We promote a culture that fosters creative thinking and strives for continuous improvement.

Community Involvement

We promote, develop and support volunteer participation.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Department goals are general statements of initiatives for achieving desired outcomes.

Department objectives are measurable and attainable milestones to be achieved in accomplishing the goal.

GOAL #1

Provide the public with excellent customer service and the best user experience possible.

- Foster professional development, offer in-service training and promote cross training that enables staff to perform their jobs effectively
- Fully implement new online registration program including improved online purchase of season passes for Piney Run and Hap Baker facilities, pavilion reservation, dog park memberships, program registration and processing of Park Legacy Fund donations
- Pursue upgrades in technology and upgrade website functionality to enhance capabilities and productivity of staff and enhance user experiences
- Increase usage of QR (Quick Response) codes and smart phone applications to enhance experiences for park visitors and as a quick means for parents to verify approved recreation council volunteers
- Utilize new registration system to offer special promotional discounts and special incentives (Black Friday sales, discount codes, etc.) to generate excitement and boost sales
- Develop and track a Citizen Complaint/Concern Form and answer public questions/concerns in less than 2 business days
- Formalize operating procedures in department manual and include general security plan
- Support and update department succession plan on an ongoing basis
- Expand usage of virtual meeting technology to support effective communication both during and after pandemic
- Complete digital mapping of park trails and develop new trail maps
- Utilize technology in parks and facilities to incorporate Wi-Fi and GIS access points where feasible for an enhanced user experience

GOAL #2

Limit dependence on local tax revenues by developing alternative funding sources.

- Develop a Department wide strategy to solicit and utilize sponsorships to help fund and publicize events
- Continue to provide support to volunteer recreation councils by funding capital improvement and self-help projects
- Develop and support ongoing relationships with donors to the Park Legacy Fund with the creation of donor societies and provide annual recognition of gifts
- Develop year-round schedule of fundraising events to serve as a revenue stream for the Park Legacy Fund
- Pursue increased funding for capital development in addition to Program Open Space and local impact fees including general fund dollars, grant opportunities from State Highway Administration transportation funds, Baltimore Regional Transportation Board funds, Maryland Heritage Area grants, Land Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) and Maryland Bikeways among others.
- Investigate public/private partnerships to develop available land at Leister & Krimgold Parks
- Explore additional revenue opportunities such as parking, concessions, special use permits, advertising, etc.
- Increase number of grant applications and monitor success rate yearly
- Continue to review park fee schedule every 3 years with next reviews scheduled for 2020 and 2023
- Add Park Legacy Fund donation information at trail heads and other strategic locations
- Submit grant applications for Land, Water Conservation Fund, Recreational Trails Program and Maryland Heritage Area grants for Northwest Regional Park/NW Rail Trail project
- Implement new special events at Piney Run, Hashawha, Hap Baker Firearms Facility and Sports Complex to increase revenue





GOAL #3

Promote awareness and good stewardship of the environment through educational programs and “green” initiatives.

- Designate Double Pipe Creek, North Carroll Community Pond, Obrecht Road Park and South Carroll Dog Park as trash-free with carry in/carry out regulations
- Use recycled paper for department publications and correspondence
- Employ new technology to achieve energy conservation and savings including installation of LED athletic field lighting at Carroll County Sports Complex and Deer Park with more energy efficiency, less light pollution and reduced operating costs
- Offer at least one activity per program guide that teaches people outdoor skills and how to enjoy outdoor activities in parks
- Identify environmentally sensitive areas in parks and implement controlled usage
- Identify acreage of tree canopy in parks and publicize with benefits to community
- Identify & quantify water recharged areas in parks and publicize with benefits to community
- Encourage use of digital/online options whenever possible to limit the use of paper



GOAL #4

Maintain a vibrant park system by protecting and reinvesting in Carroll County assets.

- Explore organizational alignment that brings park maintenance under Department of Recreation & Parks
- Establish a tiered maintenance classification program that specifies levels of maintenance based on a park's size, staffing and usage levels
- Maintain the Department's preventative maintenance and capital asset replacement plan that addresses life-cycle replacement costs for pavilions, trails, playgrounds, parking areas, roofs and lighting
- Monitor nuisance wildlife at park sites and implement wildlife management strategies as needed
- Expand “Helping Hands Keep Parks Green” program to solicit the participation of neighborhoods, schools, local clubs, and civic groups to help maintain parks with a focus on park entrances and focal points
- Replace caretaker house at Hashawha Environmental Center
- Improve park signage in parks to replace old outdated signs to enhance user experience



GOAL #5

Promote healthy, safe communities that are supported by well-rounded program offerings and policy.

- Promote parks and trails as an inducement to physical activity and pursue partnership with the medical/health community
- Continue developing relationships with the Commission on Aging, Health Aging Leadership Team, Senior Center Site Councils and other organizations to promote recreational opportunities
- Continue to work with Partnership for a Healthier Carroll County and Walk Carroll initiatives
- Increase number and diversity of programs designed for growing senior population
- Target younger participants to expand audience and grow support for new adaptive recreation program offerings
- Promote positive behavior and good sportsmanship among youth sports programs through various initiatives
- Investigate pilot afterschool program for middle school students
- Increase STEM programming efforts, and continue participation in annual Maryland STEM Festival
- Increase efforts to provide alternative sports programs and events such as flag football, futsal, and other less traditional activities
- Explore creation of future Park Ranger position as more trails are developed to assist with trail security and maintenance



GOAL #6

Expand recreation and parks programs and facilities to meet current and future needs.

- Establish minimum service levels including a goal of 50 miles of trails (or .3 miles/1,000 residents) with at least 33% hard surface accessible trails (17 miles) and support through Community Investment Program
- Identify areas within Carroll County not adequately served by county parks and facilities in the Land Preservation, Park & Recreation Plan, and address through the capital budget
- Create a mechanism for voluntary donation of easements for identified trail corridors
- Pursue public-use easements along creeks, overhead powerline corridors, abandoned railroad lines, road rights-of-way, etc. for trail connections where feasible
- Continue to increase non-motorized connections from parks to neighborhoods
- Monitor demand for dog parks and if needed, investigate development of a third dog park in North Carroll area to meet public needs
- Initiate process in 2020 to update Carroll County's Land Preservation Park & Recreation Plan, to be completed by 2022
- Complete Needs Assessment Survey in 2021
- Develop and implement virtual programs for use during and after pandemic
- Develop and implement E-Sports programs
- Complete development of water trail with access points at Hapes Mill, Little Pipe Creek, Double Pipe Creek and Bridgeport
- Increase efforts to achieve equity of services by reaching out to underserved & underrepresented demographics through target marketing, annual stakeholder open houses, elimination of barriers, etc.
- Develop an inventory of strategic parcels for possible future acquisition





GOAL #7

Promote Carroll County's natural, cultural and historical legacies through the development of programs and exhibits.

- Continue to foster appreciation and stewardship of Carroll County's natural, cultural and historical legacies through new nature center exhibits, interpretive signage and a variety of programs
- Encourage and promote public art and design in our parks, including permanent free-standing art elements and temporary art displays with designated locations or "canvas" for artists
- Develop cooperative programming with Historical Society regarding local history with at least 2 programs per year
- Increase historical programs utilizing lectures, demonstrations and hands on history experience, using period appropriate clothing and furnishings.
- Install additional historical signage in County parks as continuation of County's Celebrating America initiative utilizing QR code technology to share additional information
- Offer "how to" programs and opportunities for family camping

GOAL #8

Enhance stakeholder value by fully developing revenue sources, contribute to local economic development and tourism efforts.

- Increase the number and marketing of special events for out-of-county residents that will result in positive economic impact for Carroll County
- Quantify the ecosystem benefits of parkland related to natural resource protection and groundwater recharge
- Develop a comprehensive sponsorship packet that includes options for special events and activities at variety of costs and distribute to businesses in advance of program year
- Promote Carroll County as a destination for outdoor recreation opportunities and eco-tourism
- Develop new brochure to promote fishing and kayaking opportunities
- Encourage non-resident participation by mailing seasonal brochures to targeted out-of-county populations
- Continue to track non-registered users of park facilities, including trails, to document usage with improved trail counters
- Revamp current nature center gift shop models and develop online store
- Include signage with QR codes at strategic locations to encourage Park Legacy Fund donations



GOAL #9

Promote the Recreation & Parks department's visible investments in the community and valuable contributions to the quality of life for residents of Carroll County.

- Develop promotional materials to encourage visitation to parks as family destinations
- Promote the Department speaker's bureau as an outreach tool to promote the relationship of recreation and parks to quality of life and a strong community
- Promote the Department and upcoming activities through multimedia-based efforts including E Blasts, Facebook posts, realtor packets, brochures, portable displays, information booths at community events and festivals, press releases and a new scrolling calendar of events on Department website
- Develop and implement a comprehensive department wide marketing plan and communication strategy
- Plan multiple events to support yearlong celebration of Department's 50th anniversary in 2021
- Create a spotlight on selected program participant, volunteer or park patron in each issue of program guide
- Continue to expand social media outreach by growing number of followers and expanding use of Instagram
- Initiate social media support group to help promote recreation & parks activities
- Advance the branding of the department to increase awareness both in and out of the community
- Utilize new park kiosks to promote park system and programs
- Develop and implement social media ambassador program





GOAL #10

Maintain an organizational philosophy of continual improvement.

- Measure performance to assess return on investment
- Align the organization's structure and resources to effectively and efficiently support the department's mission and goals
- Solicit feedback from the public on an ongoing basis to ensure customer satisfaction
- Conduct departmental self-assessment on a regular basis
- Develop smart phone app for immediate feedback regarding parks and programs
- Conduct park user surveys to evaluate existing services and identify areas for improvement and store information digitally for easy access
- Conduct participant and instructor evaluations of programs and store information digitally for easy access





GOAL #11

Support volunteer efforts to maximize community engagement.

- Market opportunities for volunteer involvement and support
- Provide training opportunities for interested volunteers
- Increase citizen interaction with county government through improved communication

GOAL #12

Develop and foster partnerships that result in increased value to Carroll County communities.

- Support joint town/county special events to increase visitation and positive economic impact for municipalities and attract visitors to main streets
- Explore public private partnerships to further develop Krimgold & Leister Parks
- Partner with community groups who sponsor annual events (example: bike race/ride)
- Solicit employer workdays to clean up our parks, create new trails, complete special projects, etc.
- Partner with MORE (Mid Atlantic off-Road Enthusiasts) to develop/maintain multi use trails
- Work with municipalities to request Community Parks & Playground funding for municipal park improvements





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