

**Amendment 98 to Council Bill No. 28 -2023**

**BY: David Yungmann**

**Legislative Day 11**

**Date: October 2, 2023**

**Amendment No. 98**

*(This Amendment makes the following changes to HoCo by Design Chapters 9 and 11 to:*

- Chapter 9:  
Supporting  
Infrastructure*                    - *Adds statements pertaining to the need to invest in sports tourism and a new Implementing Action in Policy Statement INF-5 for the County to explore the development of a commercial athletic facility;*
- Chapter 11:  
Implementation*                - *Adds a new Implementing Action in Policy Statement INF-5 for the County to explore the development of a commercial athletic facility.)*

1 In the *HoCo By Design* General Plan, attached to this Act as Exhibit A, amend the following  
2 pages as indicated in this Amendment:

- 3        • Chapter 9: Supporting Infrastructure, pages 26 and 28.  
4        • Chapter 9: Supporting Infrastructure, insert a new page 26.1.  
5        • Chapter 11: Implementation, page 55.

6

7 Correct all page numbers, numbering, and formatting within this Act to accommodate this  
8 amendment.

9



— “ —

*Providing parks, recreation, and public spaces is essential to the human spirit.*

— “ —

*- HoCo By Design process participant*

## Recreation and Parks

Parks, open space, and recreation facilities and programs contribute significantly to a healthy lifestyle and a high quality of life for Howard County’s residents and visitors. Every five years, the County updates its Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP), a comprehensive plan that guides the Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks (DRP) on key issues, trends, and plans for managing and enhancing its preserved public lands, facilities, and programs. The 2022 LPPRP is organized around five aspirations that incorporate department goals and strategies:

- Deliver accessible experiences to all members of the community.
- Be a trusted steward for natural resources.
- Acknowledge and amplify all cultural histories.
- Maintain functional and financial responsibility.
- Maintain high-quality spaces.

The first three aspirations also respond to the three themes of the LPPRP—parks and recreation, natural resource conservation, and agricultural land preservation. Environmental stewardship and equitable access to Howard County’s parks, open space, and recreation facilities and programs are central tenants for the County and will continue to be essential when planning for Howard County’s future. DRP oversees and maintains 9,825 acres of land, including 5,779 acres used for the County’s 98 regional, community, and neighborhood parks, and 4,046 acres used as open space. In addition, the County benefits from 9,268 acres of state parkland, 3,213 acres of Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) land for public use, and 3,629 acres of Columbia Association open space. The presence of state parks, such as the Patapsco Valley State Park; Columbia’s lakes, open space, and trail system; and county facilities, such as the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area and the Robinson Nature Center, all greatly contribute to Howard County’s access to and appreciation for nature.

The County’s park system includes 44 playgrounds, three community gardens, multiple recreation centers, and a wide array of athletic fields and facilities, including basketball courts, skate parks, baseball and softball diamonds, tennis and pickleball courts, and multi-purpose fields. Despite the many fields and athletic facilities in the county, local demand from youth and adult sports typically exceeds capacity, preventing the County from attracting and hosting regional athletic tournaments and other events. Tournaments are often multi-day events for teams that travel from out of town. Currently, these events generate significant hospitality spending in neighboring jurisdictions, primarily through hotels and restaurants, and provides local clubs with fundraising opportunities. Numerous surrounding counties have developed either temporary or permanent tournament sites with success. The County also offers nearly 112 miles of trails for residents and visitors to enjoy.

DRP offers programming and activities for residents of all ages. In 2019, the Department served over 100,000 people in approximately 8,500 different programs, a figure that underscores the widespread use and enjoyment of the County's parks and recreational activities. Many DRP programs take place at the Meadowbrook Athletic Complex or one of the County's three community centers located in Cooksville, Laurel, and Ellicott City.

There are also other public, nonprofit, and private organizations that provide a variety of recreation programs, events, and leisure services in Howard County. The LPPRP includes updated information on these organizations to ensure that DRP is aware of the opportunities that exist to fill gaps, seek out partners when appropriate, and reduce or eliminate the potential duplication of efforts.

## Expansion of the County Park System and Recreation Facilities

As the County's population grows, so will the demands for new and improved parkland and recreational programming. This increased demand will require hiring additional staff, purchasing and replacing park vehicles and equipment, and constructing and maintaining new parks and facilities to address public needs and facility deficiencies identified in the 2022 LPPRP.

The 2022 LPPRP sets an acquisition goal of 25 acres of parks and open space per 1,000 residents. The County currently has 29.5 acres per 1,000 residents. The 2022 LPPRP also uses the Maryland Park Equity Tool to analyze county residents' access to a facility, park, open space, or amenity. In the Rural West, access is measured as a 5- to 15-minute drive. In the East, access is measured as a 5-minute drive or a 10-minute walk. The results of this analysis indicate that there are more areas of low access or low park equity in the eastern part of the County compared to the Rural West. The 2022 LPPRP sets an acquisition goal to prioritize parks and open space acquisition within census tracts with low park equity.

Land acquisition has become a challenge for the department in recent years as large parcels of available land become scarce. As a result, DRP has shifted to acquiring smaller parcels, generally of 25 acres or less. This trend is expected to continue as smaller parcels are acquired in redeveloped areas, especially activity centers, offering an opportunity to increase equitable access to green space and create links to existing open space. Park and recreation facilities in redeveloped areas could include plazas, pocket parks, and amphitheaters, as well as open space connections to nearby parks and pathways. Park and recreation facilities may also be provided through privately-owned playgrounds, dog parks, plazas, or entertainment areas with access restricted to residents of the development.

As inter-departmental needs for the last remaining developable land in the community become more competitive, undeveloped parkland and open space may sometimes be considered for new public facilities. The struggle to protect existing parks and develop new parks to serve a growing population is likely to escalate as the competition for space grows—especially in eastern portions of the County that are inside the Planned Service Area.



### INF-5 Policy Statement

Maintain and expand Howard County's park and open space system and recreation facilities and programs to keep pace with future growth and ensure safe, convenient, and equitable access to residents.

### Implementing Actions

1. Establish land acquisition goals for parks and open space in the Howard County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP), and prioritize parks and open space acquisition within communities with low park equity.
2. Establish countywide goals and priorities in the LPPRP for recreation facilities and programs that are accessible to all residents.
3. Build partnerships within county government and with other organizations across the County to efficiently share resources.
4. Use flexible designs for parks and open space in more urban areas, such as plazas, pocket parks, and amphitheaters.
5. Partner with other county departments to link parks, open space, and recreation facilities to surrounding communities through transportation improvements.
6. Explore the development of a commercial athletic facility. The facility could be owned by the County, privately, or in partnership.
7. Consider zoning changes that allow the use of large parcels for indoor and outdoor athletic facilities throughout the County.

Table 10-1: Implementation Matrix		
Policy and Implementing Actions	Lead Agency	Timeframe (Mid-Term five-year, Long-Term six+ years, Ongoing)
<b>INF-4 - Minimize loss of life, loss of property, and injury due to fire or medical emergencies.</b>		
1. Construct and staff new and replacement fire stations in the Capital Improvement Program. Renovate and rehabilitate existing fire stations as appropriate to ensure the continued provision of efficient service.	DFRS	Ongoing
2. Continue to construct underground cisterns to support fire suppression in the Rural West. Determine strategic placement locations for water-holding cisterns that allow for improved water supply access and shortened distance for tanker trucks shuttling water for firefighting operations in the Rural West.	DFRS	Ongoing
3. Provide funding to replace fire and rescue vehicles when needed.	DFRS	Ongoing
4. Complete a strategic plan for the fire department that anticipates future year fire station needs based on the type, location, pattern, and intensity of development envisioned on the Future Land Use Map.	DFRS Elected Officials	Mid-Term
5. Consider opportunities to provide shared-use facilities in some locations of the County to provide fire stations where they are most needed and thereby create equitable access, similar to the Merriweather District Fire Station.	DPW DFRS DPZ	Ongoing
<b>INF-5 - Maintain and expand Howard County's park and open space system and recreation facilities and programs to keep pace with future growth and ensure safe, convenient, and equitable access to residents.</b>		
1. Establish land acquisition goals for parks and open space in the Howard County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP), and prioritize parks and open space acquisition within communities with low park equity.	DRP	Mid-Term
2. Establish countywide goals and priorities in the LPPRP for recreation facilities and programs that are accessible to all residents.	DRP	Mid-Term
3. Build partnerships within county government and with other organizations across the County to efficiently share resources.	DRP All Agencies Non-profit Partners	Ongoing
4. Use flexible designs for parks and open space in more urban areas, such as plazas, pocket parks, and amphitheaters.	DRP	Ongoing
5. Partner with other county departments to link parks, open space, and recreation facilities to surrounding communities through transportation improvements.	DRP OOT DPZ	Ongoing
6. <u>Explore the development of a commercial athletic facility. The facility could be owned by the County, privately, or in partnership.</u>	DRP Private Property Owners, HCEDA	Ongoing
7. <u>Consider zoning changes that allows the use of large parcels for indoor and outdoor athletic facilities throughout the County.</u>	DPZ DRP	

Table 10-1: Implementation Matrix		
Policy and Implementing Actions	Lead Agency	Timeframe (Mid-Term five-year, Long-Term six+ years, Ongoing)
<b>INF-6 - Continue to invest judiciously to maintain and enhance county facilities and assess county agency space needs against the County's portfolio of spaces.</b>		
1. Use the Capital Improvement Program to evaluate and prioritize county building renovations.	DPW	Ongoing
2. Establish county space standards and evaluate the efficiency of county space usage. Assess future county agency needs for space.	DPW	Ongoing
3. Determine whether it is in the County's best interest to continue all or some leases. Consider opportunities to purchase leased space or construct new office and/or mixed-use spaces.	DPW	Ongoing
4. Determine whether it is in the County's best interest to continue to own or surplus various properties. Consider finite land supply and potential future costs of acquisition as part of such evaluation.	DPW	Ongoing
<b>INF-7 - Partner with the Howard County Library System to provide training and resources needed in the community.</b>		
1. Evaluate the need for additional library capacity in the County to serve planned population and program growth. Provide necessary expansion of resources via additions or new facilities within the Planned Service Area.	HCLS	Mid-Term
2. Enhance the design of existing and any future libraries to both optimize the delivery of service at each library branch and help create a civic focal point. Where feasible, integrate libraries with other complementary public or private facilities.	HCLS DPW Private Partners	Long-term
<b>INF-8 - Continue to support the Howard Community College's expanding abilities to provide higher education for county residents and workers.</b>		
1. Continue the County's commitment to fund expansion of the Howard Community College (HCC) to accommodate enrollment and program growth. Support the HCC in obtaining funding from the State of Maryland and others to invest in the campus.	HCEDA	Ongoing
2. Continue to work with the Howard County Economic Development Authority, the private sector, and other institutions of higher education to meet workforce development and re-training needs, especially in science and technology-related fields.	HCC HCEDA OWD Private Partners	Ongoing
3. Continue to expand non-credit course offerings and cultural programs that promote life-long learning and enhance community life.	HCC	Ongoing