



Howard County

Internal Memorandum

SUBJECT: Council Resolution to Adopt the 2017 Land Preservation, Park and Recreation Plan

TO: Lonnie Robbins
Chief Administrative Officer

FROM: John R. Byrd, Director
Department of Recreation
and Parks



DATE: May 17, 2017

The Department of Recreation and Parks has been designated the coordinator for the preparation of testimony and fiscal impacts related to the above-referenced Council Resolution to adopt the 2017 Land Preservation, Park and Recreation Plan (LPPRP).

The 2017 Land Preservation, Park and Recreation Plan is required under Section 5-905(b)(2) of the Natural Resources Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland. Each local jurisdiction must have an approved Plan, updated every six years, in order to receive state grants from "Program Open Space", a state program to fund the acquisition and development of state and local parks.

The Department of Recreation and Parks and our consultant, Sasaki Associates, prepared this Plan. The citizens of Howard County participated in this process via the following methods:

1. Public Engagement Events

The LPPRP process included three public engagement events. On April 16, 2016, members of the Department staff and the consulting team attended GreenFest, an annual county festival focusing on sustainability, in order to generate project interest. More than 220 festival attendees completed a survey about their usage of parks and recreation offerings. On July 13, 2016, two public meetings took place at the Roger Carter Community Center and the North Laurel Community Center. Attendees at both locations submitted over 250 comments in the form of group discussions, activities, and one-on-one conversations. The third public engagement event took place on September 21, 2016 at the Department headquarters. Approximately 30 community members attended this open-house-style public meeting, which involved a presentation and small discussion groups around exhibit boards.

2. Statistically Valid Survey

In June 2016, the Department administered a phone survey to 800 households across the County to better understand user satisfaction and community needs. The statistically valid survey captured responses from 3 percent of the county population with a 95 percent confidence level. This high degree of confidence ensured that the survey captured a snapshot of the county's diverse population across geographic area, income, race, and age, among other factors.

3. Staff Interviews

The consulting team conducted two group interview sessions with employees who have direct contact with customers and leadership staff involved in managing programs and services. Staff shared insight on the Department's overall strengths and areas for improvement.

4. Focus Groups

The Department held six focus group sessions throughout the course of the LPPRP process, covering the topics of similar providers, seniors, land conservation, athletics and recreation, and youth concerns. These sessions included more than 20 local stakeholders.

5. Similar Provider Survey

As part of the LPPRP process, the Department sent an online survey to identify providers of similar services and received a total of 48 survey responses from 42 individual agencies.

6. Online Engagement

Throughout the duration of the LPPRP effort, the Department offered community members the opportunity to submit comments and suggestions through their website. The Department received a total of 195 online comments.

7. Advisory Board Presentations

The consulting team presented to the eight-member Recreation and Parks Advisory Board on two separate occasions to get feedback and general guidance on the analysis and visioning phases of the LPPRP.

All public meeting dates were advertised in three local newspapers for two consecutive weeks prior to each meeting. Social media was also utilized in the advertisement effort (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram).

This Plan is compatible with Plan Howard 2030 and it has been reviewed by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources for compliance with all state plans, regulations and guidelines. The County and its consultant have amended the Plan to incorporate recommended changes received from the State agency. Further State changes are not anticipated, but remain a possibility.