

Chapter I Framework



Sunset at Choptank Marina

1. Purposes of the Plan

Every five years each county in Maryland is required to submit an updated Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) to the State of Maryland. The plans are intended to provide a common benchmark to assist the State's evaluation of each county's land preservation and recreation programs and to assist in guiding public investment in land preservation, parks and recreation. LPPRPs qualify local governments for State Program Open Space (POS) grants.

The Maryland Department of Planning uses the information gathered through the county LPPRPs to develop a statewide plan, the Land Preservation and Recreation Plan (LPRP). The LPRP is required for Maryland's participation in the Land & Water Conservation Fund, a critical funding source for land preservation and conservation efforts across the State.

The LPPRP planning process:

- Allows local, county, and municipal jurisdictions to plan for improving natural resource and agricultural preservation as well as planning for parks and recreation in each county.
- Evaluates State and county land preservation goals and objectives for parks, recreation and open space as well as for agricultural land preservation and natural resource conservation and identifies where they are complementary or different;
- Evaluates the ability of implementation, programs and funding sources to achieve goals and objectives for each element;
- Recommends changes to policies, plans and funding strategies to better implement goals and leverage return on public investment in the three land preservation elements;

- Identifies the needs and priorities of current and future county residents for recreation;
- Ensures that public investment in land preservation and recreation supports the County's Comprehensive Plan, State goals, and State and local programs that influence land use and development.

Upon adoption by the Board of County Commissioners, the 2022 LPPRP becomes an amendment to the Caroline County Comprehensive Plan and replaces the prior, 2017 LPPRP.

The 2022 LPPRP for Caroline County was prepared in accordance with guidelines developed in 2020 by the Maryland Departments of Planning and Natural Resources. Caroline County government is responsible for the preparation of the LPPRP. The effort was led by the Department of Parks and Recreation, with assistance by the Department of Planning and Codes. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board as well as the Caroline County Planning Commission provided oversight and direction. Shore Strategies LLC, a Caroline County based consulting firm, was contracted to work with Caroline County to develop the plan.

2. Physical Characteristics

A. Location

Caroline County forms the geographic center of the Delmarva Peninsula and is the only county that is not bordered by either the Atlantic Ocean or the Chesapeake Bay. Bisected by Route 404, a major artery to the beaches along Delaware and Maryland's coast, it is one of the least populated counties in Maryland.

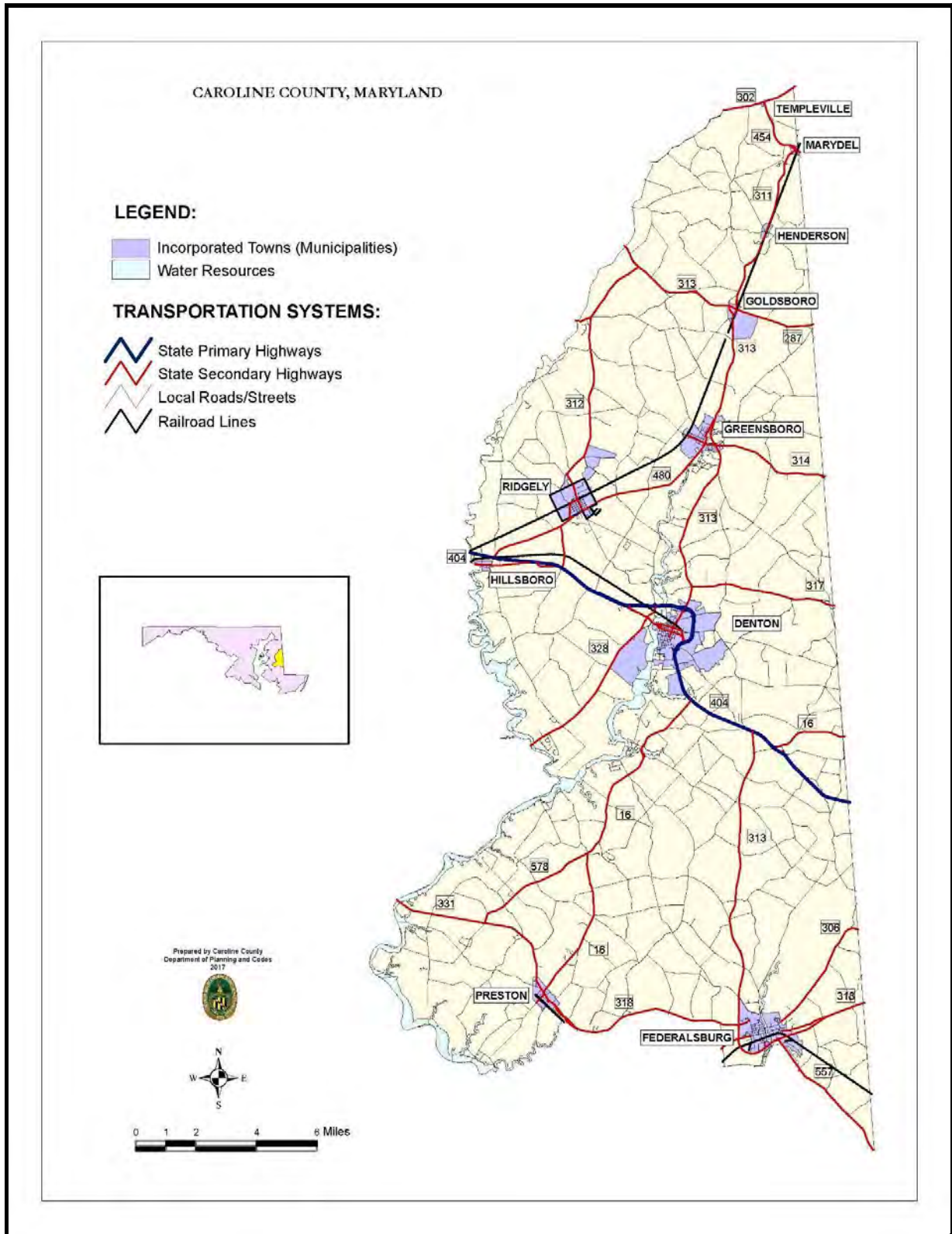
The county boundaries were created in 1773 from portions of Dorchester and Queen Anne's Counties. Caroline County played a significant role in the Underground Railroad, and in the lives of Harriet Tubman who led many family members to freedom out of lower Caroline County and Frederick Douglass who was born along the Choptank River in 1818.

The Choptank River and Tuckahoe Creek separate Caroline County from Talbot County to the southwest; Tuckahoe Creek separates Caroline County from Queen Anne's County to the northwest. Caroline County borders Dorchester County to the south, and the State of Delaware to the east (Map II-1).

MD Route 404 is the major east-west artery through the County, connecting US 50 in Wye Mills, Maryland with US 13 in Bridgeville, Delaware. MD Route 313 is the major north-south artery, connecting Caroline County with most of the other counties on Maryland's Eastern Shore. MD Route 313 intersects MD Route 404 in Denton., the County Seat.

There are 10 municipalities within the county and approximately 40% of the population lives within one of these small towns.

Map I-1 Location and Major Features



B. Land Cover

Table I-1 summarizes trends in land cover and development from 1997 to 2010 and is the most recent comprehensive data set for land cover. During this period, development lands (high, medium, and low-density residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional uses) increased by a little more than 11,000 acres, or 73%; most of this increase occurred between 1997 and 2002. Resource lands declined by about 10,000 acres; approximately 6,500 acres of forest land and 4,300 acres of agricultural land were converted to development. Caroline County's land cover is primarily resource-based, with approximately 87% of land cover defined as either agriculture, forest, wetland, or extractive/barren. Map I-2 shows land cover in 2010. The new data set for and cover is anticipated to be released later this year.

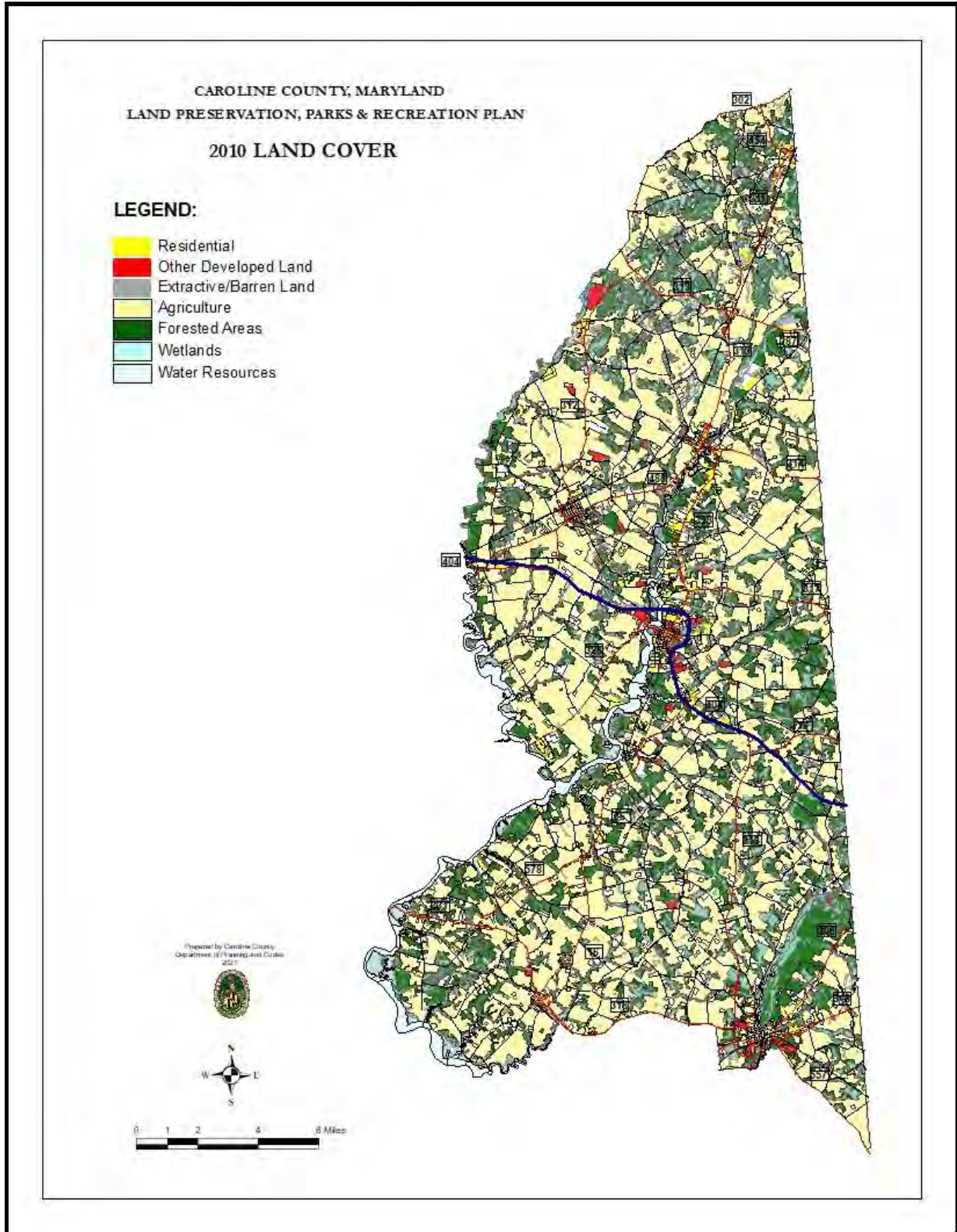
Table I-1 Caroline County Land Cover, 1997-2021

Land Cover Type	1997		2002		2010		Change 1997-2010	
	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent
Resource Lands	189,401	93%	181,195	88%	178,564	87%	-10,837	-6%
Agriculture	120,094	59%	117,471	57%	115,748	56%	-4,346	-4%
Forest	65,695	32%	60,162	29%	59,122	29%	-6,573	-10%
Extractive/Barren	352	<1%	66	<1%	209	<1%	-143	-41%
Wetland	3,260	2%	3,497	2%	3,485	2%	225	7%
Development Lands	15,335	7%	23,858	12%	26,490	13%	11,155	73%
Residential	12,776	6%	21,029	10%	23,253	11%	10,477	82%
Non-Residential	2,559	1%	2,829	1%	3,237	2%	678	26%

Source: 2005 MD PropertyView



Map I-2 Land Cover 2010



C. Natural Resources

Environmentally sensitive areas occur throughout Caroline County, including flood plains, streams and their buffers, the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area, wetlands, and prime agricultural soils. Caroline County is unique among the Eastern Shore counties in that it does not have frontage on the Chesapeake Bay or the Atlantic Ocean. The upper Choptank River, Tuckahoe Creek, and Marshyhope Creek drain the County's 325 square mile land area.

1. Topography

Caroline County lies entirely within the Atlantic Coastal Plain, a physiographic province characterized by flat topography, low elevation, low gradient streams and rivers, unconsolidated sedimentary soils, and abundant wetlands. Most of the county is between 40 feet and 70 feet above sea level. Elevations generally increase from south to north, from a low elevation of approximately five feet above sea level in the village of Choptank at the county's south westernmost point, to a maximum of 77 feet above sea level north of Mount Zion near the northern county boundary. Most of the county has less than 5% percent slopes. Less than 2% percent of the county has slopes greater than 10%, and these steeper areas are typically located adjacent to eroding stream banks and river shorelines.

2. Forest Land

Forested land is an important component of the county's landscape, comprising about 30% of the County's land cover in 2010 (Table I-1). Forested areas occur throughout the County. The two largest contiguous forested tracts are in the Idylwild Wildlife Management Area (WMA) north of Federalsburg, and Tuckahoe State Park and Adkins Arboretum north of Hillsboro.

3. Watersheds and Streams

The Choptank River, Tuckahoe Creek, Marshyhope Creek, and their major tributaries are the most significant water-bodies in the County.

Portions of each

water-body are in the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area, which adjoins the shorelines generally to the head of tide. There are six major (8-digit) watersheds in the county (Table I-2 and Map I-3).

Table I-2 Major Watersheds in Caroline County

Watershed Name	Watershed Number	Total Watershed Acreage	Acres in Caroline County	Percentage of County
Upper Choptank River	02130404	158,731	117,900	58.5%
Tuckahoe Creek	02130405	97,364	35,287	17.5%
Marshyhope Creek	02130306	77,477	40,034	19.9%
Lower Choptank River	02130403	114,801	8,092	4.0%
Nanticoke River	02130305	110,464	196	0.1%
Upper Chester River	02130510	86,110	26	0.01%

Source: 2005 MD PropertyView

4. Floodplains and Flooding Impacts

Floodplains are areas subject to periodic flooding. Caroline County has both tidal and non-tidal floodplains. Non-tidal flooding may occur at any time of the year, but it is most common in spring, due to a combination of precipitation and low evapotranspiration rates, and in late summer as a result of high intensity rainfall from hurricanes, tropical storms, and severe thunderstorms. Most tidal flooding is attributed to tidal surges and high coastal waters, due to strong winds also associated with such storms.

Map I-3 identifies as “Special Flood Hazard Area” the 100-year floodplains that have been delineated along the County’s major rivers and tributaries. Many smaller tributaries also have floodplain areas that are not shown.

The Maryland Coastal Atlas, a GIS compilation from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), provides datasets that show the potential for changes in shorelines, wetlands, floodplains, and watershed due to land subsidence and sea level rise. The information can assist the county in understanding the potential impacts of these phenomena on land use and public recreation assets. A sample of the information available from this atlas is shown in Map I-4; this map shows areas of potential impact from the storm surges that could result from hurricanes of various strength.

The areas that could experience flooding from stronger hurricanes (Categories 2 through 4) are more extensive than mapped floodplains along the Upper Choptank River and Tuckahoe and Marshyhope Creeks.

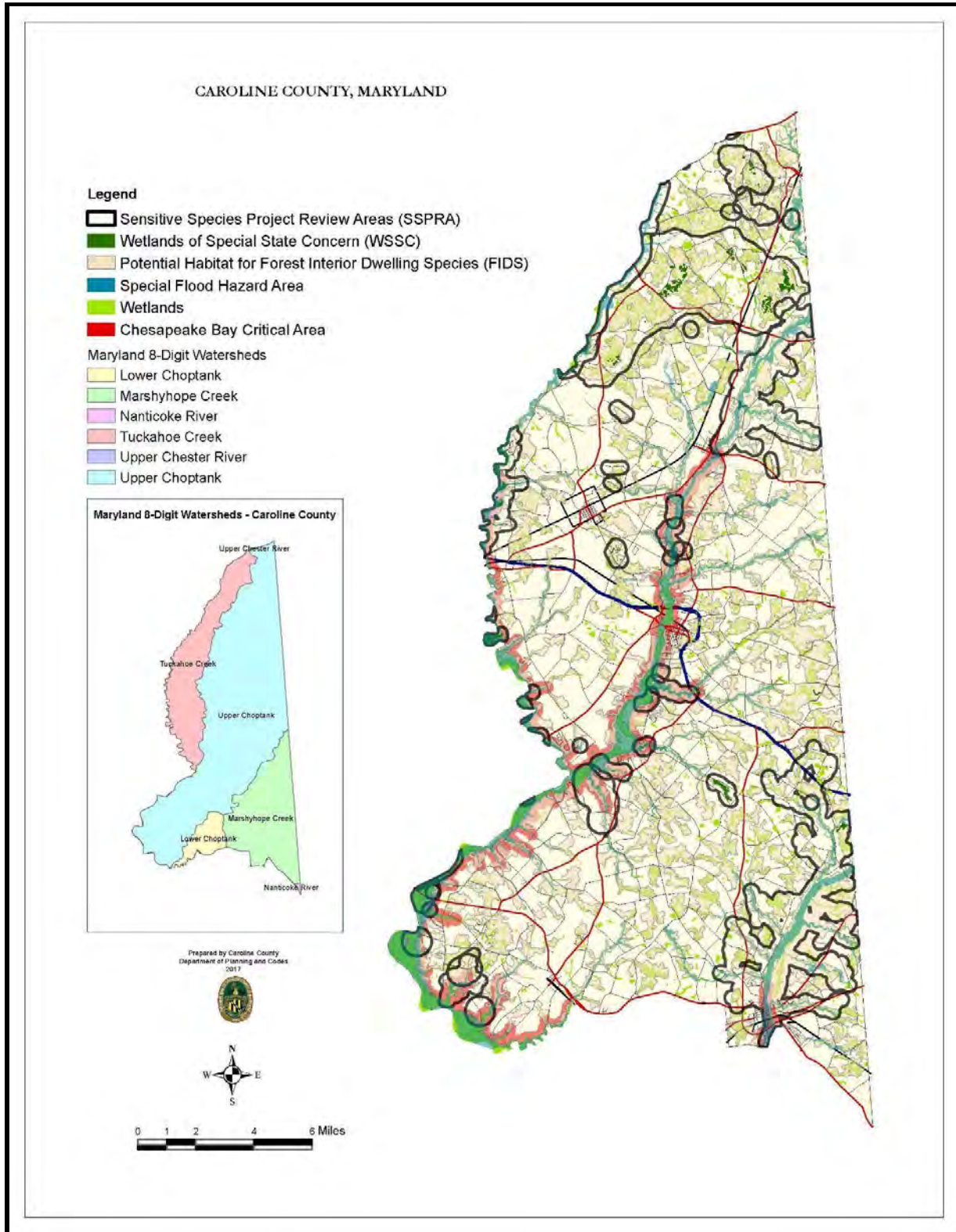
In Summer 2018, Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative created a report for the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration reviewing the impact of sea level rise on roadways across the state. The report found that although Caroline County is less susceptible to the impacts of sea-level changes than neighboring counties, it is still anticipated that by 2100 rising sea levels in the Bay will have an impact on the County. In particular, areas along the Choptank River in Greensboro and Marshyhope Creek in Federalsburg will see significant increases, particularly during high tides. (<https://www.esrgc.org/data/flooding>)

Future capital projects on Caroline County parks/open space properties will include mitigation measures related to the impact of sea level rise, particularly along shorelines within these properties. On October 30, 2021, the Choptank Marina experienced a tidal flooding event that resulted in Governor Larry Hogan declaring a state of emergency for impacted counties, including Caroline.

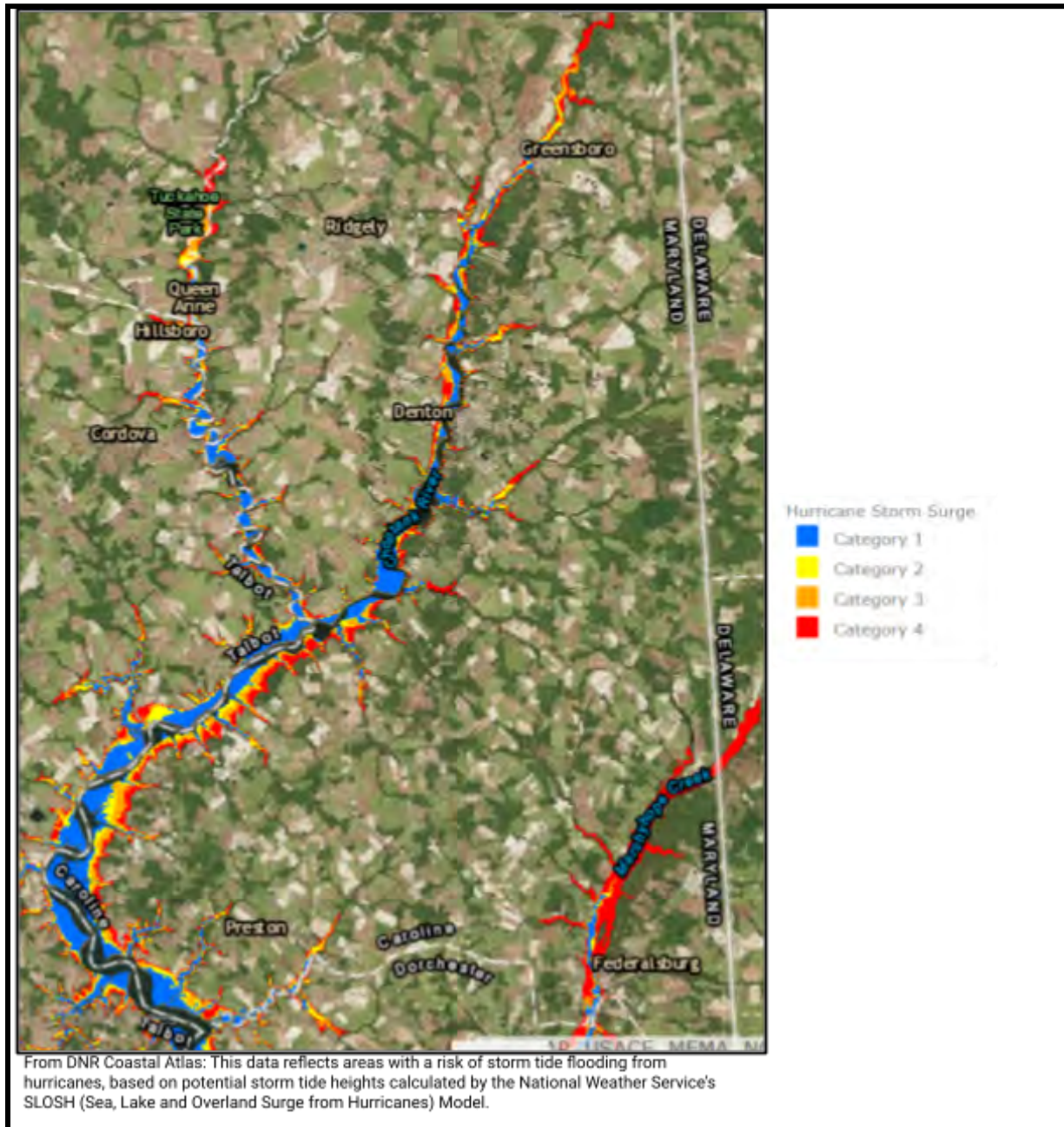


Tidal Flooding at Choptank Marina

Map I-3 Major Watersheds and Environmentally Sensitive Areas



Map I-4 Hurricane Surge Estimates in Caroline County



5. Significant Habitat Areas

The Maryland DNR maintains a database of significant habitat areas for sensitive species. These areas, called Sensitive Species Project Review Areas, or SSPRAs, incorporate areas that have been identified by the State as Natural Heritage Areas, Listed Species Sites, Locally Significant Habitat Areas, Colonial Waterbird Sites, Waterfowl Staging and Concentration Areas, Nontidal Wetlands of Special State Concern, and Geographic Areas of Particular Concern. In Caroline County, SSPRAs are concentrated along the three major tributaries (the Tuckahoe, Marshyhope and Upper Choptank) and in the northern part of the county, which has numerous

wetlands and extensive forests (Map I-3). New subdivisions and development projects are reviewed for opportunities to minimize impacts on the SSPRAs.

6. Wetlands

Caroline County has a diverse assemblage of non-tidal and tidal wetlands, including freshwater and brackish emergent, scrub-shrub, and forested wetland communities (Map I-3).

The County's tidal wetlands are located along major rivers and streams, upstream to the head of tide. Non-tidal wetlands include those that border rivers and streams upstream from the limit of tidal influence, as well as isolated "pothole" wetlands throughout the County.

Wetlands and other naturally vegetated buffers along streams and rivers serve as flood and water storage and pollution filtration areas. Wetlands also sustain aquatic biological resources by functioning as reproductive habitat and foraging habitat for fish, waterbirds, aquatic mammals, and other wildlife. They also provide recreational and educational opportunities.

7. Prime Agricultural Soils

Agriculture has long been the dominant land use in the rural portions of Caroline County, and together with forests constitutes the bulk of the County's land area. The County has over 70 different soil types, grouped into four major soil associations:

- Sassafras-Galestown-Fallsington,
- Sassafras-Fallsington-Woodstown,
- Fallsington-Woodstown-Sassafras, and
- Pocomoke-Fallsington.

Of the County's soils, the Sassafras-Fallsington-Woodstown Association's capacity to retain moisture and nutrients make them the best soils in the County for agricultural production. This soil association forms most of the central-western portion of the County between Tuckahoe Creek and the Choptank River, from their confluence north to Bridgetown and Greensboro.

3. Demographic Characteristics

A. Population Growth

Caroline County’s population was approximately 33,655 in 2020, representing a growth of less than 2% since 2010. Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) projects that by 2045 Caroline’s population will grow by 32.2%, however real population growth since 2000 has significantly lagged behind projected estimates. The State’s projections (prepared in December 2020) do not consider the decrease in population between 2010 and 2015, and thus may overestimate Caroline County’s actual potential for population growth.

Table I-3 Caroline County Population

Year	Population	Percent Change in Population		
		Since 2010	Since 2015	Since 2020
2010	33,066	NA	NA	NA
2015	32,894	-0.5%	NA	NA
2020	33,655	1.8%	2.3%	NA
2025*	35,550	7.5%	8.1%	5.6%
2030*	37,703	14.0%	14.6%	12.0%
2035*	40,001	21.0%	21.6%	18.9%
2040*	42,203	27.6%	28.3%	25.4%
2045*	44,498	34.6%	35.3%	32.2%

Source: Maryland Department of Planning (Population Households Total Population Projections)
 *Indicates projections published December 2020
https://planning.maryland.gov/MSDC/Pages/s3_projection.aspx

Table I-4 Caroline County Population by Zip Code, 2020

Zip Code	Population	Percent of Total**
21629	9,555	29%
21632*	6,353	18%
21636	1,186	3%
21639	4,408	14%
21640*	1,434	4%
21641*	117	<1%
21649	1,858	6%
21655	5,009	16%
21660	4,063	12%
Total County	33,983	102%

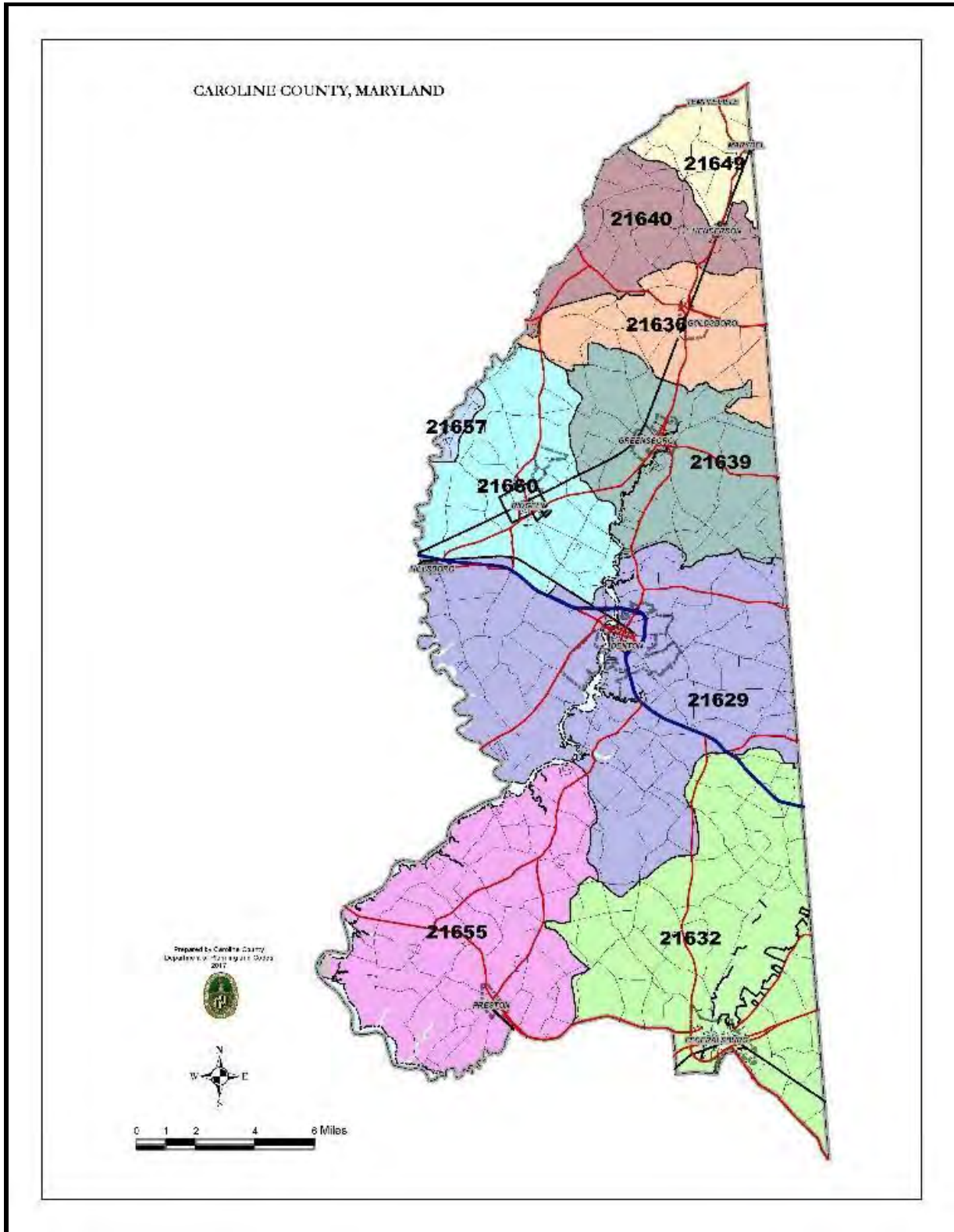
Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey
 *Includes some areas outside of Caroline County
 **Reflects approximate total based on Caroline County’s population. Because some zip code areas extend beyond Caroline County’s borders, the total population and percentage add up to more than the County total.

B. Population Distribution

In 2020, 40% of Caroline County residents lived in one of the County’s 10 incorporated municipalities, while 60% of County residents lived in unincorporated areas. In 2010, 37% of the county population lived in incorporated towns. This 3% increase in municipal populations aligns with the County’s comprehensive planning policies to direct new growth to the incorporated towns (see Section II-C, Comprehensive Plan Framework).

As indicated in Table I-4, nearly half of the County population in 2015 lived in the 21629 (Denton and surrounding areas) and 21632 (Federalsburg and surrounding areas) zip codes (see Map I-5). Municipalities range in population from 4,429 in Denton to 117 in Hillsboro.

Map I-5 Zip Code Areas



C. Age

The County, State, and Upper Eastern Shore region are all experiencing an aging of the population, as demonstrated by growth in the number of residents aged 55 or older and a decline in the number of younger residents (Table I-5). Caroline County has a younger population than the Upper Eastern Shore: 68.2% of Caroline County

Table I-5 Caroline County Population Estimates and Projections by Age

	Years of Age										
	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
2010	2,314	2,324	2,248	2,328	1,978	3,930	4,308	5,149	4,074	2,446	1,967
2015	1,965	2,375	2,504	2,036	1,638	3,966	4,002	4,879	4,591	2,990	1,948
2020	1,965	2,050	2,629	2,343	1,624	3,754	4,183	4,393	5,029	3,521	2,164
2025*	2,281	2,100	2,355	2,533	2,109	3,598	4,595	4,203	4,979	4,148	2,649
2030*	2,670	2,431	2,393	2,285	2,220	4,197	4,559	4,474	4,591	4,676	3,207
2035*	2,933	2,828	2,749	2,314	2,028	4,895	4,397	4,915	4,402	4,646	3,894
2040*	3,130	3,102	3,166	2,644	2,016	4,780	5,107	4,845	4,702	4,263	4,448
2045*	3,227	3,319	3,480	3,049	2,331	4,537	5,977	4,639	5,168	4,111	4,660

Source: US Census Bureau, Maryland Department of Planning

*Indicates projections published December 2020

https://planning.maryland.gov/MSDC/Pages/s3_projection.aspx

residents are under age 55. Over the next 25 years, the County’s age distribution is projected to gradually continue to shift within the over 55 age cohort, but the relative percentage of senior adults is projected to hold at under 32%. By 2045, 31% of the County’s population will be 55 or older, including 10.5% who will be 75+. In 2020, 6.4% of the population was 75 or older. Concurrently, the percentage of young people is projected to be 29.5% of the population (0-19). In 2020 children represented 26.7% (Table I-6).

Table I-6 Caroline County Percent Population Estimates and Projections by Age

	Years of Age										
	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
2010	7.0%	7.0%	6.8%	7.0%	6.0%	11.9%	13.0%	15.6%	12.3%	7.4%	5.9%
2015	6.0%	7.2%	7.6%	6.2%	5.0%	12.1%	12.2%	14.8%	14.0%	9.1%	5.9%
2020	5.8%	6.1%	7.8%	7.0%	4.8%	11.2%	12.4%	13.1%	14.9%	10.5%	6.4%
2025*	6.4%	5.9%	6.6%	7.1%	5.9%	10.1%	12.9%	11.8%	14.0%	11.7%	7.5%
2030*	7.1%	6.4%	6.3%	6.1%	5.9%	11.1%	12.1%	11.9%	12.2%	12.4%	8.5%
2035*	7.3%	7.1%	6.9%	5.8%	5.1%	12.2%	11.0%	12.3%	11.0%	11.6%	9.7%
2040*	7.4%	7.4%	7.5%	6.3%	4.8%	11.3%	12.1%	11.5%	11.1%	10.1%	10.5%
2045*	7.3%	7.5%	7.8%	6.9%	5.2%	10.2%	13.4%	10.4%	11.6%	9.2%	10.5%

Source: US Census Bureau, Maryland Department of Planning

*Indicates projections published December 2020

https://planning.maryland.gov/MSDC/Pages/s3_projection.aspx

D. Race

The County's population is projected to become more racially and ethnically diverse. In 2015, 81% of the County's population identified itself as being white alone (Table I-7). In 2019, this figure decreased to 79.9%, a figure projected to decrease to 76% by 2020 (MDP, July 2014). The percentage of the population that identifies itself as Hispanic or Latino (of any race) increased to 7.3% in 2019, a 45.5% increase since 2015 (Table I-8) and is projected to increase to 9% by 2021. In 2010, 5.1% of the county population identified as Hispanic or Latino.

Table I-7 Population by Race Caroline County and State of Maryland

Race/Ethnicity	Caroline County						State of Maryland					
	2010		2015		2019		2010		2015		2019	
Total population	32,805	% Pop	32,661	% Pop	33,049	% Pop	5,696,423	% Pop	5,930,538	% Pop	6,018,848	% Pop
White	26,350	80.3%	26,459	81.0%	26,405	79.9%	3,396,216	59.6%	3,416,107	57.6%	3,343,003	55.5%
Black or African American	4,402	13.4%	4,508	13.8%	4,666	14.1%	1,665,235	29.2%	1,750,916	29.5%	1,799,094	29.9%
American Indian and Alaska Native	156	0.5%	37	0.1%	130	0.4%	16,213	0.3%	15,579	0.3%	16,762	0.3%
Asian	210	0.6%	166	0.5%	229	0.7%	304,574	5.3%	357,616	6.0%	378,126	6.3%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	215	0.7%	22	0.1%	0	0.0%	2,977	0.1%	2,754	0.0%	3,034	0.1%
Some other race	980	3.0%	616	1.9%	733	2.2%	178,952	3.1%	211,914	3.6%	272,137	4.5%
2 or more races	492	1.5%	853	2.6%	886	2.7%	132,256	2.3%	175,652	3.0%	206,692	3.4%
Not Hispanic or Latino	31,144	94.9%	30,676	93.9%	30,632	92.7%	5,266,477	92.5%	5,396,867	91.0%	5,412,366	89.9%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	1,661	5.1%	1,985	6.1%	2,417	7.3%	429,946	7.5%	533,671	9.0%	606,482	10.1%

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey

<https://www.census.gov/aca/www/data/data-tables-and-tools/data-profiles/2019/>



Caroline County Summer Learning Program

Table I-8 Change in Population by Race Caroline County (2010 - 2019)

Race/Ethnicity	2010	2015	2019	% Change since 2010
Total population	32,805	32,661	33,049	0.7%
White	26,350	26,459	26,405	0.2%
Black or African American	4,402	4,508	4,666	6.0%
American Indian and Alaska Native	156	37	130	-16.7%
Asian	210	166	229	9.0%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	215	22	0	-100.0%
Some other race	980	616	733	-25.2%
2 or more races	492	853	886	80.1%
Not Hispanic or Latino	31,144	30,676	30,632	-1.6%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	1,661	1,985	2,417	45.5%

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey

<https://www.census.gov/aca/www/data/data-tables-and-tools/data-profiles/2019/>

School enrollment data (Table I-9) provides additional information about the changing racial demographics of the County. In 2019, 60.5% of the Caroline County School population identified as white as compared to 79.9% of the total population. While 7.3% of the total population identified as Hispanic or Latino, 15.9% of the student population identified as Hispanic or Latino. This data indicates the younger population of Caroline County shows an increase in diversity, which will lead to a continued shift in the diversity of the county's total population over time.

Table I-9 School Enrollment Disaggregated by Race Caroline County Public Schools vs. Caroline County Demographics

Race/Ethnicity	CCPS Student Enrollment		Caroline County		Difference %
	2019	% Pop	2019	% Pop	
Total population	5,829	% Pop	33,049	% Pop	
White	3,624	62.2%	26,405	79.9%	-22.2%
Black or African American	848	14.5%	4,666	14.1%	3.0%
American Indian and Alaska Native	13	0.2%	130	0.4%	-43.3%
Asian	73	1.25%	229	0.7%	80.7%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Some other race	0	0.0%	733	2.2%	-100.0%
2 or more races	426	7.3%	886	2.7%	172.6%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	842	14.4%	2,417	7.3%	97.5%

Source: Maryland Report Card
<https://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/Graphs/#/Demographics/Enrollment/3/17/6/05/XXXX/2019>
 Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey
<https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data/data-tables-and-tools/data-profiles/2019/>

5. Household Economics

As noted earlier, the percentage of Caroline County's population living in poverty makes it one of the more economically challenged in the state. Despite a drop in the overall percentage of individuals/households in poverty over the past four years, Table I-10 presents selected income characteristics for Caroline County, other Eastern Shore Counties, and the State. The estimated median household income in Caroline County in 2019 was \$58,638, a decrease from the \$58,799 median household income reported in the 2010 Census, but a 12% increase from 2017 when the median income was \$52,469. Caroline County's household income is significantly lower than the median household income in the State of Maryland, which was \$84,805 in 2019. The median household income in Caroline County is also significantly lower than neighboring Queen Anne's and Talbot Counties.

Table I-10 Income Characteristics of the Midshore

Location	Median Income				Per Capita Income				Percent Below Poverty Level			
	2015	2017	2019	Change	2015	2017	2019	Change	2015	2017	2019	Change
Caroline County	\$52,465	\$52,469	\$58,638	12%	\$24,943	\$25,355	\$29,624	19%	15.8%	16.5%	13.9%	-12.0%
Dorchester County	\$47,093	\$50,532	\$52,917	12%	\$27,870	\$28,911	\$30,293	9%	16.5%	15.4%	15.8%	-4.2%
Kent County	\$58,147	\$56,638	\$58,589	1%	\$30,081	\$32,217	\$36,813	22%	11.2%	13.1%	11.5%	2.7%
Queen Anne's County	\$85,963	\$89,241	\$97,034	13%	\$38,733	\$40,553	\$44,754	16%	7.5%	6.4%	5.7%	-24.0%
Talbot County	\$58,228	\$65,595	\$73,547	26%	\$38,317	\$44,785	\$49,136	28%	11.2%	10.0%	8.7%	-22.3%
Maryland	\$74,551	\$78,916	\$84,805	14%	\$36,897	\$39,070	\$42,122	14%	10.0%	9.7%	9.2%	-8.0%

Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey
https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=median%20income&g=0400000US24_0500000US24011_24019_24029_24035_24041&tid=ACSST5Y2015.S1901
https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=per%20capita%20income&g=0400000US24_0500000US24011_24019_24029_24035_24041&tid=ACSDT5Y2015.B19301
https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=poverty%20level&g=0500000US24011_24019_24029_24035_24041&tid=ACSST5Y2015.S1701

Caroline County’s mean per capita income also lags behind Maryland and other Upper Eastern Shore counties. From 2015 through 2019, the mean per capita income, as reported by the Census Bureau, shows that Caroline has the lowest mean per capita income on the mid-shore. In 2019, the per capita income in Caroline was \$29,624, nearly a 20% increase since 2015 but still significantly behind the state mean of \$42,122

In 2019, the percent of the people living in Caroline County who had income below the poverty level within the past 12 months (Table I-10) decreased by 12% from 2015. The estimated poverty rate of 13.9% is consistent with the household income estimates and is higher than that of Maryland and the other Upper Eastern Shore counties.¹

Another way of evaluating household sufficiency is the Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed (ALICE) data (Table I-11). In 2019, 42% of Caroline households were below the ALICE threshold. ALICE households earn above the Federal Poverty Level but less than the cost of living in their county which is calculated using the ALICE Essentials Index which includes essential household items (housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, and a smartphone plan). Additionally, while the number of households in poverty in Caroline County has stayed relatively flat, the number of ALICE households is growing, meaning that households that had been above the ALICE threshold are losing ground, due to wage stagnation and increased cost of living.

Table I-11 Households by Income, Percentages, Caroline County, MD 2010-2018

Households	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
Above ALICE Threshold	63%	61%	60%	60%	61%
ALICE	28%	29%	30%	30%	30%
Poverty	9%	10%	10%	10%	9%

<https://www.unitedforalice.org/maryland>

A similar pattern can be seen among the percent of students who receive Free and Reduced-Price Meals (FaRM) in public schools (Table I-12). The percentage of students on the FaRM program in Caroline County (57%) is higher than that of the State

Table I-12 Free & Reduced-Price Meals in Public Schools Midshore

Locale	School Year Dataset					Change SY2008 - SY2020
	SY2008	SY2012	SY2016	SY2020	SY2021*	
Maryland	34%	42%	45%	42%	48%	45%
Caroline County	45%	56%	57%	52%	59%	31%
Dorchester County	50%	62%	67%	67%	83%	67%
Kent County	40%	52%	55%	56%	66%	67%
Queen Anne's County	15%	25%	26%	25%	29%	88%
Talbot County	29%	38%	44%	47%	50%	72%

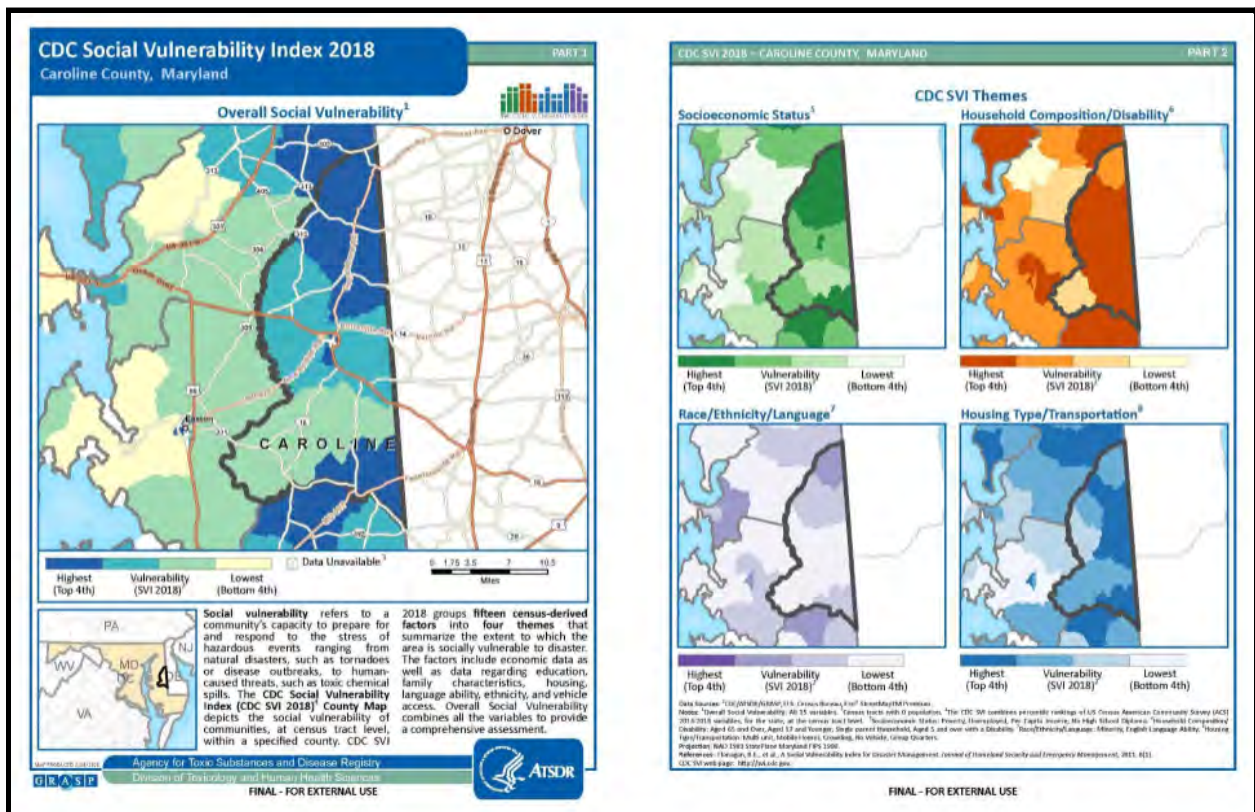
Source: Maryland State Department of Education
<http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/programs/SchoolandCommunityNutrition/Pages/FreeReducedPriceMealStatistic.aspx>
 *Note discrepancy due to documentation requirements in pandemic

and the Upper Eastern Shore counties. The FaRM population increased sharply between 2007 and 2011, and has changed little since the 2011 school year.

¹ A Poverty Threshold (PT) is defined by federal agencies as- a specific dollar amount that represents the dividing line between non-poor and poor. There is no single PT that is used for all persons, but rather annually revised sets of poverty threshold tables. Because of the annually changing PT numbers, its rate of change is independent of the rate of change of Per Capita Income.

In 2018 the Center for Disease Control (CDC) created a Social Vulnerability Index for every jurisdiction in the country. Social vulnerability demonstrates a community’s capacity to prepare for and respond to the stress of hazardous events. It also demonstrates where residents are generally more vulnerable. The index uses fifteen census-derived factors grouped in four themes to display which areas of the county are most socially vulnerable to disaster. As Image I-1 below shows, overall Caroline is primarily in the mid to upper risk levels of the vulnerability scale. Within the four themes considered, Caroline scores high on the index for socioeconomic status in the southern and northern portions of the county. Housing and transportation are high vulnerability areas in the southern and eastern parts of the county. This data representation provides only a broad generalization of the distribution of individuals and households across the county. As shown in the park equity analysis in Chapter II, awareness of the distribution of poverty at the town and village level is an important consideration for park planning.

Image I-1



6. Characteristics of Population Below the Poverty Level

According to the Maryland Alliance for the Poor, 44% of female headed households in Caroline County live below the poverty line of \$23,850 for a family of four. Additionally, of those individuals living in poverty, nearly half (49%) live in deep poverty or \$5,835 for an individual in 2014.

Based on U.S. Census, 2019, the population living below poverty level in Caroline County have the following characteristics:

- The population is nearly equally split between male and female residents.
- Approximately 68% of children under 18 years of age live in families with only one parent.
- Nearly 92% of those aged 5 years and over for whom poverty status is determined speak only English while approximately 6% speak only Spanish.
- Nearly 70% of the individuals in poverty are white alone and approximately 24% are black or African American alone with the remaining 6% represented by all other races and individuals of two or more races.

7. Employment

There were approximately 10,000 jobs in Caroline County in 2019, including approximately 5,631 service sector jobs (see Table I-14). The top four industries in terms of jobs were: trade, transportation, and utilities (2,690); government (1,807); manufacturing (1,291); and education and health services (1,231). Industries paying relatively high wages (information, business and professional services) are a small portion of the local employment base.

Industry	Average Number of Reporting Units	Annual Average Employment	Total Wages	Average Weekly Wage Per Worker
TOTAL EMPLOYMENT	695	10,002	\$435,654,573	\$838
GOVERNMENT SECTOR TOTAL	46	1,807	\$83,473,822	\$888
Federal Government	13	70	\$3,611,451	\$985
State Government	6	191	\$7,880,415	\$793
Local Government	27	1,546	\$71,981,956	\$896
PRIVATE SECTOR TOTAL	649	8,194	\$352,180,751	\$826
GOODS PRODUCING	189	2,563	\$114,392,146	\$858
Natural Resources and Mining	31	425	\$15,083,819	\$683
Construction	128	847	\$42,590,714	\$967
Manufacturing	30	1,291	\$56,717,613	\$845
SERVICE PROVIDING	459	5,631	\$237,788,605	\$812
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	165	2,690	\$115,903,334	\$829
Information	4	238	\$22,361,673	\$1,804
Financial Activities	36	185	\$9,798,675	\$1,017
Professional and Business Services	94	449	\$25,315,988	\$1,084
Education and Health Services	53	1,231	\$45,399,602	\$709
Leisure and Hospitality	43	538	\$8,242,779	\$295
Other Services	61	299	\$10,766,554	\$692

Source: Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation Industry Series Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) - OWIP

<https://www.dllr.state.md.us/lmi/emppay/caro2019ep.shtml>

Table I-15 Unemployment Rate for Population 16 Years and Over

Locale	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	Change 2011 - 2019
Caroline County	7.6%	10.3%	8.8%	6.5%	4.9%	-3.6%
Maryland	7.3%	8.2%	7.4%	6.1%	5.1%	-3.0%

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey

https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?tid=ACSDP5Y2019_DP03&g=0400000US24_0500000US24011

Since 2011 Caroline County unemployment rates have been falling, reaching a low of 4.9% in 2019 according to the US Census American Community Survey (Table I-15). Despite an increase in the second quarter of 2020 to 6.4%, following stay-at-home orders due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Caroline's rate has decreased to 4.9% in Quarter 1 of 2021, matching its 2019 overall rate (Table I-16).

Table I-16 Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)

	2019 Q4	2020 Q1	2020 Q2	2020 Q3	2020 Q4	2021 Q1	2021 Q2
Caroline County	3.0%	3.9%	6.4%	5.5%	5.4%	4.9%	5.7%

Source: Maryland Department of Labor

<https://www.dlr.state.md.us/lmi/laus/>

8. Educational Attainment

In 2019, 84.3% of the Caroline County population (25 years and older) held a high school degree. This included 44.5% who had obtained some higher education. Overall, 18.4% of the county's population held a bachelor's degree or higher. In comparison to the state, Caroline continues to lag significantly behind. Overall 40.2% of the state's population hold bachelor's degrees or higher.

Table I-17 Educational Attainment for Population 25 Years and Over

Highest Level of Educational Attainment	Caroline County			Maryland		
	2010	2015	2019	2010	2015	2019
No High School Diploma	18.4%	17.3%	15.7%	12.2%	10.7%	9.8%
High School Graduate (includes equivalency)	40.4%	40.7%	39.9%	26.4%	25.5%	24.6%
Some College, No Degree	19.1%	19.9%	17.9%	19.3%	19.5%	18.7%
Associate's Degree	6.8%	6.7%	8.1%	6.3%	6.4%	6.7%
Bachelor's Degree	10.2%	9.7%	10.5%	19.8%	20.6%	21.5%
Graduate or Professional Degree	5.0%	5.8%	7.9%	16.0%	17.3%	18.6%
High School Graduate or Higher	81.6%	82.8%	84.3%	87.8%	89.4%	90.2%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	15.2%	15.5%	18.4%	35.7%	37.9%	40.2%

Source: US Census Bureau, Maryland Department of Planning

https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?t=Educational%20Attainment&g=0400000US24_0500000US24011.24029.24041&tid=ACSST5Y2019_S1501

4. Comprehensive Planning Framework

Caroline County's current Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2010. It is amended periodically, most recently in 2015 to revise the priority preservation area as discussed in Chapter IV of this plan. The next planned update will take place upon release of the 2020 Census Data.

A. General Planning Strategy

The Comprehensive Plan provides the County's policy framework for land use management. Plan elements address land use, water resources, resource conservation, priority preservation areas, community facilities, transportation, economic development, and housing.

The land use goals direct development to growth centers while seeking to preserve the rural character of the surrounding landscape. The Comprehensive Plan identifies the five largest towns (Denton, Federalsburg, Greensboro, Preston and Ridgely) as "growth centers"; areas where future industrial, residential, and commercial growth should be concentrated. It also identifies fifteen villages and small towns where limited amounts of "infill" residential and commercial development are encouraged, both within and on the periphery of existing municipal boundaries (see Map I-6). Another consideration for this plan includes analysis of equitable accessibility of parks to residents as well as consideration of equity in land preservation.

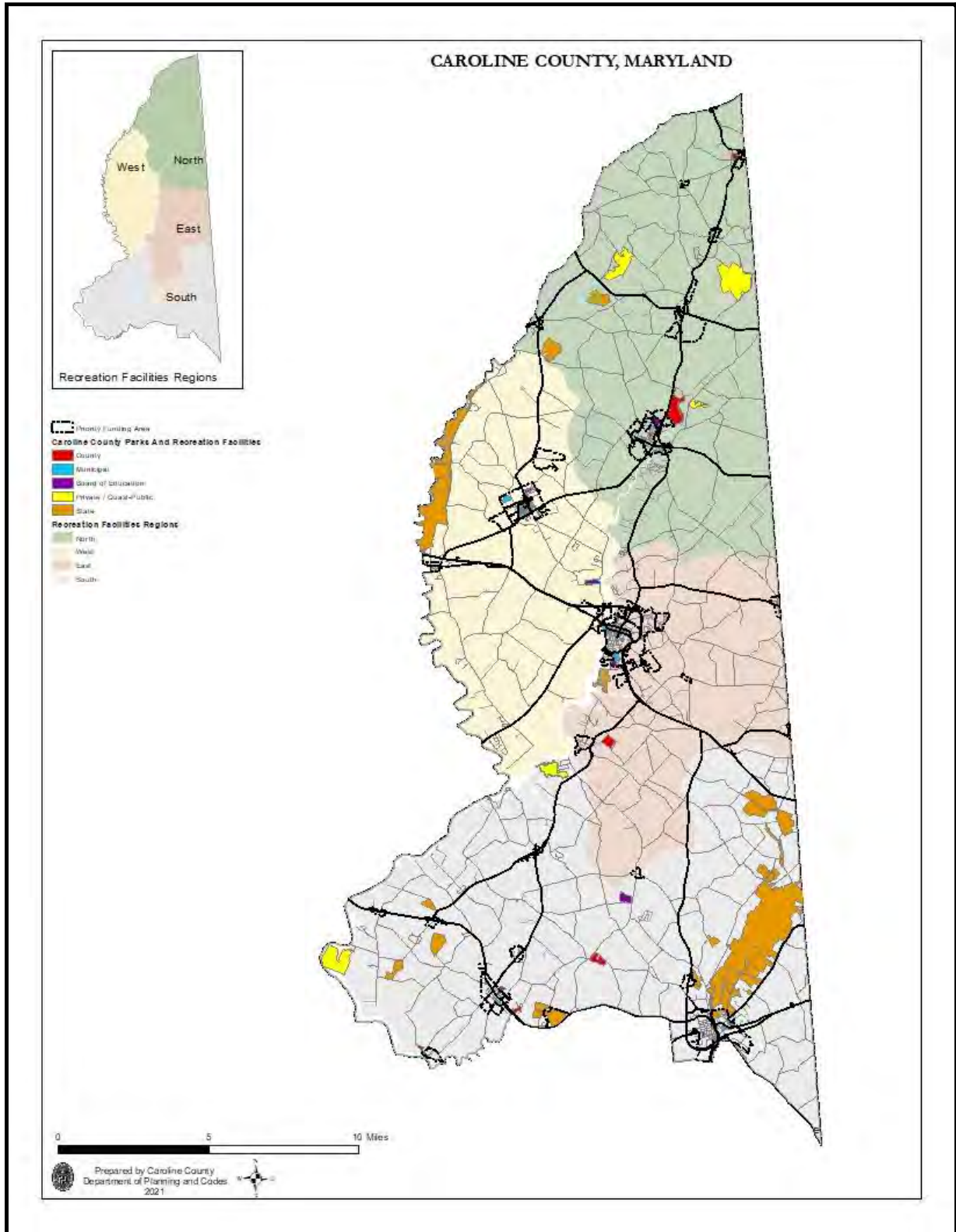
The Comprehensive Plan recognizes the importance of public services, especially water and sewer, in determining the extent and type of growth the County will experience. Policies support expansion of public water and sewer systems in the towns to accommodate future development.

The County completed a major comprehensive zoning update in 2013 that implemented Comprehensive Plan policies to strengthen the County's land preservation program. The zoning added rural village zones to recognize small rural communities, increased the land area of the R-Rural zoning district, and reduced the land in the R-1 Single Family Residential zoning district.

Key goals, objectives, and actions related to facilities, from the Community Facilities Element of the Comprehensive Plan, include:

- Review the Adequate Public Facilities regulations.
- Ensur[e] adequate park and open space land and facilities meet current and projected demands.
- Coordinat[e] planning and programming of community facilities with the appropriate Municipal, County, and State agencies and entities.
- Review the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance and explore the appropriateness of impact fees to address demand on public facilities and services created by new development.
- Coordinate planning between the County, municipalities, and Board of Education to provide adequate public infrastructure to areas in need.

Map 1-6 Caroline County Parks and Recreation Locations



B. Town Comprehensive Plans

The Comprehensive Plans for Caroline County's towns were prepared in 2009, except for Denton and Greensboro (2010) and Preston (2012). All town plans are due to be reviewed and updated between 2022 and 2024.

C. Implications for Land Preservation and Recreation

The County's physical features, demographics, and planning framework have implications for land preservation and recreation policies.

Some major characteristics of the County that impact this plan are as follows:

Natural Resources and Planning Framework

- Caroline County is rural. Population densities are low; automobile travel is expected and essential for most of the population.
- Farming is a stable, healthy and dominant industry.
- Rivers and streams, both tidal and non-tidal, are very important environmental and recreational resources.
- The municipalities provide services, varied housing, and opportunity for limited new growth for the County.
- The area of greatest residential growth potential is in the Denton-Ridgley-Greensboro triangle.

Demographic Characteristics

- County population is stable, although official State projections anticipate substantial population growth.
- Average household incomes in the County are lower than in the State and two of its three bordering counties. Poverty levels are correspondingly higher than the state and its neighbors.
- The proportion of the population over 55 is expected to increase at a moderate rate, while the 35-54 population is expected to decline. The proportion of younger age groups is expected to change little.
- The racial demographics of the county are changing with 15.7% of school age residents identifying as Hispanic/Latino as compared to only 7% of the overall population.
- Education levels are modest; however there has been progress at each attainment level.
- ALICE households make up a significant number of the households in Caroline County, living above the federal poverty level, but struggling to cover basic needs. Individuals

with income below the poverty level are more likely to be either unemployed or not in the labor force; children are more likely to be in single parent households.

The implications for land preservation and provision of parks and recreation are detailed in the remainder of this LPPRP. Overarching concepts are as follows:

- The County intends to provide parks and recreation services that are distributed through the County and accessible for all County residents.
- The towns play a major role in the provision of recreation facilities and services in the County. Pedestrian access to parks in the towns is important in the towns.
- The projected age distribution in the County will result in stable demand for recreation services from all age groups, with increasing demand from the 55 and older age group.
- Public recreation programs and parks are important resources for lower-income residents who cannot easily afford private or fee-based recreation. Equitable access to parks, recreation, and open spaces needs to be a priority in planning efforts.
- Farmland is interspersed with forests and water resources (streams, rivers and wetlands). This land use pattern requires a coordinated approach to land preservation that addresses both agriculture and environmental resources.
- Waterways contribute greatly to the sense of place in the County, and are a significant recreational and natural resource asset.
- Climate change, sea level rise, and storm surge need to be a part of land planning at all levels.
- Continued commitment to the preservation of agricultural and natural resource lands is important to maintaining the County's quality of life and environmental quality, which are closely linked.

Chapter II Recreation, Parks, and Open Space

1. Executive Summary

This chapter summarizes Caroline County's current parks and open space inventory as well as anticipates future needs for both land acquisition and development. Based on the analysis of the factors listed below, Caroline County Recreation & Parks (CCRP) has identified goals for development of lands in its current inventory, acquisition of additional acreage to meet identified needs and development of programming associated with parks and facilities usage. Factors used for this analysis and goal-setting include:

- User feedback
- Accessibility of parks and open space available to the public based on proximity and equity analysis
- Engagement with local leaders, including elected officials in Caroline's municipalities
- State goals for recreation and parks
- National Recreation & Parks Association goals
- Caroline County's comprehensive planning program



Choptank Marina, Preston Maryland

As outlined in Chapter I, Caroline County's approach to both preservation and recreational land use can be placed within the context of the County's commitment to protecting its agricultural traditions and the demographic make-up of the county. Caroline County is rural, with low population densities. Much of its infrastructure, including the recreational offerings provided by the County's recreation and parks department, requires that residents have accessible transportation. Regional parks are situated within short driving distance of the County's population centers. Parks provided by the five municipalities within the County play a critical role in providing equitable access to parks and open space, particularly for those within walking distance but also for county residents who live outside the municipal town limits. Based on information gathered through a comprehensive community engagement process and analysis of parks and program usage, Caroline's recreation and parks system is geographically well distributed and residents agree the number and location of parks and open space acreage is adequate. Community feedback indicates that development should focus on providing additional features within existing parks and that any development must take into consideration capacity to maintain both the built recreational features and conserved natural environment.

Caroline County provides county residents and visitors with access to premiere experiences in their parks and their programs. The work of the Caroline County Recreation & Parks Department is guided by its Mission and its alignment with the National Recreation & Parks' Association's mission and vision.

A. Mission

The Department of Recreation and Parks has adopted the following Mission Statement:

To improve and enrich citizen well-being and community life through the provision of affordable, high quality activities and parks and facilities for Caroline County families and individuals.

The Department has identified two guiding principles to fulfill this mission:

- Provide safe, attractive, and functional facilities and open spaces for the delivery of community recreation and individual leisure pursuits.
- Provide access to recreational services that challenge, engage, and respond to the needs of Caroline Countians and their families.

B. Alignment with National Recreation & Parks Association Mission & Vision

In pursuing its mission, the Department is guided by the National Recreation and Parks Association's three pillars:

Well-being: Leading the nation to improve health and wellness through parks and recreation.

Recreation and Parks play a crucial role in providing its citizens with opportunities to exercise more and to access the benefits of nature. With the County Health Department and local medical providers, Recreation & Parks and Maryland State Parks host the Healthy Parks Healthy People ParksRx program.

Conservation (Climate Readiness): Protecting open space, connecting children to nature, and engaging communities in conservation practices.

Caroline County is committed to developing its parks and recreation system that supports and reinforces the rural nature of the County, as established in the policies of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan. This includes a commitment to good environmental stewardship practices.

Environmental stewardship is critical for the county as the increased threat of climate change and sea level rise play an ever more important role in all aspects of life.

Social Equity: Ensuring all people have access to the benefits of local parks and recreation.

The County seeks to provide a network of recreation parks and facilities that are accessible to all residents. For county parks and facilities, this refers to parks within a short driving distance.

Within municipalities, “convenient access” includes neighborhood parks and other recreation facilities within ½ mile walking distance.

2. Park Land and Recreation Inventory

As of 2021, Caroline County contains a total of 9,817 acres of recreation and resource land that is owned by State or local government or private organizations. Table II-1 summarizes this land by owner. There are no federal recreation lands in Caroline County.

Land in the inventory is classified as recreation or resource land based on the following definitions: Recreation land is developed for primary use by the public; resource lands are lands whose primary objective is natural resource protection. Although there may be public recreation value to these properties, that use is secondary to the needs of wildlife and natural resources that the land protects.

Table II-1 Recreation and Resource Land by Owner (acres)

Owner	Recreation	Resource	Total
Local Recreation and Resource Lands Total	445.2	354.4	799.6
Board of Education*	104.4	0.0	104.4
Caroline County	158.8	324.3	483.1
Town of Denton	51.3	11.2	62.5
Town of Federalsburg	57.6	18.1	75.7
Town of Ridgely	36.9	0.0	36.9
Town of Preston	8.5	0.0	8.5
Town of Greensboro	21.6	0.0	21.6
Town of Hillsboro	4.0	0.8	4.8
Town of Templeville	0.8	0.0	0.8
Town of Goldsboro	1.3	0.0	1.3
State and Federal Recreation and Resource Lands Total	1487.0	5784.6	7272.0
State	1487.4	5784.6	7272.0
Federal	0.0	0.0	0.0
Private/Quasi-Public Recreation and Resource Lands	278.3	1467.3	1745.6
TOTAL - ALL RESOURCE LANDS	2210.5	7606.3	9817.2

*Refers to the footprint of buildings on school sites subject to a Joint Use Agreement with the Department of Recreation and Parks.

County and Municipal Land: Recreation land is currently developed for public use; resource land is currently unimproved, but is reserved to be developed and used in the future for public recreation.

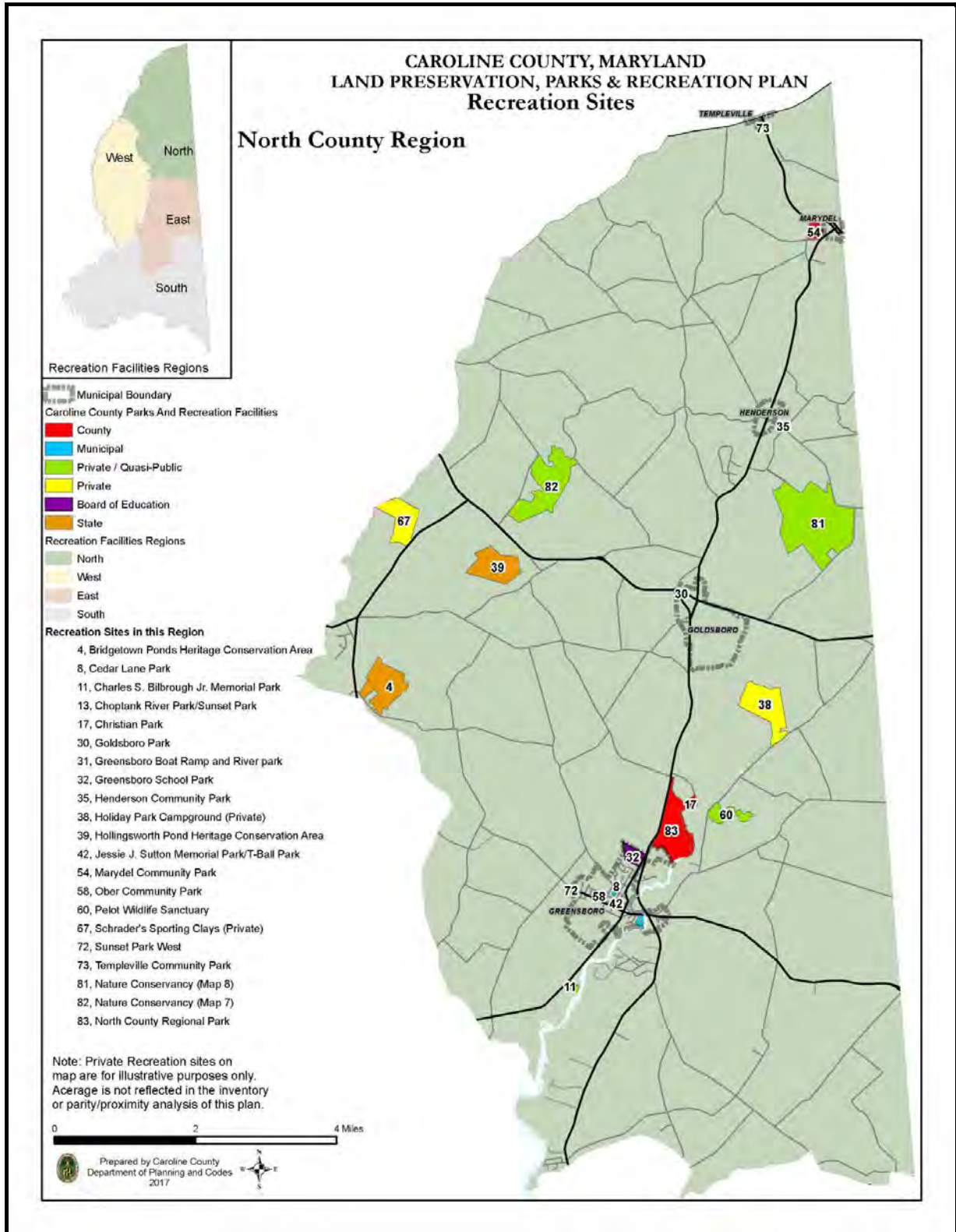
Board of Education Land: Recreation land includes outdoor areas that are available and developed for public education and outdoor community use. This includes outdoor playing fields, playgrounds, grass areas, paths, parking areas, etc.

State Land: State parks are considered recreation land. Resource land includes wildlife management areas and other environmental conservation lands. (For example, the Idylwild Wildlife Management Area, encompassing over 3,500 acres, is classified as resource land, although it is open to the public for hunting, fishing, and hiking.)

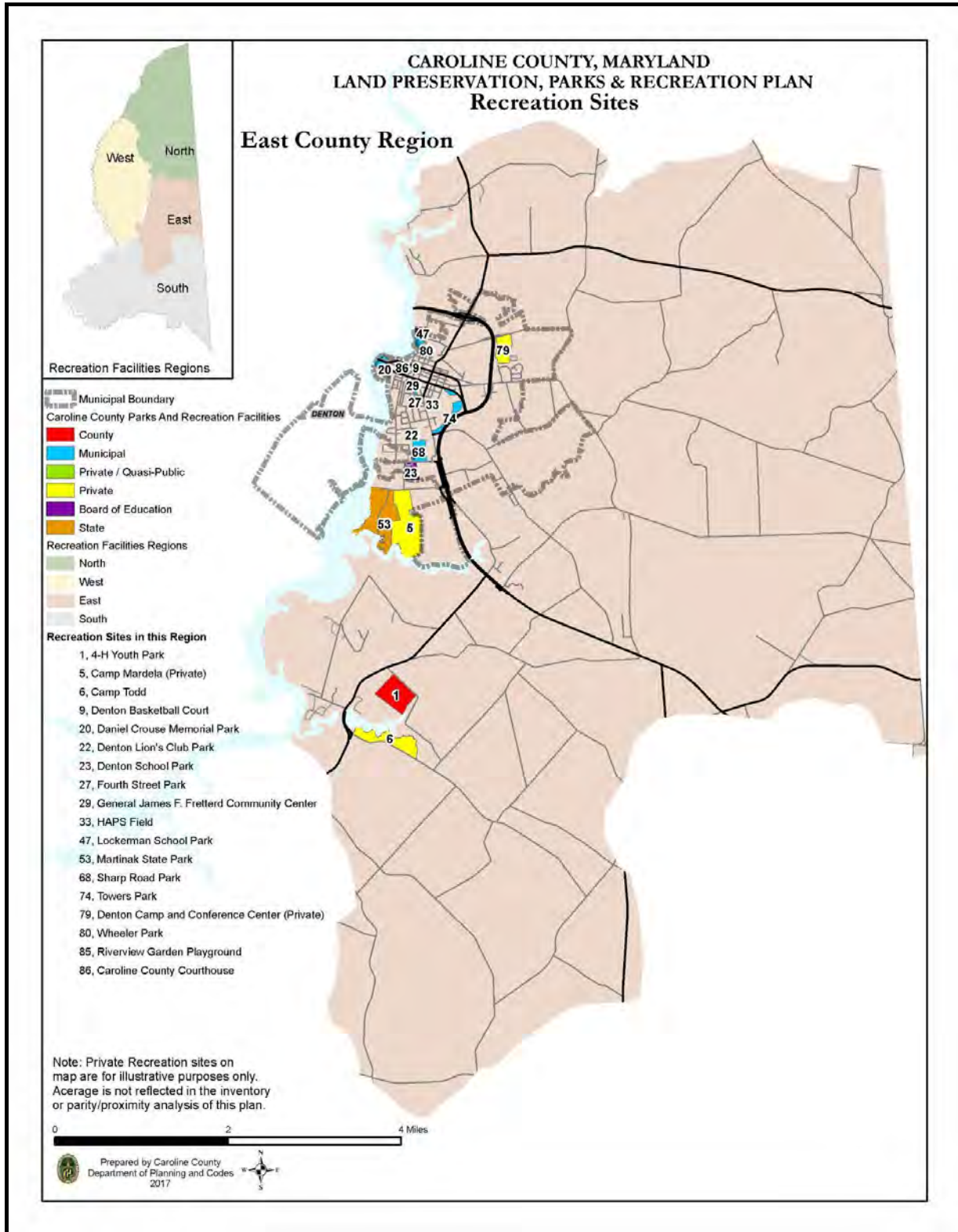
Private/Quasi-public: These lands are privately owned but are accessible to the general public.

State and quasi-public resource land is shown in Table II-1 but is described in more detail in Chapter V, Natural Resources. This chapter focuses on recreation land. The inventory of park and recreation sites is presented by region of the county on the following pages as Maps II-1 through II-4, and also appears in the Appendix B.

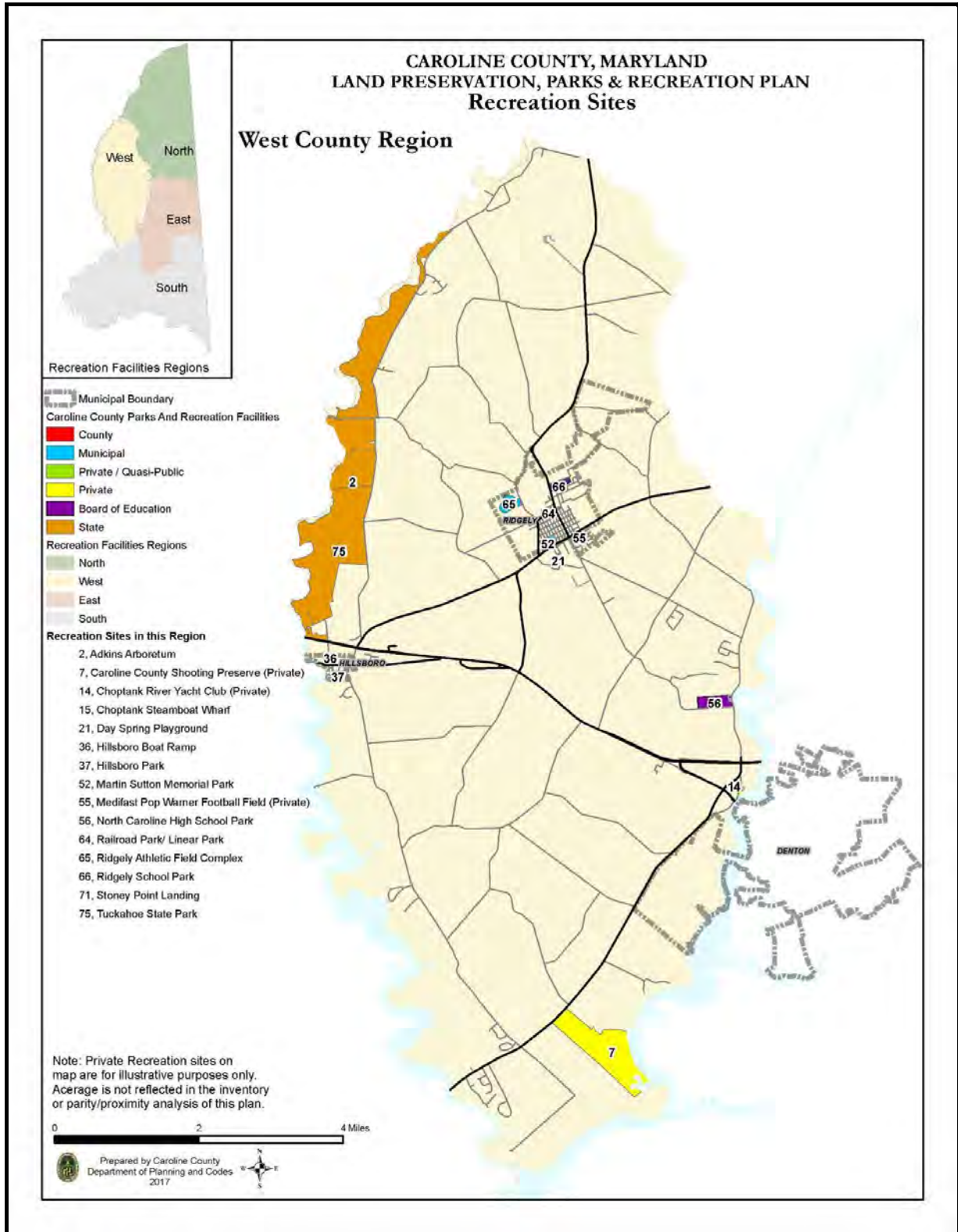
Map II-1 Parks and Recreation Sites in Northern Caroline County



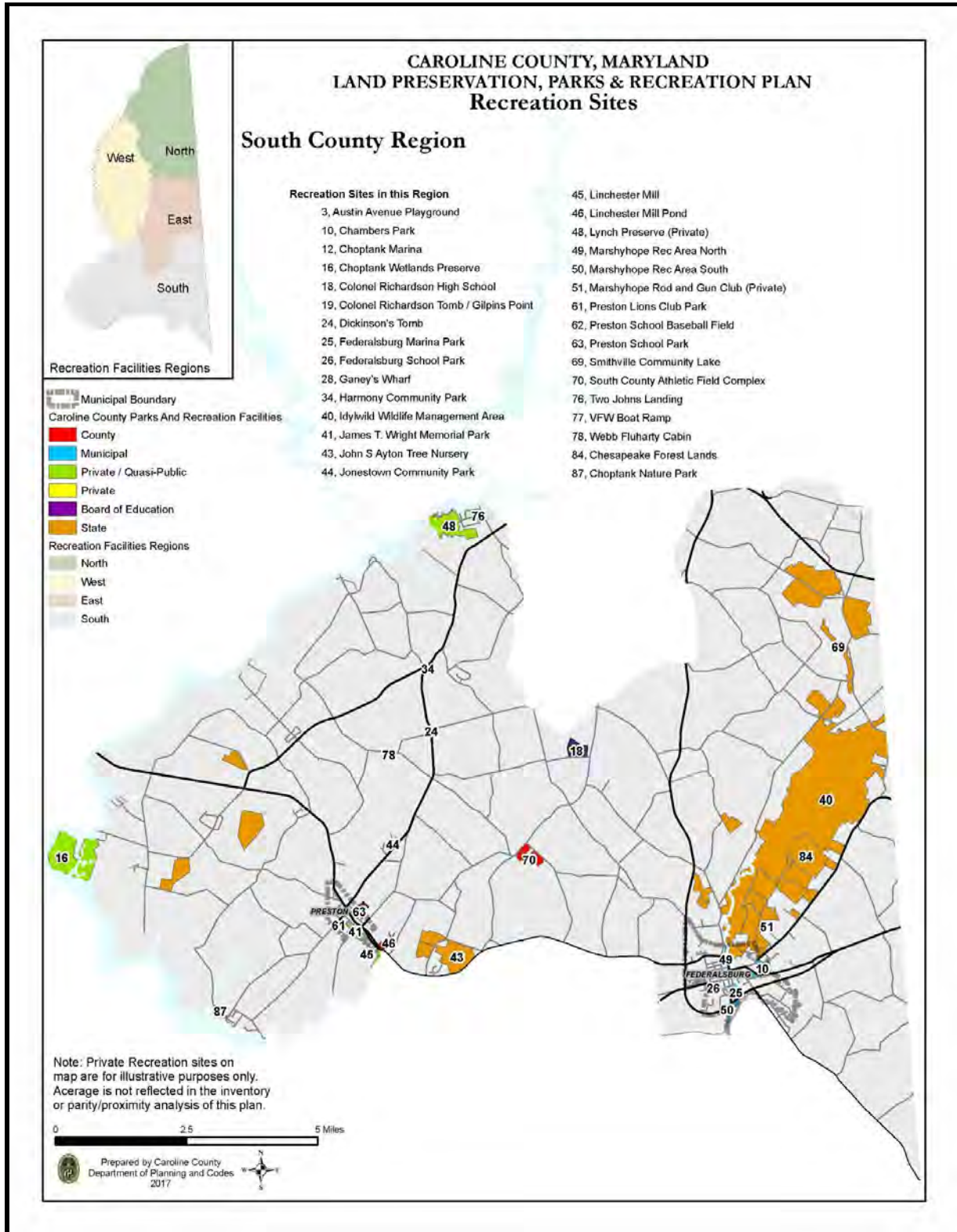
Map II-2 Parks and Recreation Sites in Eastern Caroline County



Map II-3 Parks and Recreation Sites in Western Caroline County



Map II-4 Parks and Recreation Sites in Southern Caroline County



A. County and Town Land

Caroline County maintains 159 acres of land developed for recreational use. This includes all developed County parks. The County also has 324 acres of undeveloped County park land (land designated or intended for future parks), which is counted as resource land. There has been no change since the 2017 Plan in the number of recreational and resource acreage owned by the county.

Board of Education property accounts for an additional 104 acres of recreational land, 22 percent of the County's locally-owned recreation land. The incorporated towns provide the remaining 182 acres, 38 percent of local recreation land. The towns of Denton, Hillsboro and Federalsburg also own undeveloped park land, listed as resource land.

B. Regional Parks

The 73-acre South County Regional Park provides three irrigated multi-purpose fields, a playground, a paved perimeter trail, and a maintenance facility. The paved perimeter trail and maintenance facility were completed as a part of the 2017 Plan. Two pavilions are anticipated to be completed by June 20, 2022.



North County Regional Park (NCRP) is a 207 acre parcel currently listed as resource land because development is still in the early phases. Active use is limited to mowed walking trails. The County completed a master design plan for the phased development of the NCRP in 2019 and anticipates beginning the first phase of development in FY2023.

C. Community and Neighborhood Parks

Community and neighborhood parks provide ball fields (baseball, soccer, and multi-purpose), basketball and tennis courts, playgrounds and picnic areas. The five community parks are generally larger than the neighborhood parks and provide facilities that serve a larger geographic population. These parks include:

- Sharp Road Park, a 24-acre facility in the town of Denton (central Caroline County), with a multipurpose field, basketball court, perimeter walking trail and parking.
- Marydel Community Park, a 25-acre park in the town of Marydel (northern Caroline County), with a multipurpose field, playground, picnic tables, disc golf, paved and mowed trails. A second phase of this project is currently underway and includes an additional multipurpose field. Part of the site is preserved via a forest conservation easement.
- Ridgely Athletic Field Complex, a 13-acre site in Ridgely (western Caroline County) with two baseball fields, two t-ball fields, a concession/storage facility and a permanent batting cage.

- Martin Sutton Park, a 17-acre park in Ridgely with multipurpose fields, a baseball diamond, a skate park, playground, picnic tables, perimeter walking trail, tennis courts and pavilions. Underway in 2021 is the replacement/rehab of the skate park, perimeter trail, tennis and basketball courts.
- Chambers Park, a 16-acre site in the town of Federalsburg (southern Caroline County) with a multipurpose field, baseball fields, tennis courts, playgrounds, picnic tables, picnic pavilions, a skate park, concessions, and a community center.

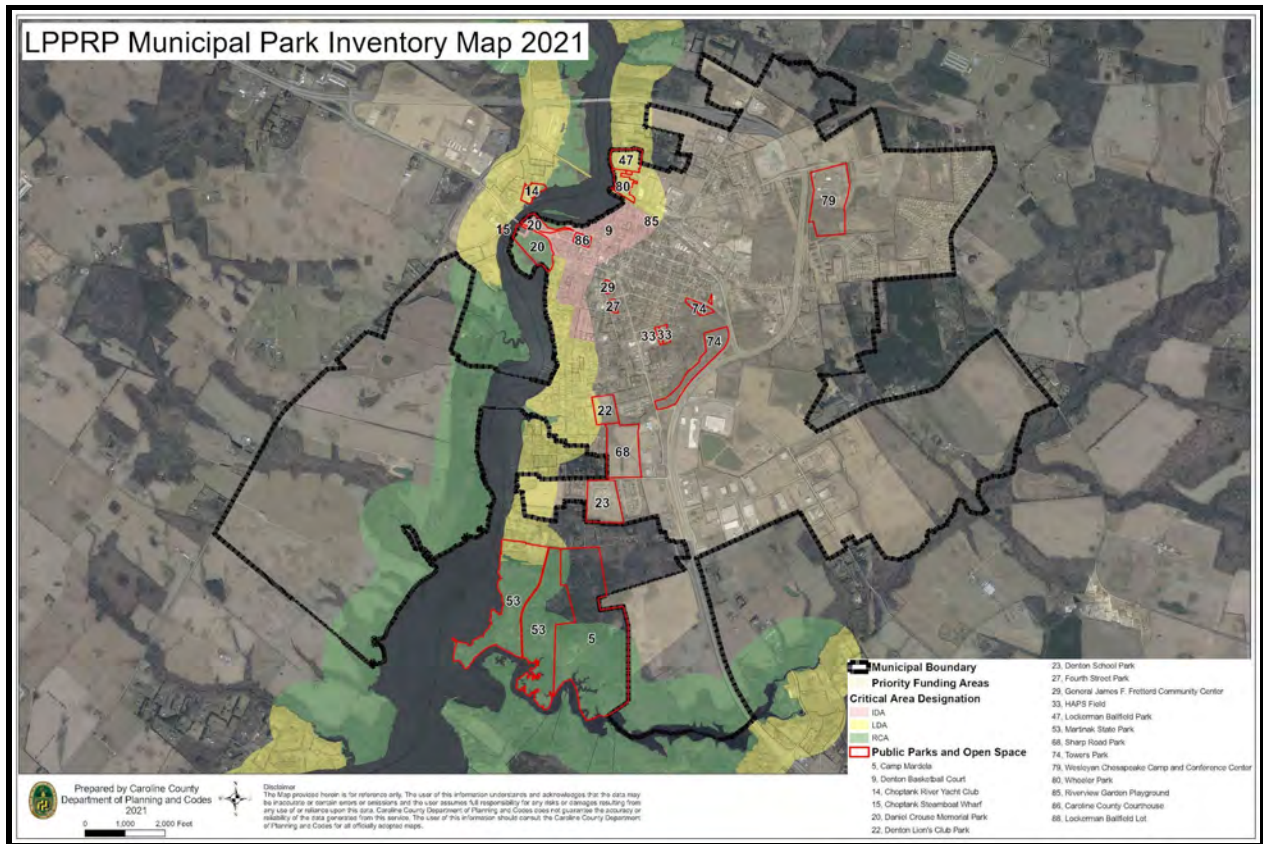


Martin Sutton Park, Ridgely MD

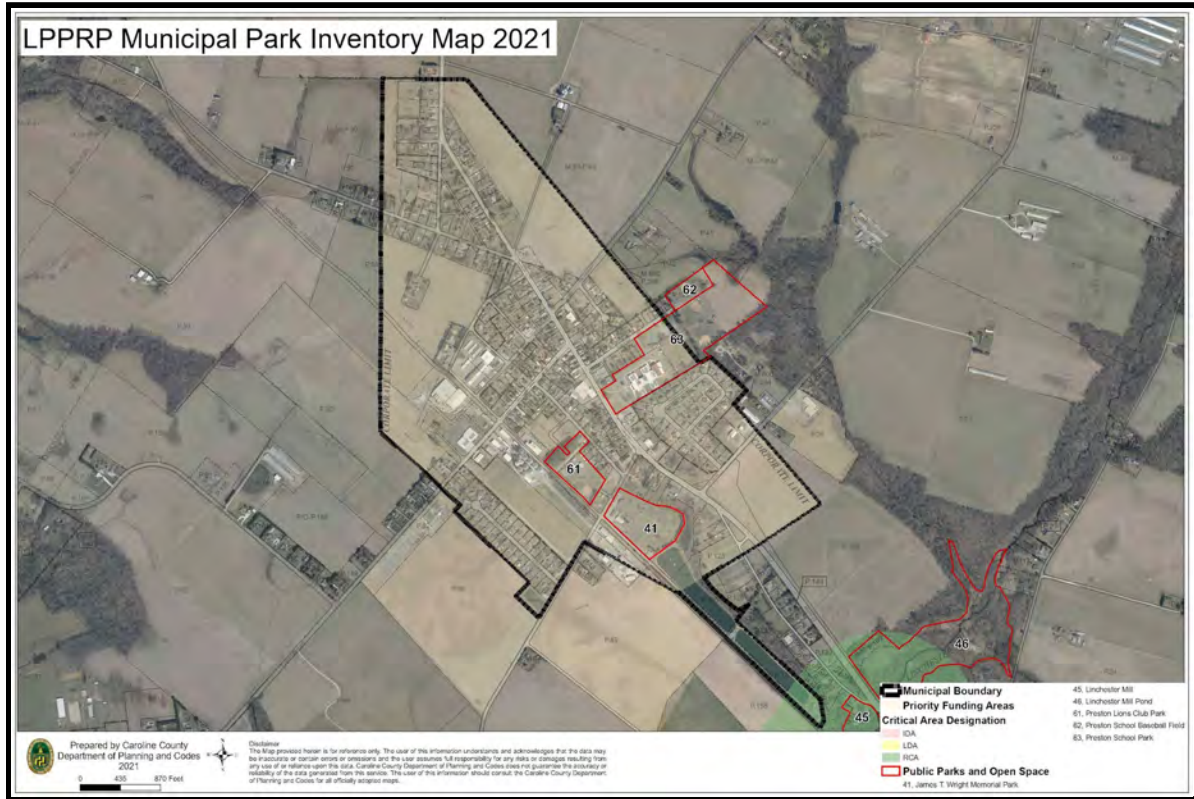
- Federalsburg Marina Park, a 19.7 acre site in Federalsburg along the Marshyhope Creek, with basketball courts, splash pad, picnic tables and pavilions, paved walking/bike trail and playground. It also connects to a 21.7 acre greenway system that runs along the Marshyhope River and includes a one mile bike and walking/trail.

There are 17 neighborhood parks located throughout the County, ranging in size from 0.1 to about 5 acres. Maps II-5 through II-9 below show parks and open land in Denton, Preston, Federalsburg, Ridgely and Greensboro, the five largest towns in the county.

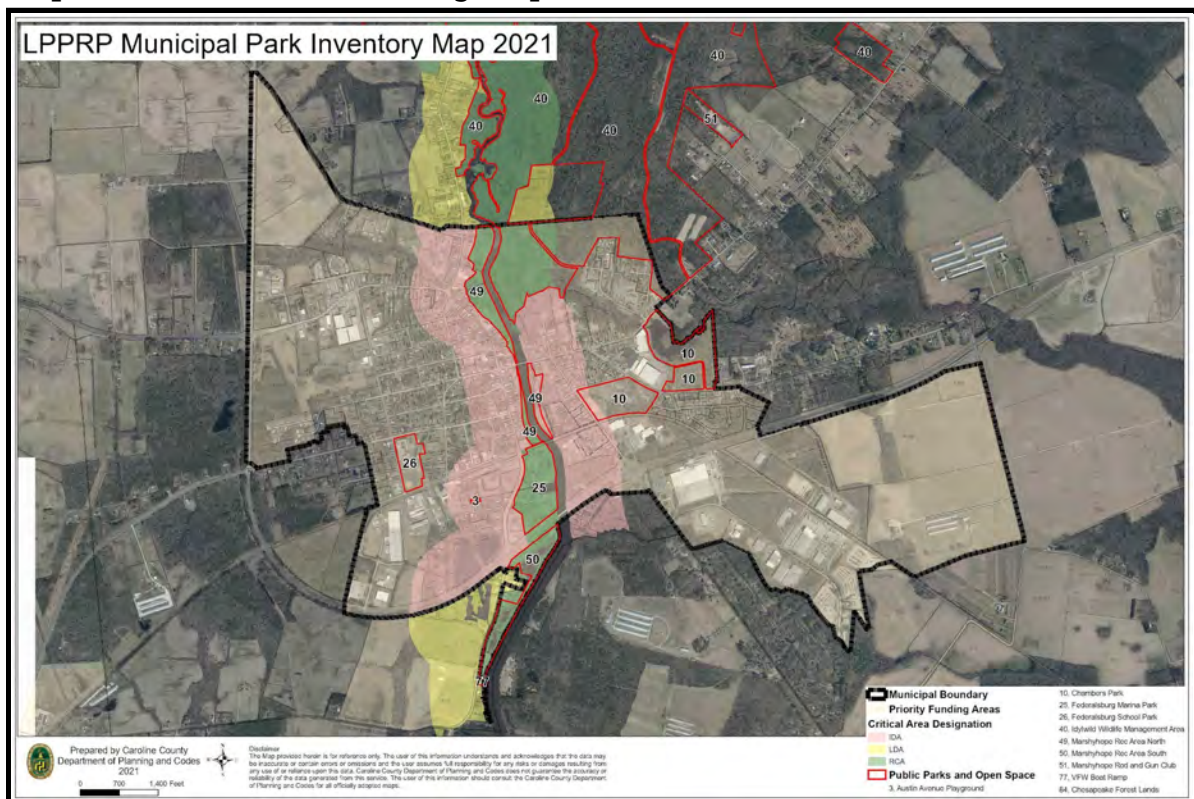
Map II-5 Town of Denton Map



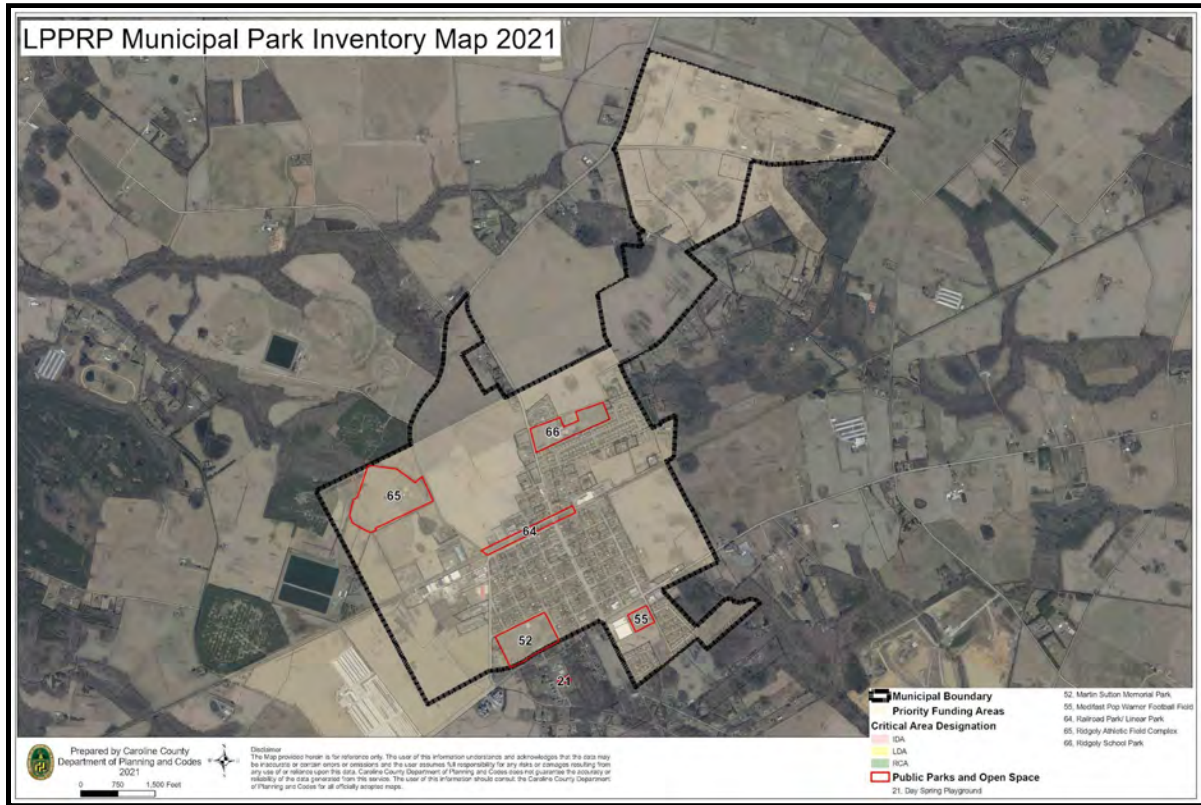
Map II-6 Town of Preston Map



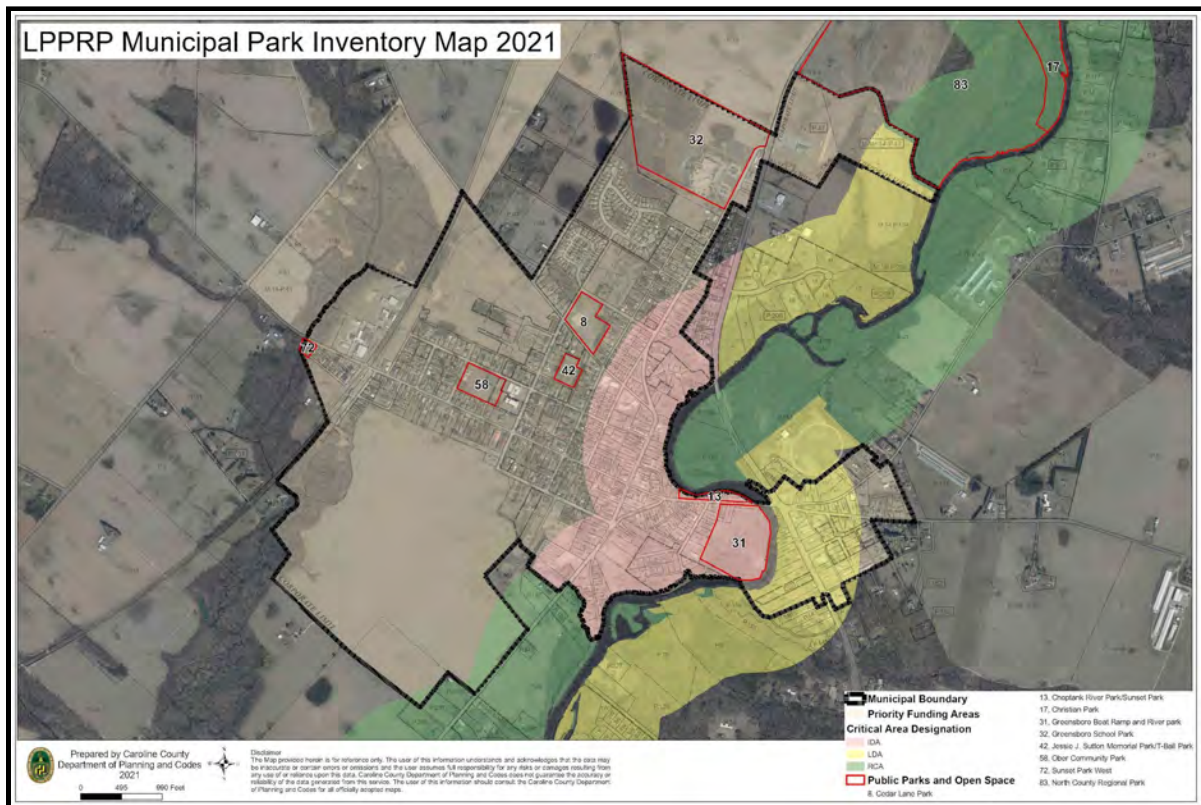
Map II-7 Town of Federalsburg Map



Map II-8 Town of Ridgely Map



Map II-9 Town of Greensboro Map



D. School Recreation Parks & Facility Access

The County has nine school recreation parks—recreation facilities on school grounds that are available for public use, for programs operated or coordinated by the Department of Recreation and Parks, at times when they are not needed by the schools. School recreation parks are widely distributed and contribute significantly to recreation opportunities in the County, particularly elementary school ball fields and multipurpose fields. The facilities include the grounds of the County’s two high schools, two middle schools, and five elementary schools.



Lockerman Middle School Baseball Field

The continuing partnership between the Department of Recreation and Parks and the Caroline County Public Schools (CCPS) also plays a key role in the County’s ability to meet the user demand for indoor recreation programming, since the County does not have the indoor space necessary to meet the demand itself. In 2012 and again in 2015 the County renegotiated its Joint Use Agreement with CCPS, clarifying in the Agreement that access to indoor spaces would be provided at no cost, in exchange for the Department continuing to manage the scheduling and maintenance of specified properties purchased or developed with POS funds. This includes

fields at three of the five elementary schools, as well as at Lockerman Middle School.

E. Other Recreation Sites

Other recreation sites include two mini-parks located in towns and thirteen County- or municipal-owned special use areas, including:

- 4H Youth Park: the only agricultural-focused recreational resource in the County. It contains unique facilities, including show barns, an equestrian ring, an agricultural museum and an indoor assembly hall. In 2019, the 4-H Youth Park Board and the County Commissioners collaborated with the Caroline Historical Society to install the William Still Interpretive Center, part of the Harriet Tubman Byway project.
- Choptank Marina: a 72-slip marina with electrical and water hook-up, septic pump-out, restrooms, and a small beach area with picnic tables.
- The Health and Public Services multipurpose field: an interim use of undeveloped land.
- Nine sites that provide access to the water, and that are not part of a larger park. Two of these provide only a right-of-way water access point, while the remainder provide fishing piers, beaches, and six of the County’s public boat ramps.



Choptank Marina

F. State Land

State-owned recreation land accounts for 1,511 acres, or 65 percent of the recreation land in Caroline County. This State recreation land consists of two State parks: Tuckahoe State Park and Martinak State Park.

Martinak State Park is a 105-acre park on the Choptank River with hiking trails, camping areas, picnic pavilions, an amphitheater, a boat ramp, and a ball field. Martinak's trail is a 1.5 mile fitness trail.



Martinak State Park

Tuckahoe State Park consists of nearly 1,700 acres of natural resource-oriented recreation land, centered on the Tuckahoe Creek. Of that total, 1,382 acres are included in the County's inventory of recreation land. (The Adkins Arboretum, within Tuckahoe State Park, is counted as resource land.) The park contains a lake, hiking trails, campsites, and a boat ramp with access to the lake and upper Tuckahoe Creek. The Park contains a 20 mile trail system that includes walking, hiking, biking, and equestrian trails and 7.4 miles of water trails.

Both Tuckahoe and Martinak State Parks contribute significantly to public access to local waterways.

G. Private Quasi-Public land and Facilities

Private recreation land that is managed as quasi-public is an important component of the County's overall recreation land inventory. The 278 acres of private recreation land accounts for 13 percent of the recreation land in the County, and includes facilities operated by non-profit organizations (church-based, Girl Scouts, local Lions Clubs, Caroline Historical Society). These include:



Preston Lions Club Carnival

- Camp Todd and Camp Mardela, which provide group camping, cabin, and conference facilities
- Lions Club sites in three towns (Preston, Denton and Greensboro) which provide ball fields, clubhouses, picnic areas and open space for carnivals and events open to the public.

H. Water Access Facilities

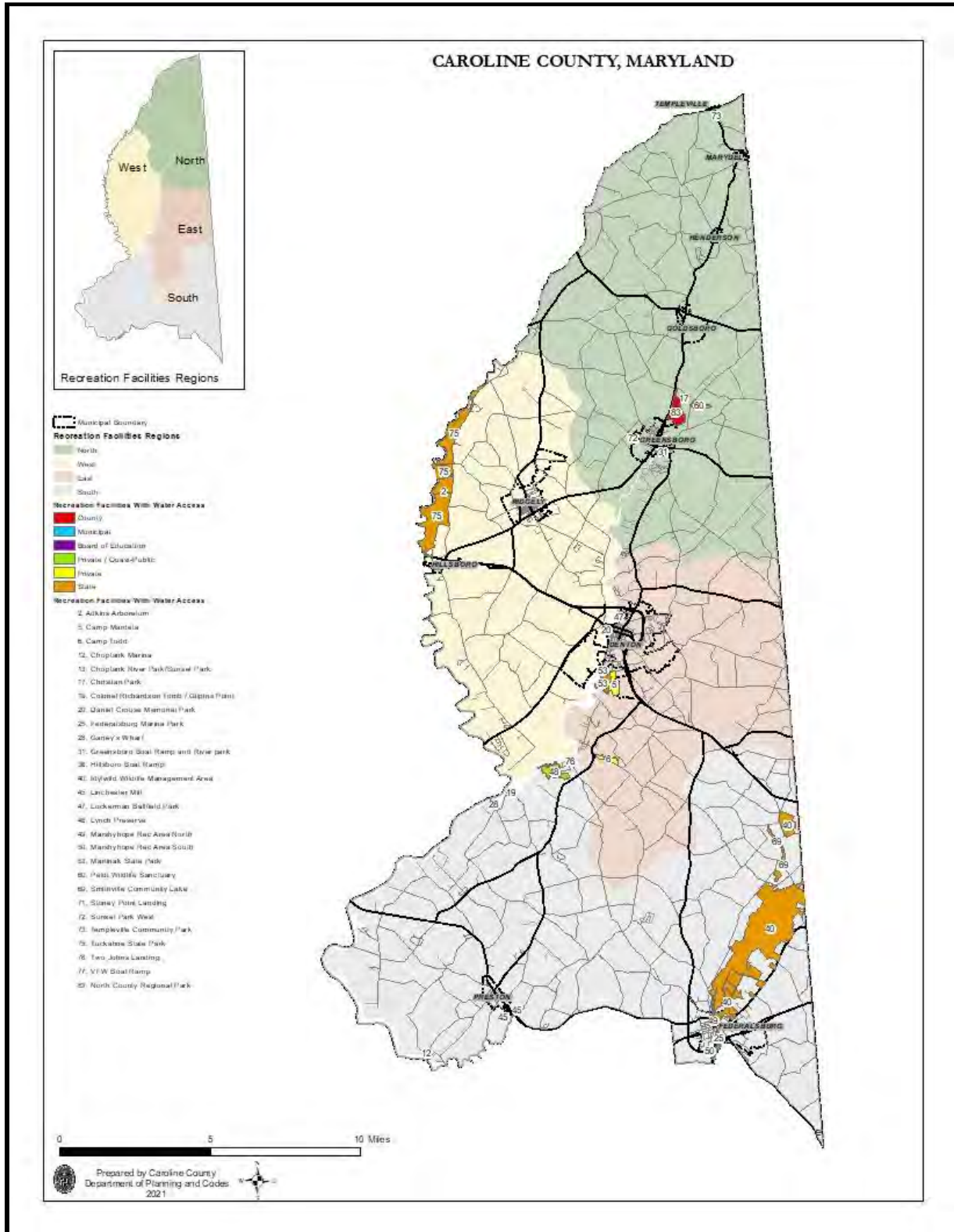
- Public access to rivers and lakes for boating and fishing is an important component of the County's recreation facilities. The network of public water access sites includes land owned by the State, County and municipal government, as well as private conservation organizations. Table II-2 summarizes water access areas. These include:

- Ten sites with publicly-owned boat ramps, where fishing from piers or bulkheads is also typically allowed;
- Several public locations where shoreline access to the water is available with no piers or ramps.

Table II-2 Water Access

Site	Ownership	Facilities
Boat Ramps		
Daniel Crouse Memorial Park	Denton	One Boat Ramp
Federalsburg Marina Park	Federalsburg	Two Boat Ramps
VFW Ramp: Marshyhope Greenway South	Federalsburg	Two Boat Ramps
Choptank Marina	Caroline County	72 Slips, One Boat Ramp
Ganey's Wharf	Caroline County	One Boat Ramp
Greensboro Boat Ramp	Greensboro	One Boat Ramp
Hillsboro Boat Ramp	Caroline County	One Boat Ramp
Martinak State Park	Maryland DNR	One Boat Ramp
Smithville Community Lake	Maryland DNR	One Boat Ramp
Tuckahoe State Park	Maryland DNR	One Boat Ramp
Water Access, No Boat Ramp		
Greensboro Lions Club Park	Private (Lion's Club)	Shoreline Access
Choptank River Park	Greensboro	Shoreline Access
Camp Mardela	Private	Fishing from Piers
Camp Todd	Private	Shoreline Access
Christian Park	Caroline County	Shoreline Access, Pier, Picnic Tables
Stoney Point Landing	Caroline County	Shoreline Access
Two Johns Landing	Caroline County	Shoreline Access
Wheeler Park	Denton	Shoreline Access
Idylwild WMA	Maryland DNR	Shoreline Access
Pelot Wildlife Sanctuary	Maryland Ornithological Society	Shoreline Access, Pier

Map II-10 Caroline County Water Access Locations



I. Heritage Areas, Scenic Byways and Historic Sites

In addition to its parks and recreation facilities, Caroline County's landscape contains views, historic resources and natural settings that evoke its history and heritage. These resources have been recognized through two State programs: Heritage Areas and Scenic Byways. The planning, publicity and financial resources provided through these programs help to protect the County's rural and scenic character, provide access to financial assistance for preserving historic resources, promote tourism and draw visitors that benefit County businesses.

Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area

Maryland's Heritage Areas Program consists of State -certified regions where public and private partners make commitments to preserve cultural, historical and natural resources for sustainable economic development. Heritage Areas focus attention on the history, living culture, and distinctive natural areas of the local region. The Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) provides financial and technical assistance to "Certified Heritage Areas."

Caroline, along with Kent, Queen Anne's and Talbot Counties and their municipalities are part of the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area, which has been certified by the MHAA, which has helped to foster grant funding for local projects as well as historic rehabilitation tax credits for property owners.

Scenic Byways

The Scenic Byway program recognizes State highway corridors that are outstanding examples of scenic, historic, recreational, cultural, and/or natural qualities and provide special benefits, including the promotion of heritage tourism.

The Maryland State Highway Administration operates the Maryland Scenic Byway Program. Once a State Scenic Byway has been designated, it becomes eligible for technical assistance for preparation of a Corridor Management Plan (CMP) as well as prioritized funding from various State grant programs.

Caroline County contains portions of two State Scenic Byways:

- The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Scenic Byway follows the roads, waterways, trails, and hiding places used by enslaved people to find their way to freedom before the Civil War. This Byway has a website (<http://harriettubmanbyway.org/>), a self-directed, 125-mile long driving tour with more than 30 sites in Dorchester and Caroline Counties, and a visitor center in the town of Church Creek in Dorchester County. The visitor center is part of the Harriet Tubman National Historic Park.



- Michener’s Chesapeake Country Scenic Byway, developed in partnership with Queen Anne’s, Talbot and Dorchester Counties, highlights the region’s maritime, agricultural and natural resources. The byway was inspired by Chesapeake by James Michener, which tells the tales of Eastern Shore families throughout centuries of history. The Byway’s “Chesapeake Country (Mid-Shore) Corridor Management Plan” proposes strategies for integration into the nationally designated portion of the Chesapeake Country Scenic Byway to the north and the Blue Crab State Scenic Byway to the south. The Byway route overlaps with the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway in several locations, and travels through the Stories of the Chesapeake heritage area.

Caroline County has numerous sites with recognized historic significance, including two National Historic Districts, 17 sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and 366 inventoried historic sites (structures built before 1900). The following historic sites are owned by the County or a nonprofit organization and provide open space and tourism opportunities:



Fretterd Community Center, Denton, MD

- **General James F. Fretterd Community Center:** Also, known as the Denton Armory, serves as the Department of Recreation and Parks headquarters and a community center with a gymnasium and three multipurpose rooms. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and was originally built for the 104th Quartermaster’s Company of the Maryland National Guard.

- **Medford House:** The County is working in partnership with the Caroline Historical Society and relocated this structure to the County-owned property that is in the design phase of development currently. The Historical Society is anticipating completion of the restoration by August 2022.
- **Caroline County Courthouse:** The grounds of the Courthouse provide public space for a wide variety of community programs and public assemblies, often produced or coordinated by Recreation and Parks. Events held on the Courthouse grounds include Shakespeare in the Park, the annual holiday Lighting of the Green and Summerfest. The grounds also include wayfinding signs associated with the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway, a Tourism Information Kiosk open 24-7 and shaded picnic tables.
- **James H Webb cabin:** A hand-hewn log cabin built by a free African American farmer in 1852. The dwelling is owned by the Historical Society on County owned land. It is a stop on the Harriet Tubman UGRR Byway.
- **Linchester Mill Park and Mill Pond area:** The 15-acre site contains the historic Linchester Mill, The Miller’s House, The Assistant Miller’s House, The Hogg Island School and the Gadow House & Creamery. The property also includes a nature trail with interpretation signs in Braille.



Linchester Mill, Preston, MD

Docent-led tours of the buildings are available. Operated by the Friends of Linchester in

association with the Caroline Historical Society, the Linchester Mill is located on the Harriet Tubman UGRR Byway and the Civil War Trail.

- **Colonel Richardson Tomb:** Open space with historic marker, adjacent to a public access point to the Choptank river.
- **Gilpin Point:** A Network to Freedom site with picnic tables. The site is historically significant as the start of Joseph Cornish's journey out of slavery
- **William Still Family Interpretive Center:** A Network to Freedom site located on the property of the Caroline County 4-H Park. The 1829 cottage interprets the Still family history and their connection to Caroline County. A pathway of interpretive signage gives the history of the site. The Interpretive Center is located on the UGRR Byway.
- **Additional Network to Freedom, Harriet Tubman UGRR Byway, and Civil War Trail Sites** are located throughout the county. These can be found at [Eastern Shore | VisitMaryland.org](http://EasternShore|VisitMaryland.org).



William Still Center, Caroline 4-H Park, Denton, MD

3. Measuring User Demand

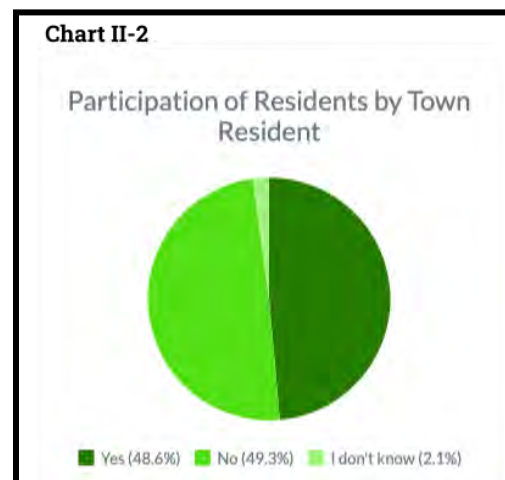
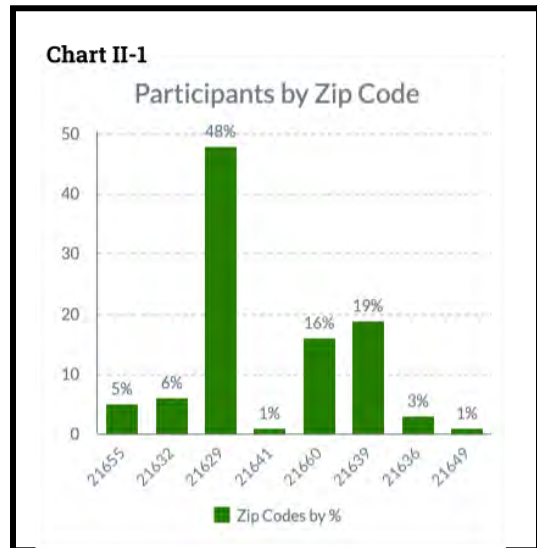
This section examines park land and recreational facility needs in the County using six sources of information:

- Community input: survey and focus groups
- Recreation and Parks staff input
- State surveys and priorities
- National trends
- Proximity analysis: determining whether parks and recreation facilities are distributed throughout the County so that all residents have reasonably convenient access
- Park equity analysis: closely related to the proximity analysis, an evaluation of the availability of parks and recreation facilities in geographic areas with higher concentrations of population, children, seniors and low income residents

A. County Community Engagement

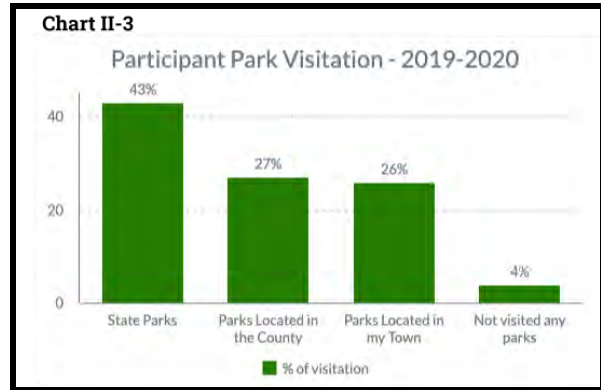
During Spring and Summer 2021 Caroline County Recreation & Parks hosted a series of community engagement opportunities for Caroline County residents and stakeholders to share their impressions and suggestions about parks and recreation in the county. The series included:

- Online survey distributed through CCRP’s website and social media presence, sponsored Facebook content, and through in-person recruitment at five summer camp parent nights in June 2021. The survey was available in English and Spanish and received 597 English responses and 25 Spanish responses. Of these, 496 were complete submissions.
- Interviews with 16 stakeholders in the county representing a diverse range of interests from youth sports to tourism and health.
- Virtual Focus Groups for three distinct regional areas of the county: South, Central and North with a total of approximately 30 participants.
- In-Person Focus Group with representatives from organizations that collaborate on various community recreation programs/projects that utilize parks and serve the county.



Survey responses came from across the county. The full results can be found at Appendix A. Nearly half of survey respondents (48%) lived within the 21629 zip code. Overall, 29% of the county's population lives within the 21629 zip code. Additionally, nearly half of all respondents lived in towns as compared to about 40% of the county's total population. The majority of respondents (77%) identified as female, 20% as male and 3% as gender variant/non-conforming or prefer not to answer. Respondents were predominantly White (87.9%) and non-Hispanic (97%). Interview, focus group, and survey prompts focused on these basic questions:

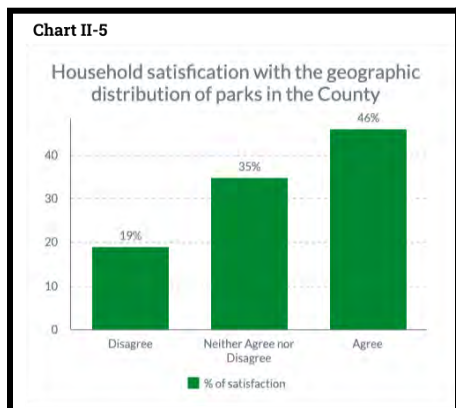
- Are parks/open space available and accessible?
- Do they offer the features and amenities desired by users?
- Are recreation programs and activities available and accessible?
- Do recreation programs and activity opportunities meet the varied recreation needs of country residents?



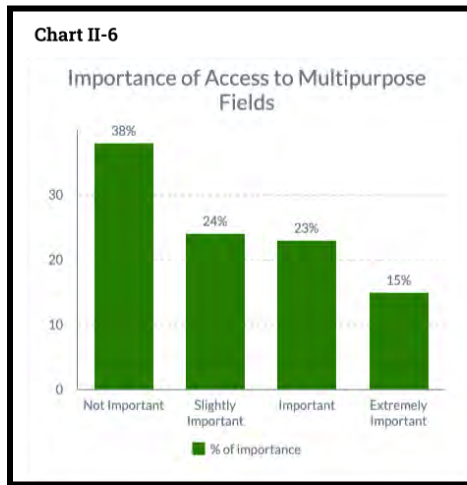
Parks are Available & Accessible

A general review of parks and facilities demonstrates that Caroline County has a network of outdoor parks and open spaces that are broadly distributed across the County. As Maps II-1, II-2, II-3, and II-4 on pages 4 through 7 indicate, there are parks/open spaces available from as far north in the county as Templeville and Marydel to as far south as Federalsburg and the Village of Choptank. Across the middle part of the county there are also ample parks within a 10 minute drive for the majority of county residents.

While the majority of survey respondents agree that parks are geographically well distributed across the county, 19% were not satisfied with the distribution (Chart II-5). In focus group discussions, stakeholder interviews and written responses to open-ended survey questions, county residents identified several gaps in the availability of parks and facilities. Specifically, they identified that developed regional parks with multipurpose fields were a need based on geographic locations of currently available multi purpose fields. South County Regional Park is the primary location for youth lacrosse and soccer and its location is perceived by survey, focus group and stakeholders as a barrier to participation. They recognized that when the North County Regional Park fields are developed, this will address some of this need. While Marydel Community Park, Denton's Sharp Road Park



and Ridgely's Martin Sutton Park are used for some activities, there was discussion in focus groups that utilization of these fields could be increased by the leagues and with a more coordinated reservation process for all available fields, whether they are county or municipally owned. Overall, 65% of respondents felt that access to multipurpose fields is important and one in 10 identified it as extremely important (Chart II-6).



There also remains a strong desire for additional access to indoor gymnasium space either by providing additional facilities in the north-central area of the county and in the southern area of the county OR through provision of access to school indoor gymnasium spaces during evenings and weekends, particularly increased usage of gyms at elementary schools.

Additionally, participants in the community engagement process recognized that access to parks and open spaces is limited for households that do not have a personal vehicle. Stakeholders and focus group participants noted that individuals and residents who live within a ½ mile of a park may still face limited accessibility if that walking route does not have adequate sidewalks or walking paths for park users to safely travel to the park location. Participants gave a number of examples of park locations where this is a barrier. The three examples shared below were shared during phone/virtual interviews and in the regional focus groups. They are representative of the types of barriers to park access that county residents face.

1. Martinak State Park borders the town-county boundary of Deep Shore Road which is maintained by Caroline County. It is a .8 mile/14 minute walk from Denton Elementary School, located on the corner of Lupine Lane and Sharp Road, to the entrance of the Park. This provides a range of potential opportunities for Green Classroom/Children in Nature partnership between Caroline County Public Schools/Denton Elementary School that could provide hands-on environmental conservation education. However, there is no sidewalk or shoulder along the route.
2. South County Regional Park is located on Seippes Road, 4 miles from downtown Preston, 7 miles from Federalsburg and 14 miles from Denton. For families without personal private transportation, the remote location of the multipurpose fields is a barrier for participation in sports. South County Regional Park is where both Caroline County Youth Soccer and Caroline County Lacrosse host the majority of their games. (See Map II-4)
3. The Town of Denton has a number of parks within its municipal boundaries. To the east of Shore Highway/Route 404 most residents can reach a municipal park within a 10 minute walk. Since the 2017 LPPRP was completed, a number of new housing developments within Denton town limits have grown up on the west side of Shore Highway/Route 404, a 4-lane highway. The only crosswalk is at the intersection of Shore Highway/Route 404 and Legion Road, which also has four crossing lanes at the intersection. The speed limit on Shore Highway through this intersection is 50 miles per hour and it is a busy intersection.

Features & Amenities

Features

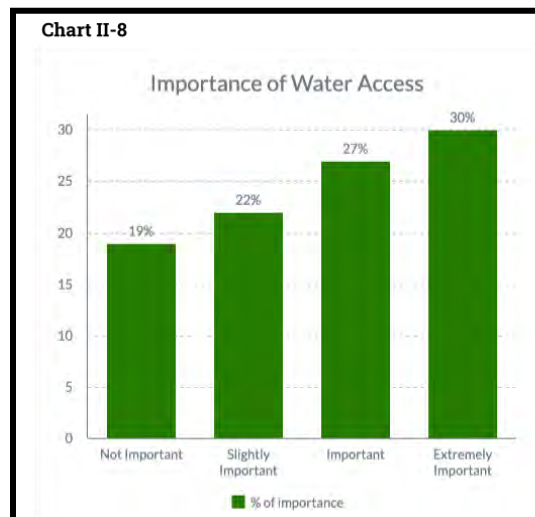
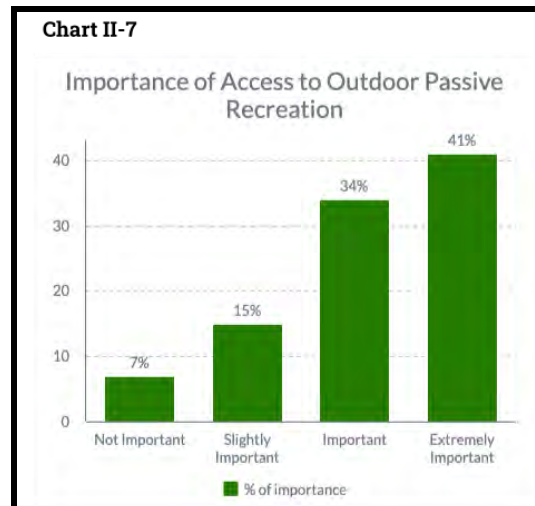
According to responses to the community survey, focus groups and stakeholder interviews (Chart II-7 & Chart II-8), the most utilized features were:

- Walking/Hiking/biking trails
- Picnic Areas
- Playgrounds
- Water Access (for boating, kayaking, fishing, crabbing, wading)
- Sports fields (multipurpose and baseball/softball)
- Paved Courts (basketball, tennis, pickleball)

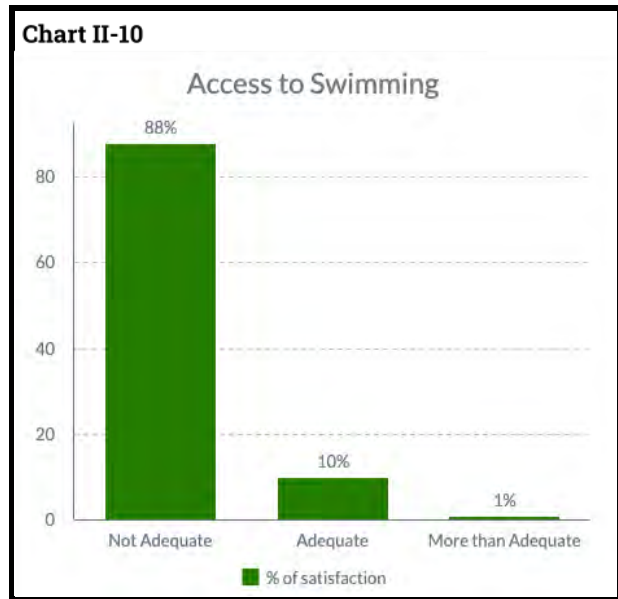
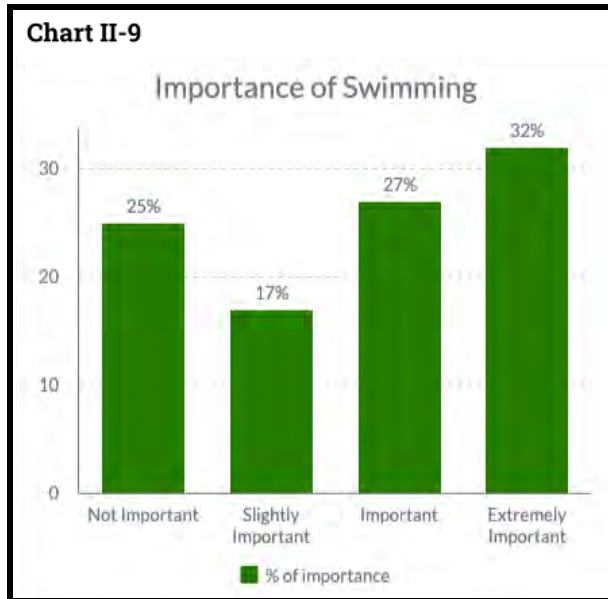
Overall, the majority of respondents to the community survey, and those who participated in focus groups and interviews, indicated that there is adequate availability of parks and facilities features. However, written comments on the community survey, and discussion in stakeholder interviews and focus groups, also indicate that there are parks features and recreational facilities that are limited geographically or are not available in the respondents community. These include:

Basketball Courts - At the southern end of the county, Federalsburg has courts at the Federalsburg Marina Park. According to stakeholders and residents they are often in use by adults and it is difficult for youth to get time on them. The court at Preston Elementary School was removed during the school renovation in 2018 and was included in the 2017 plan as to be replaced, however at this time that court has not been developed. In Ridgely the one court at Martin Sutton Park is consistently in use as is the one court in Greensboro at the Choptank River Park. The court(s) at Sharp Road are also consistently busy in prime times. Additionally, a number of these courts need resurfacing and are questionable for safe play according to community responses.

Tennis-Pickleball Courts - There are 16 tennis courts in the county, six of them are currently not playable. Of the 10 that are available, just three are dual purpose, lined for both tennis and pickleball, which has grown tremendously in popularity over the past five-seven years. Both Ridgely and Greensboro are currently rehabilitating older tennis courts and intend to add pickleball lines to the new surfaces.



Swimming Pools - There are no public swimming pools in Caroline County. This was identified as a missing feature/facility across the county in interviews, focus groups and on the community survey. Charts II-9 and II-10 reflect the public's interest in this activity.

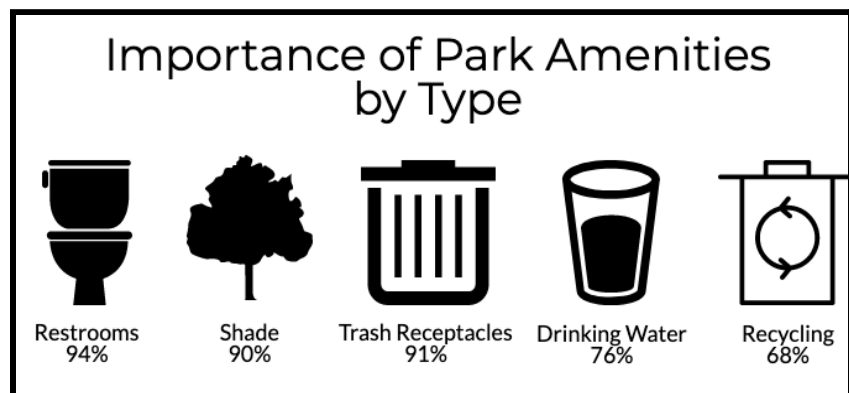


Indoor Recreational Space - As in 2017, access to gymnasium and other indoor facility space continues to be a concern for residents. This feedback was provided in written responses on the community surveys as well as in focus groups and in stakeholder calls. (See Appendix B) Youth sports advocates across multiple disciplines from basketball to softball requested additional access to these spaces by building a community center-sports complex.

Dog Park - There is no open space set aside in Caroline County for specific use by dogs and their owners. While leashed dogs are allowed in all parks and the state parks and some county and municipal parks provide Dog Waste stations with bags and disposal cans, there is no off-leash fenced area.

Amenities

Across stakeholder interviews, focus groups and the community survey, participants placed a significant amount of importance on amenities. Topping the list is the need for built restroom facilities at regional and community parks and full-year access to porta-pots where built restroom facilities are not available.

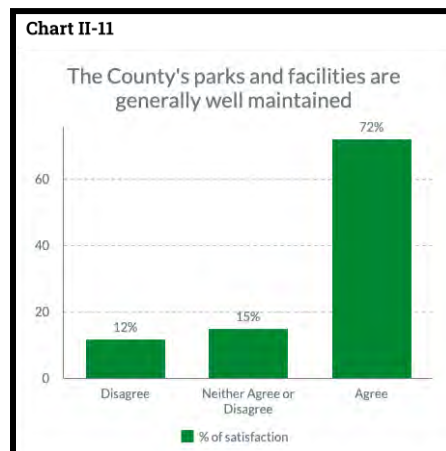


Community members also indicated that shade structures are needed at many of the parks. Both access to restrooms and shade at South County Regional Park were noted multiple times. Shade was also mentioned related to Sharp Road Park, Lions Club Ballfields, and near the basketball and tennis courts at Ridgely's Martin Sutton

Park and the basketball court at Greensboro's Choptank River Park. Access to drinking water and electricity were secondary in terms of priorities.

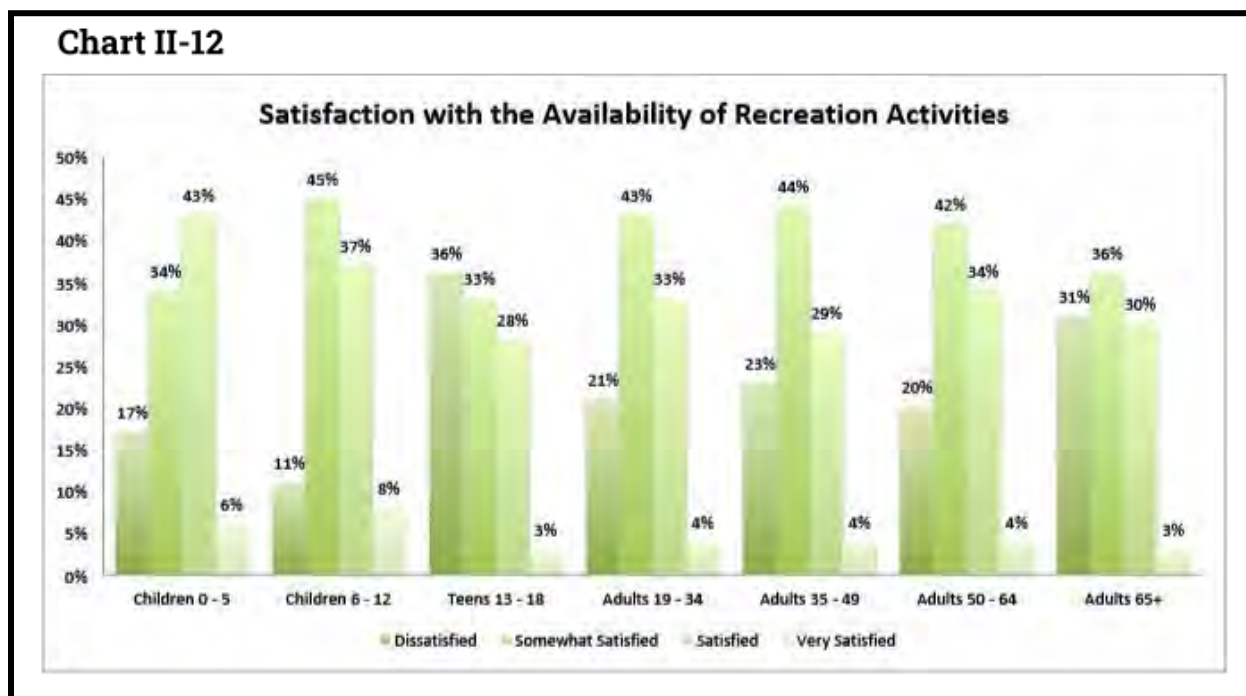
Accessibility within the parks was also commented on during interviews and focus groups. Participants indicated that their overall impression is that there are not enough accessible playgrounds or walking trails for differently abled individuals. Participants also noted that adults with mobility issues cannot access many of the fields where youth sporting activities occur because there are no maintained walkways within parks except perimeter trails.

Maintenance & Upkeep - Overall the community survey demonstrated that county residents are generally satisfied with the maintenance at parks and facilities, 13% were not satisfied with the maintenance and upkeep of the parks & facilities (Chart II-11). In stakeholder calls and focus groups there were cautionary recommendations that existing parks, fields and facilities should be upgraded and well maintained before new properties are acquired and developed.



Recreational Opportunities - Availability and Accessibility

Overall, community engagement participants indicated that they were satisfied with the activities available for preschool and elementary age youth in Caroline County. However, more than 30 percent of respondents indicated they were not satisfied with offerings for teens and older adults (65+) and one in five (21%) were not satisfied with activities for adults 19 - 64 years old. Overall, 86% of respondents indicated that recreational programming should be a high priority for the county.



Advisory Board & Professional Staff Observations

The LPPRP has been an agenda feature of the County Commissioner-appointed citizen Advisory Board for Recreation and Parks starting in September 2020 and in all subsequent meetings in 2021 - 2022. These work sessions and general meeting discussions yielded similar themes and objectives reflected in previous sections.

A focus group consisting of Department staff was held by Shore Strategies on September 13, 2021. Primary areas of focus for the group related to

- Increasing capacity to maintain the parks and open spaces currently in the inventory
- Increasing accessibility and participation in recreational opportunities for the county residents.

Trends in County Recreation Program and Utilization

Between 2016 and 2020 Caroline County Recreation & Parks experienced an overall decrease in both youth and adult participation in classes/programs. The COVID-19 pandemic was responsible for some of the drop off in registrations as there were no in-person programs offered after March 2020, however, registrations had also fallen between 2017 and 2019.

As noted in Table II-3, youth registration fell from 2,440 during program year 2016-17 to 1,667, a 7.65% decrease. Between FY2017 and FY2019 youth registrations dropped from 2,440 to 2,286. While overall registrations dropped, unduplicated registrations increased from 1,774 to 1,892 demonstrating a better level of retention and engagement in multiple programs. (Unduplicated registrations indicate that one person registered multiple times for different programs.) Limited on-line recreational service options for youth were provided during the Pandemic but did not require registration to participate.

Table II-3 Youth Programs Registrations and Unduplicated Participants by Program Year

Program Year	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020*	Total 2016-2020	Change 2016-2019
Registrations	2440	2135	2266	1667	8508	-7.13%
Unduplicated Participants	1774	1773	1892	1463	3964	6.65%

*Program year interrupted by COVID 19 pandemic. % change is based on 2016/17 - 2018/19.

As noted in Table II-4, adult registration fell from 215 in 2016-17 to 74 in 2020. Adult registrations fell both in total registrations and in unduplicated registrations. In FY17 unduplicated adult participants were 149, dropping to 93 in FY19.

Special event registrations also decreased between FY16 and FY19 falling 11.5% from 1,250 to 1,106 in overall registrations and 18% in unduplicated registrants from 1,117 to 917.

Table II-4 Adult Programs Registrations and Unduplicated Participants by Program Year

Program Year	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020*	Total 2015-2020	Change 2015-2019
Registrations	247	215	181	187	74	904	-24.3%
Unduplicated Participants	149	115	73	93	45	330	-37.6%

*Program year interrupted by COVID 19 pandemic. % change is based on 2015/2016 - 2018/19.

Registration data was analyzed by zip code in order to evaluate whether participation relates to geographic proximity to programs. Population data for zip codes was matched to registration data and evaluated. For example, the 21629 (Denton) zip code, which represents 29% of the county population, represented 54% of adult registrations and 37% of special event registrations. Caroline County Recreation & Parks offers the majority of its adult programming opportunities at the Fretterd Community Center located in Denton, which is the county seat and is centrally located in the county. The next most populated zip code in the county is 21632 (Federalsburg) located at the southernmost tip of the county. Adult programs do not reflect a similar ratio of registrations to overall population. Only 5.3% of adult registrations originated in 21632. The Department did not offer any adult programs in the 21632 area of the county, so adults participating in programming from 21632 were traveling the 15 miles between Federalsburg and Denton in order to participate in adult programming.

Table II-5 Adult Programs Registrations by Zip Code (more than 5 registrations)

Zip Code	2015-2016	% Total Reg	2016-2017	% Total Reg	2017-2018	% Total Reg	2018-2019	% Total Reg	2019-2020*	% Total Reg	Municipality/ County
19933							6	3.2%			Sussex County, DE
21601	5	2.0%	5	2.3%							Easton
21629	106	41.6%	119	55.3%	105	58.0%	86	46.0%	40	54.1%	Denton
21632	19	7.5%	8	3.7%	10	5.5%	10	5.3%			Federalsburg
21639	54	21.2%	38	17.7%	27	14.9%	27	14.4%	7	9.5%	Greensboro
21640	5	2.0%									Henderson
21641	5	2.0%									Hillsboro
21643									5	6.8%	Hurlock
21649	5	2.0%									Marydel
21655	23	9.0%	11	5.1%	16	8.8%	18	9.6%			Preston
21660	12	4.7%	18	8.4%	19	10.5%	24	12.8%	6	8.1%	Ridgely
OTHER	13	5.1%	16	7.4%	4	2.2%	16	8.6%	16	21.6%	N/A
Total	247	96.9%	215	100.0%	181	100.0%	187	100.0%	74	100.0%	

*Program year interrupted by COVID 19 pandemic, registration data for summer and fall only

The same analysis was done on the Youth Program Registrations by zip code included in Table II-6. The 21632 population is 18% of the total county population and 20% of youth registrations originate from this zip code. Caroline County Recreation and Parks provides a number of youth programs at Federalsburg Elementary School and Colonel Middle and High Schools, all located within the 21632 zip code impacting the registrations within this zip code.

Youth program registrations from 21655 (Preston) offers another example of how programs offered within an area have a significant correlation to overall registration. Preston represents 16% of the county population and 10% of youth registrations. During the time period included, CCRP did not offer after school or summer learning at Preston Elementary School. Preston students could register for the summer learning program at Federalsburg Elementary and were provided with bus transportation. The lack of programming offered directly in the community impacts the registrations.

Table II-6 Youth Programs Registrations by Zip Code (more than 5 registrations)

Zip	2016-2017	% Total Reg	2017-2018	% Total Reg	2018-2019	% Total Reg	2019-2020	% Total Reg	Town/County
19953	13	0.5%							Kent County, DE
21601	27	1.1%	12	0.6%	19	0.8%	13	0.8%	Easton
21613					5	0.2%			Dorchester
21617	20	0.8%	15	0.7%	5	0.2%			Queen Anne's
21625	8	0.3%	5	0.2%					Cordova
21629	813	33.3%	762	35.7%	812	35.8%	509	30.5%	Denton
21632	467	19.1%	421	19.7%	403	17.8%	328	19.7%	Federalsburg
21636	59	2.4%	45	2.1%	56	2.5%	51	3.1%	Goldsboro
21639	271	11.1%	285	13.3%	308	13.6%	246	14.8%	Greensboro
21640	79	3.2%	68	3.2%	87	3.8%	78	4.7%	Henderson
21641							5	0.3%	Hillsboro
21643	22	0.9%	14	0.7%	14	0.6%	10	0.6%	Hurlock
21649	55	2.3%	45	2.1%	51	2.3%	41	2.5%	Marydel
21655	343	14.1%	262	12.3%	233	10.3%	158	9.5%	Preston
21657	11	0.5%	7	0.3%	6	0.3%	3	0.2%	Willoughby
21660	212	8.7%	162	7.6%	225	9.9%	209	12.5%	Ridgely
21666					5	0.2%			Queen Anne's
OTHER	40	1.6%	32	1.5%	37	1.6%	16	1.0%	N/A
Total	2440	100.0%	2135	100.0%	2266	100.0%	1667	100.0%	

B. State Surveys

1. Parks and Programming Survey

In the last statewide survey of residents regarding outdoor recreation participation, completed in 2018 as part of the [2019-2023 Maryland Land Preservation Parks and Recreation Plan](#) 2019-2023 Maryland Land Preservation & Recreation Plan, respondents identified their favorite activities as walking, hiking, biking, playgrounds, team sports, running/jogging. This is similar to the finding in the 2021 Caroline County survey which identified walking, hiking, biking, picnicking and playing on playgrounds at the top of the list followed by water and shoreline activities, team sports and paved court sports.

2. Economic Impact

In December 2019, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the Maryland Department of Commerce released the [Maryland Outdoor Recreation Commission Final Report](#), which resulted in the creation of the Governor's Office of Outdoor Recreation in September 2021. This report, based in part on a 2010 Economic Impact Study, found that outdoor recreation in Maryland is a strong economic engine. The [2010 Maryland State Parks Economic Impact and Visitor Study](#) surveyed approximately 3,400 Maryland State park visitors, including visitors to Tuckahoe and Martinak State Parks. Respondents at the time ranked hiking/walking as the most popular activity in the State parks.

The 2010 study also demonstrated the substantial economic benefit of state parks by gathering data on spending by park visitors within the communities outside the park. Seventy percent of spending impacts were found to be concentrated within a 20-minute drive of parks. Statewide,

the average daily spending outside of the park was \$37 per person for day visitors and \$53 per person for overnight visitors. Although county-specific information was not provided, some of the data is reported by region: eastern (including Caroline County), western, central and southern. The eastern region survey results indicated the highest daily spending levels. It is important to note however that in addition to Caroline County, the Eastern Region includes the beach areas of Worcester County.

3. *Project Green Classrooms (Children in Nature)*

In 2017, through executive order, Governor Larry Hogan created Project Green Classroom (PGC) building on the State's "Children in Nature" initiative begun in 2008. This project is a partnership of the Maryland Departments of Agriculture, Education, and Natural Resources and local public and private agencies. The goals of the initiative are to ensure that Maryland's youth experience, understand, and learn to conserve the natural environment and to promote outdoor activities and environmental education in schools, communities and public lands.

Within its [2021 Progress Report and Recommendations-PGC-Annual-Report.pdf](#) PGC has three focus areas:

- Supporting environmental literacy programs in schools;
- Increasing access to nearby nature; and
- Promoting the use of the outdoors for learning, discovery, healthy play and career exploration.

In Caroline County, there are many opportunities to support this initiative, starting with the strong partnership that already exists between Caroline County Public Schools (CCPS) and Caroline County Recreation & Parks (CCRP). At this time the CCPS and CCRP partnership has not focused on environmental education specifically. In the future there are opportunities to more intentionally explore how this partnership can take a leadership role in creating PGC projects within the existing CCPS-CCRP out-of-school and summer learning programs that are offered in partnership at elementary school locations. In addition, the ParksRx-Healthy People Healthy Parks partnership between CCRP, Maryland State Parks, Caroline County Health Department, and local pediatricians and general practitioners offers the opportunity to incorporate health prescriptions that include accessing parks and greenspace for healthy physical activity and mental health outcomes for both children and adults.

C. National Trends in Outdoor Program Participation and Organized Youth Sports

By participation, the most popular outdoor activities nationally are Running, Hiking, Fishing, Biking and Camping. According to the [2020 Outdoor Participation Report](#) published by the Outdoor Foundation, in 2020, 53% of Americans age 6+ participated in outdoor recreation activity at least once, the highest participation rate on record. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased outdoor recreation to its highest level ever. Participation in outdoor activities had already been trending up prior to the shutdown, increasing 3% annually over the past three years. While participation overall has increased, the frequency of participation has continued to fall. Whites still participate in outdoor activities far more than other races. Three in four outdoor participants (75%) are White as compared to 60% of the American population. Participation in outdoor activities among children ages 6 to 17 continues to trend down. On average children

spent time in outdoor activities 77 times in 2020 compared to 91 in 2012.
<https://outdoorindustry.org/resource/2021-outdoor-participation-trends-report/>

According to the [Youth Sports Facts: Participation Rates – The Aspen Institute Project Play](#), 61% of kids age 6 - 12 played some team sport at least casually. However, the percentage of kids who participated on a regular basis has continued to fall from 41.4% in 2012 to 38.1% in 2019. Before the COVID-19 shutdown, there had been participation gains in a number of sports. Baseball after a significant decline was up 6% with its highest rate since 2011. Soccer was up 3%. Tackle football, after years of drops in participation over concussion concerns, increased participation 5%. Children from higher income families continue to be more likely to play organized sports. There was a 21.6% difference in participation between children from households with incomes under \$25,000 as compared with households with incomes above \$100,000 during 2019. This gap has continued to widen since 2012 when it was 15 points.

The transition from elementary to middle school has been a turning point in youth sports participation for years. In 2019, significant decreases in participation occurred in baseball, soccer, gymnastics, and basketball between ages 11 and 13. Sports that experienced minimal increases at the elementary to middle school junction included wrestling, field hockey and tennis.

One additional consideration in the report indicates trend changes may occur with COVID-19 with a shift to more outdoor individualized (cycling/hiking) or smaller team sports tennis/pickleball because it is easier to accommodate social distancing.

The Aspen Institute's [State of Play 2020](#) includes recommendations for stakeholders in youth sports. It calls on community recreation groups and local recreation providers to "proactively build programs that represent its diversity." The authors suggest allocating free/reduced roster spots or facility space based on Free and Reduced Meal (FaRM) rates within communities. In Caroline County 53% of school age youth are eligible for Free or reduced meals. At Federalsburg Elementary School more than 80% of students are eligible and at Greensboro Elementary which serves the northern end of the county, 70% are eligible.

Additionally the authors suggest ensuring that funding of open space development supports the development of parks and recreation spaces that are open and accessible to all youth, carefully taking into consideration not only proximity but also equity.

4. Level of Service Analysis

A. Proximity Analysis

This section evaluates the extent to which residents in all areas of Caroline County have access to parks and recreation facilities. It examines whether parks and recreation facilities are concentrated in a few areas of the County or in a few towns, and whether the facilities support the County's land use policies.

Maps II-11, II-12 and II-13 show the location of three types of park features that are popular within the County and that are important in meeting residents' demand. These include: Trails, Water Access and Multipurpose fields. A five-mile radius is shown around each location. These

maps, in conjunction with Maps III-1a-d above, illustrate that the County has a well-distributed system of park land.

The maps also show how important recent park acquisitions and development are. The northern portion of the County would not be conveniently close to athletic fields or trails without Marydel Park, and the North County Regional Park. Water access is, by its nature, less evenly distributed, but readily available.

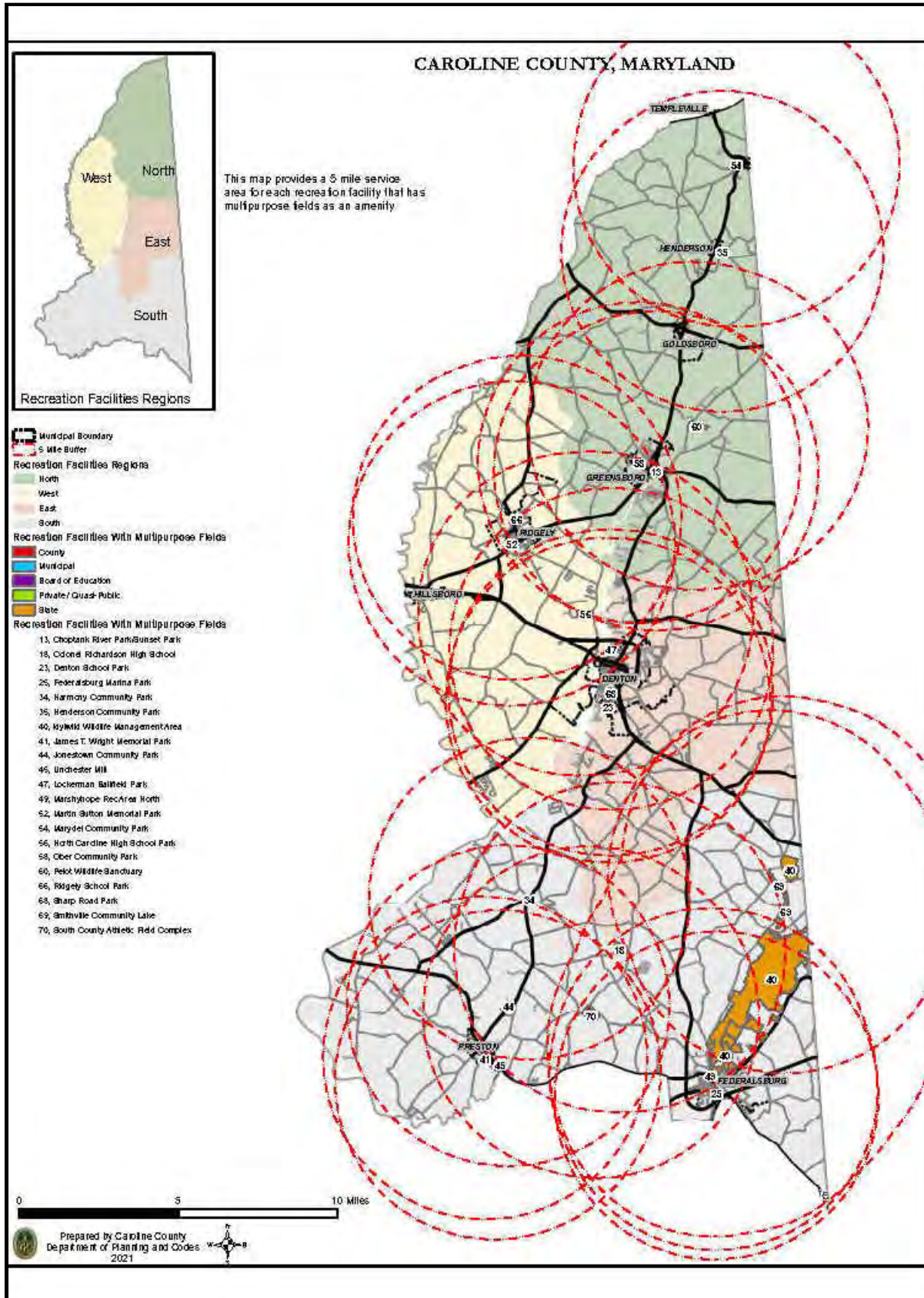
Pedestrian access to local parks is very important within the municipalities. Maps II-1 through II-4 show that each town has neighborhood parks - and often community parks - accessible by walking. What these maps do not demonstrate is other barriers which may exist including lack of sidewalks or safe shoulders along roadways. This is further discussed in the Park Equity section of this report.

Maps II-11 through II-13, which show park and recreation facilities by type, lead to the following observations:

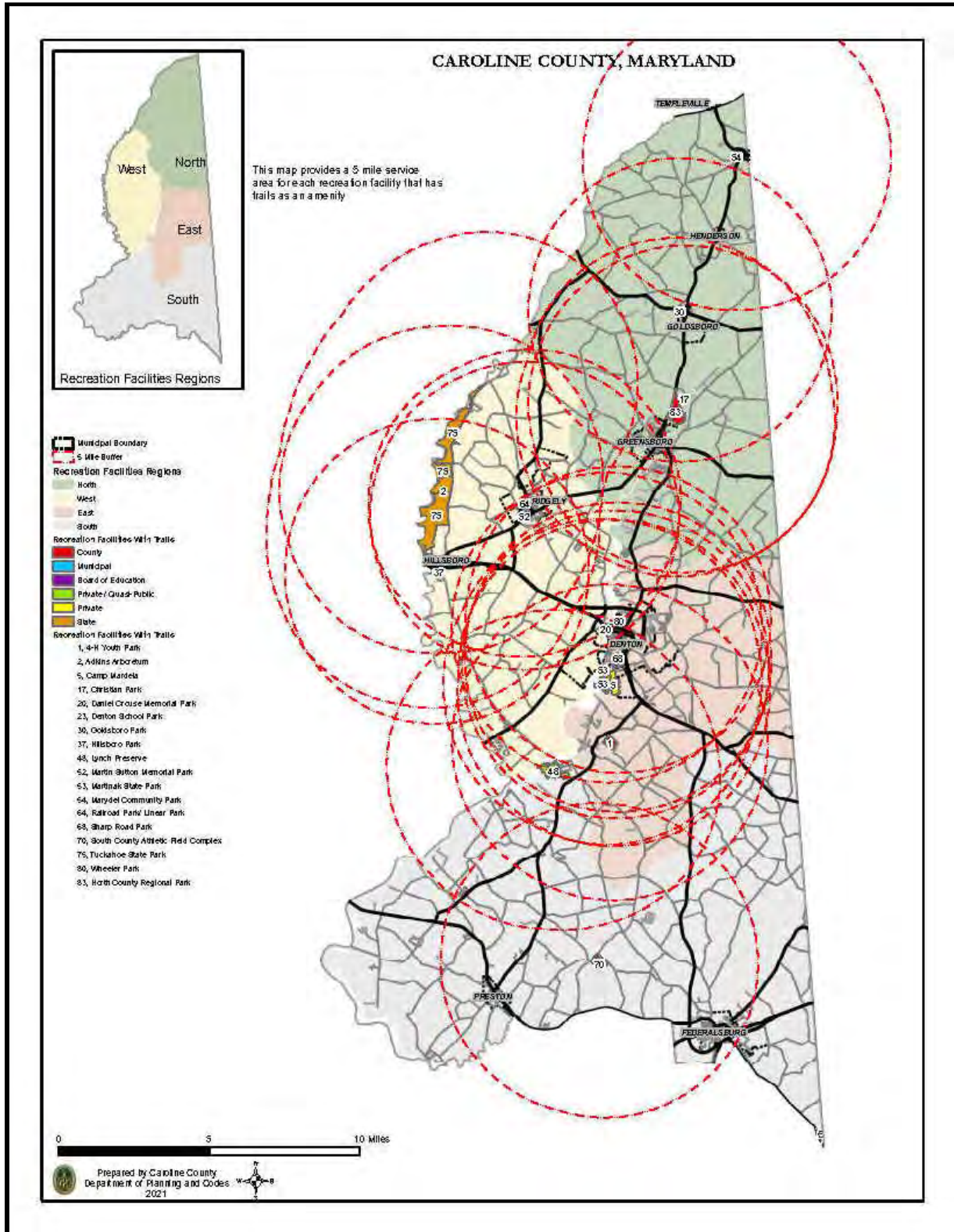
- Regional facilities: The recently acquired 207-acre northern regional park site will provide an important addition to the County's park system. It will provide a northern location for athletic leagues and recreation to complement the South County Regional Park.
- Community parks: The five community parks are well-distributed: Marydel is in northern Caroline County; Chambers Park is in Federalsburg in southeastern Caroline County; Sharp Road Park is centrally located in Denton; and two parks are in Ridgely in western Caroline County (the Ridgely Athletic Field Complex and Martin Sutton Park). Martin Sutton Park provides varied recreational opportunities, while Ridgely provides athletic fields in a location convenient for western County residents.
- Neighborhood parks are located throughout the County.
- Water access points are also well distributed along the County's major waterways, providing access to Tuckahoe Creek, Tuckahoe Lake, the Choptank River, Marshyhope Creek and smaller streams.
- Parks are appropriately concentrated within the incorporated municipalities, in proximity to the largest share of population. The four community parks and 14 out of 18 neighborhood parks are located within the municipal boundaries. The new North County Regional Park is adjacent to Greensboro. This concentration within or near municipalities also corresponds to the County's growth policies, which call for public services to be provided in these centers of population. Park land outside of the towns is suitable for rural areas and approximately equally accessible by all County residents: large state parks and privately preserved resource areas, water access locations, privately-owned camps, and the 4H agricultural park.

The County's joint use of County school sites for recreation provides well-distributed athletic fields and indoor space for recreation programs throughout the County.

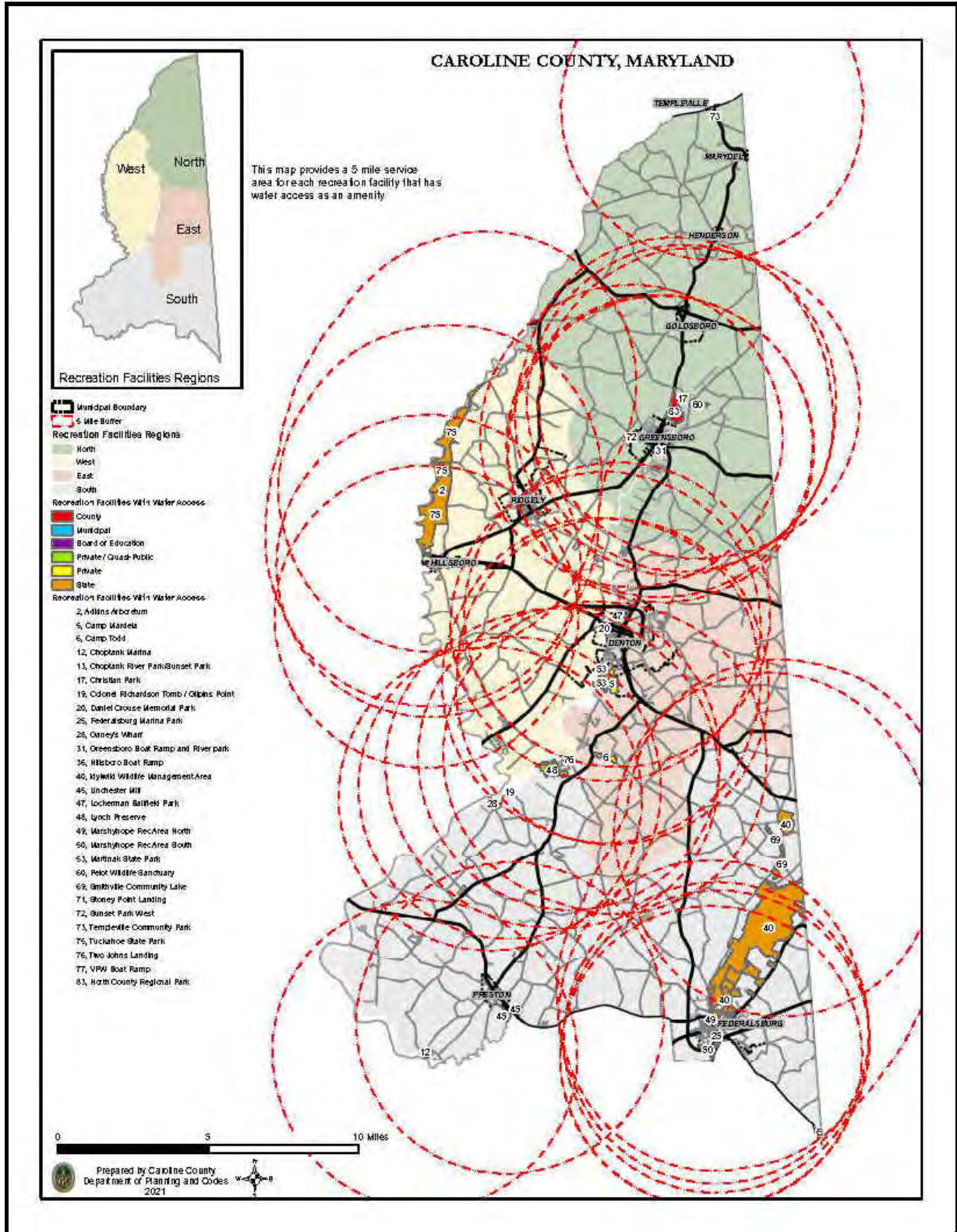
Map II-11 Areas within Five Miles of Recreation Facilities with Multipurpose Fields



Map II-12 Areas within Five Miles of Recreation Facilities with Trails



Map II-13 Areas within Five Miles of Recreation Facilities with Water Access



B. Park Equity Analysis

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources has provided a tool to assist in the evaluation of park land needs. The “Park Equity Mapper” uses Census data in conjunction with mapped GIS layers showing state and local parks to prioritize park land needs based on four factors:

- Concentration of children under age 17;
- Concentration of older adults;
- Concentration of the population with incomes below the poverty threshold; and
- Population density.

The results of the analysis draw attention to Denton and Federalsburg, which are listed as “High Need Areas” for parks and recreation facilities.

Attention needs to be given to the location of parks in these two towns and their accessibility to residents on foot. On Maps II-14 and II-15, a half-mile radius is shown around the parks in these two towns as a means of measuring pedestrian accessibility. Observations based on this analysis are given below.

1. Denton

Denton lacks parks in the growth area on the east side of MD Route 404. As the subdivisions east of Route 404 develop, a neighborhood park would be beneficial in this area. Effective use of subdivision open space could address the need.

Sharp Road Park is located within close proximity to Denton Elementary School but there is currently no crosswalk to the park from the school. Walkers from central Denton cannot reach the park within ½ mile following sidewalks, however Choptank Community Health System has provided walking paths through its property, from the back of their new facility to the park, shortening the distance to the park.

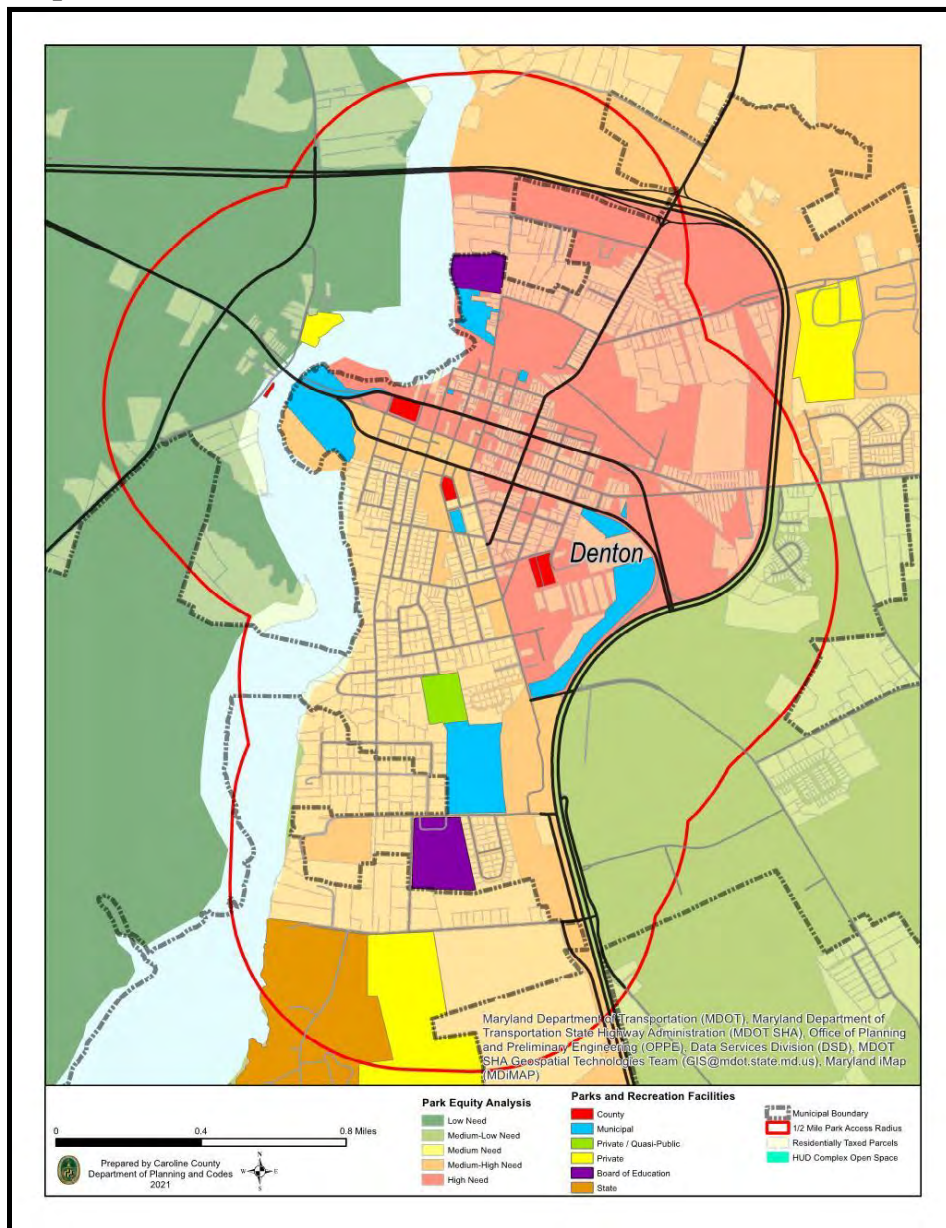
Martinak State Park is within walking distance of Denton Elementary School however Lupine Lane and Deep Shore Road do not have sidewalks or shoulder paths. Recreation facilities in northwest Denton are limited in scope. The density of population makes pedestrian access to recreation facilities important for this area, particularly as many residents in this area do not have access to personal vehicles.

- Wheeler Park provides convenient public access for northwest Denton, but includes only limited facilities - tennis courts and perimeter trails. Although it has river views, the steep banks here preclude river access.
- Adjacent to Wheeler Park is Lockerman Middle School. Until 2021, outdoor facilities included a multipurpose field, a cinder ¼ mile track, and lighted senior league baseball field. However in 2021 CCPS relocated a number of portable classrooms to the multi-purpose field, eliminating this field from the county inventory.
- The Fourth Street Park is located on the corner of Fourth and Fountain Avenue. Features include older playground equipment and two tennis courts that are also used regularly for outdoor pickleball.

- Park land with more varied facilities - playgrounds, baseball fields and trails - are in southern Denton and include the Sharp Road Park, Lions Club Park and Denton Elementary complex. Pedestrian access from the north Denton neighborhoods is possible but not convenient.
- Crouse Memorial Park in west-central Denton provides a significant waterfront park with pedestrian access across the Upper Choptank River. In 2018, the Town of Denton opened its flagship Visitor Welcome Center and Meeting/Conference space at this location.

The County should work with the town to create a parks master plan that incorporates safe walking/biking routes to address accessibility barriers and priorities future park development on the East side of Route 404 where new subdivisions are currently underway.

Map II-14 Half-Mile Radius of Denton Park Locations



2. Federalsburg

Federalsburg has a system of parks and open space with pedestrian access throughout the town. The key natural feature, Marshyhope Creek, divides the town but is spanned by a pedestrian bridge at the Marina Park (southern Federalsburg) and sidewalks along MD Route 306 (Central Avenue).

Federalsburg Marina Park is a full service, well-used community park. The town's other major park, Chambers Park in eastern Federalsburg, also has varied facilities but needs comprehensive rehabilitation. This park was listed

as a priority project in the 2017 LPPRP Plan. Some progress was made in rehabilitation but improvements are not complete, slowed by the pandemic and major leadership changes within the Town of Federalsburg. The greenway along the Marshyhope is well developed, with portions owned and maintained by the town and the State. Pathways are available along much of the shoreline within Federalsburg and nearby, however these paths need to be upgraded to address safety concerns.



Marshyhope River, Federalsburg MD

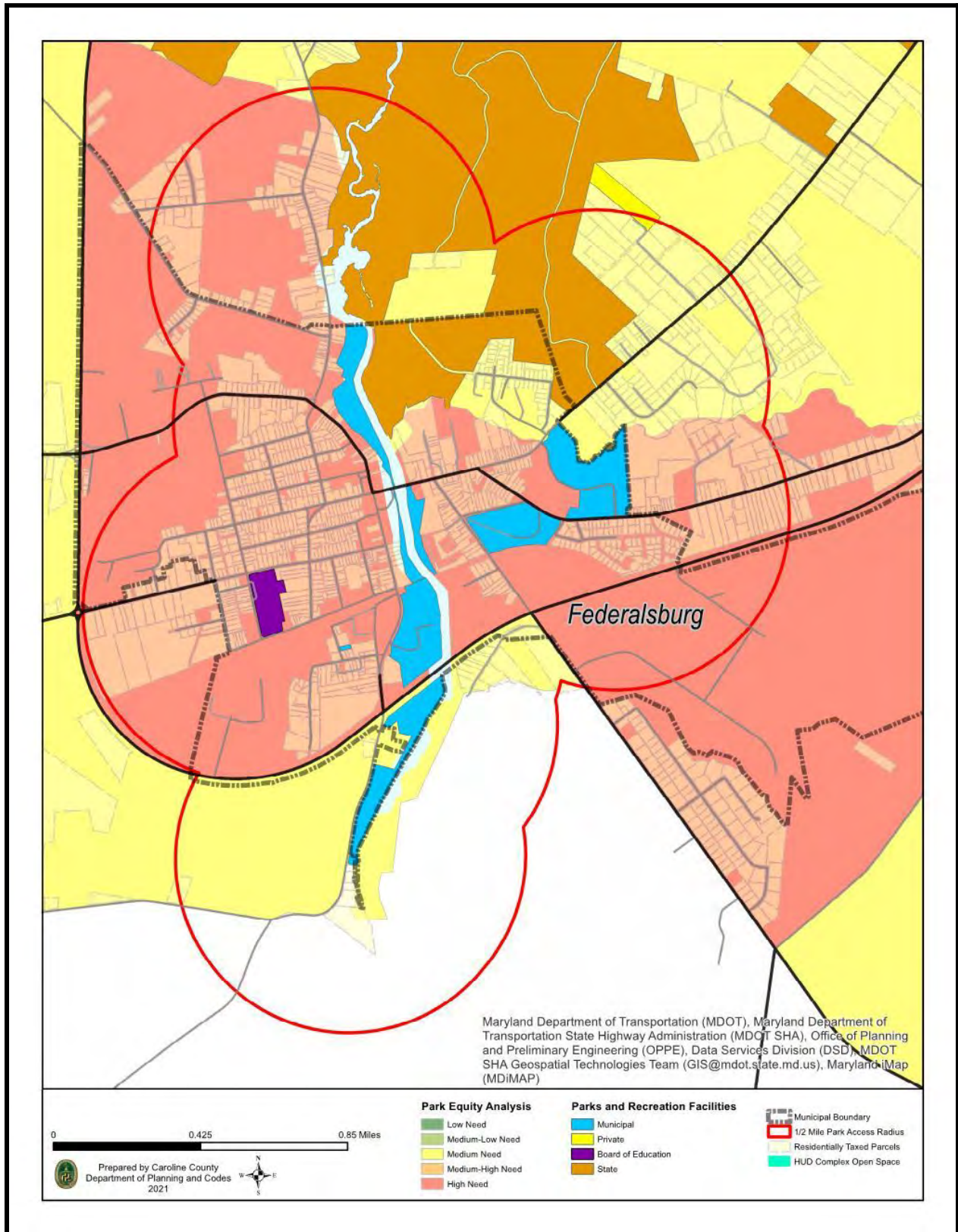


Marina Park Trail View, Federalsburg, MD

Federalsburg is a high need area based on the DNR Equity Model demographic layers. However, the town has a well-developed park and greenway system with convenient pedestrian access for most town residents. The area from the eastern side of the town in the Smithville Road/Laurel Grove Road lacks access to parks and greenspaces. There are neither parks in close proximity or safe pedestrian access to existing parks/open spaces. Continued priority should be given to maintaining existing parks, moving forward with rehabilitation of

Chambers Park and completion of the trail system within public lands along Marshyhope Creek which will connect outlying areas of the town not only to parks and greenspaces but to the downtown area as well.

Map II-15 Half Mile Radius of Federalsburg Park Locations



C. Other Equity Considerations

While the Equity Mapper demonstrates that Federalsburg and Denton are the two largest population centers and the locations of affordable housing and subsidized rental housing, consideration should also be given to several other areas identified and discussed during the Community and staff focus group discussions.



Marydel Community Park, Maryland, MD

Marydel Community Park - is a town/county partnership designed to improve equitable access to a park and playground for Marydel residents and neighbors in the county, including residents of two trailer parks predominantly occupied by immigrants from Central America. At this time the park can only be accessed from Lepore Road which is a county maintained road without shoulder or sidewalk. Park users participating in the North County focus group shared concerns about safety for walkers/bicyclists trying to

access the park and recommended improvements including regular mowing and clearing along the roadway. In the original plan of the park, there was also an access point from the back of the Marydel Community Center property which is located on Route 313 and accessible from residences on that side of the park.. This path/trail has not been developed and merits additional development with adjoining property owners to address community concerns.

Jonestown Park is a small community park in the center of Jonestown, a village along Route 16 where homeowners and residents are primarily African Americans. This community park was redeveloped with a small perimeter trail and a



Jonestown Park, Jonestown, MD

pavilion in 2017. It is currently in a second phase of improvements which includes the rehabilitation/replacement of a basketball court and play equipment and



Jonestown Park, Jonestown, MD

extending the perimeter trail. Community planning for the project is being completed in conjunction with stormwater management improvements to the village which has its own small sewage treatment facility. This project addresses equity in terms of providing a quality park in close proximity to residents of the village, however Route 16 is a

well traveled road and though there are speed limit signs drivers do not slow down through the village. There are no sidewalks or crosswalks limiting safe access to the park.

Henderson Community Park is another small community park located on Bee Tree Road. In 2019, Recreation & Parks removed the dilapidated playground equipment and has plans to replace it as well as to improve the small multipurpose playing field that is often used for soccer by both youth and adults. This park is in close proximity to the Henderson Trailer Park. However, like in Jonestown, the 170 homesites in Caroline Acres Mobile Home Park are on the opposite side of Route 313, a busy state highway. The majority of residents of the mobile home park are Latino. There are no sidewalks or border paths and there is no safe crossing on Route 313.

D. Level of Service Discussion

The following key points emerge from the analyses of need and demand provided in this section.

1. *User Satisfaction*

County parks and programs are well-used, receive generally positive marks from the public, and are an important asset to Caroline County.

Although there are no user surveys specific to state parks in Caroline County, state parks receive high marks on state surveys and are well-used. They benefit County businesses as well as providing valuable recreational and environmental resources.

2. *Land Acquisition Needs*

As shown in Table II-1, the County and towns currently have approximately 354 acres of “resource land,” undeveloped park land. Some of this land is suitable for active recreational facilities. The County does not have a current or foreseeable deficit of park land, based on acreage needs for facilities. Where land acquisition needs are evident, as described later in *Section 7, Capital Improvement and Acquisition Priorities*, they are based on particular needs or opportunities at specific locations. Currently, there are approximately 35.2 acres of land identified as potential acquisitions between 2022 and 2031 by either the county or by municipalities.

Parks and recreation sites are well distributed through the County and towns. The County should focus on facility development and improvement within its existing properties. The County should also focus on strengthening its planning efforts with municipalities to work collaboratively to efficiently and effectively meet the needs of all County residents.

3. *Facility Needs*

The community-wide recreational facility needs as identified through the Community Engagement process include:

- Longer multi-use trails (rails to trails type)
- Picnic Areas/playgrounds, especially ADA accessible areas
- Public swimming pools
- Facilities for indoor and outdoor sports activities that teams can access for practice and play - including paved court surfaces (basketball)
- Dog parks
- Water access - boat ramps and soft launches, ADA kayak and canoe launches, and fishing piers



Upper Choptank USGS Spillway in the North County Regional Park, Greensboro, MD

It is important to note that participants in the community engagement process also stressed that development should be focused on properties that are already in the inventory and expansion and enhancement of features and amenities should be balanced with the county's ability to upkeep and maintain the properties within its inventory.

Beyond these particular types of facilities, the following facility needs have been identified as priorities:

- Retaining and enhancing park areas for unstructured, outdoor activities such as walking, picnicking and nature appreciation.
- Developing and improving amenities (restrooms, shade structures) at regional and community parks.
- Continuing to emphasize public access to waterfront locations in development of public lands. Long-term projects should include additional boat ramps and locations accessible for fishing. Address both the interest in pathways and the goal of public access to water by seeking opportunities for paths or boardwalks along publicly owned shorelines.
- Seeking collaborative solutions to provide access to existing indoor courts in the public school system.
- Continued partnership and investment in rehabilitation and expansion of park assets in municipalities, in response to current and anticipated recreation activity demands.
- Continuing to prioritize parks/open space development that enhances access for all.

5. Goals & Objectives

A. Review of 2017 Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives for recreation and parks programming and facilities, described below, support the Department’s Mission Statement. Progress toward 2017 goals are discussed in more detail below. The 2022-2027 goals are refinements to those from the previous LPPRP. The refined 2022-27 goals remain consistent with the State Goals.

2017-21 County Goals:

- Goal 1: Retain public recreation land and facilities in Caroline County necessary to meet current and anticipated needs. Work with incorporated towns and the Caroline County Planning and Codes Department to locate future park facilities in a way that supports designated growth centers, as well as the County’s land preservation and conservation efforts.
- Goal 2: Provide recreation programs for all residents.
- Goal 3: Provide adequate financial resources and effective planning to support recreation and parks facilities and programs.
- Goal 4. Provide attractive, well-maintained, safe and secure recreation and open space facilities.
- Goal 5: Effectively communicate the Department’s mission and vision to improve citizen well-being through access to parks and recreation facilities and programs.

1. Progress Towards These Goals

The County has continued to pursue its policy of making the most of existing resources: maintaining existing parks and program infrastructure, ensuring the safety of the public at County facilities, and promoting cooperative use of facilities.

Over the past five years the department has worked towards the goals of the 2017 plan. Accomplishments since 2017 have focused on parks development and maintaining access to recreation activities and includes:

Table II-1. State Goals and Caroline Progress Toward 2017-21 Goals

State Goal	Complementary County Goals and Strategies
<p>1. Make a variety of quality recreational environments and opportunities readily available to all its citizens and thereby contribute to their physical and mental well-being.</p>	<p>Goals 1, 2 and supporting strategies: facilities and programming for all residents; emphasis on opportunities to promote health and wellness.</p> <p>Progress - Caroline County made progress toward this goal with ongoing capital development as demonstrated in Appendix B -2022 Caroline Parks Inventory-2017 Updated CIP. Partnerships with Maryland State Parks and Caroline County Health Department to implement Healthy Parks Healthy People and Parks RX continued to develop. Health and wellness is also a priority in youth and family</p>

	development programs (Summer Learning, Afterschool, Family Engagement) offered by the Department.
2. Recognize and strategically use parks and recreation facilities as amenities to make communities, counties, and the State more desirable places to live, work, play and visit.	<p>All the County 2017-21 goals support this State goal, especially Goals 1, 4 and 5, which addressed the need for a well-planned recreation and parks program, the condition and security of parks.</p> <p>Progress - Capital projects throughout the county enhanced communities throughout the County. See Appendices B For details.</p>
3. Use State investment in parks, recreation and open space to complement and mutually support the broader goals and objectives of local comprehensive/master plans.	<p>Goal 1 and supporting strategies, which call for locating parks in ways that support designated growth centers, as well as the County's land preservation efforts. Goal 3, which calls for leveraging State investments with County and other funds to collaboratively meet public priorities.</p> <p>Progress - Capital projects throughout the county enhanced communities throughout the County. See Appendices Appendix B for details.</p>
4. To the greatest degree feasible, ensure that recreational land and facilities for local populations are conveniently located relative to population centers, are accessible without reliance on the automobile, and help to protect natural open spaces and resources.	<p>Goal 1, locating parks in support of growth centers; Goal 2, providing programs for all residents; strategies under Goal 3 that address coordination with municipalities and with the subdivision process.</p> <p>Progress - Capital projects throughout the county enhanced communities throughout the County. See Appendices B for details. The Department worked with municipalities to support development of parks within population centers. Best practices in environmental rehabilitation and protection were employed as a part of all capital improvement projects.</p>
5. Complement infrastructure and other public investments and priorities in existing communities and areas planned for growth through investment in neighborhood and community parks and facilities.	<p>Goals 1 and 3, locating parks to support growth centers and towns, in coordination with municipalities and subdivision review; also giving priority to maintaining the partnership with public schools; Goal 4, cultivating partnerships with nonprofit organizations and other providers.</p> <p>Progress - Capital projects throughout the county enhanced communities throughout the County. See Appendices B for details. The Department worked with municipalities to support development of parks within population centers. Best practices in environmental rehabilitation and protection were employed as a part of all capital improvement projects.</p>
6. Continue to protect recreational open space and resource lands at a rate that equals or exceeds the rate that land is developed at a Statewide level.	<p>Goal 3 and supporting strategies: provision of funds for park acquisition; coordination with and dedication through the subdivision process.</p> <p>Progress - Capital projects throughout the county enhanced communities throughout the County.</p>

2. Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Recreation & Parks Operations & Capital Projects:

The Recreation & Parks Department responded to community needs during the COVID State of Emergency by shifting the 2020 summer learning program for 400 elementary age students to a virtual experience, supporting meal deliveries to homebound seniors and children, setting up mobile food pantries and the administration of such and working in COVID Testing/Vaccination sites. Of the department's 10 full-time staff, half spent some or all of their work schedules supporting direct Pandemic response efforts. This included the Deputy Director who was reassigned to County Emergency Operations, Food insecurity, Equity, Housing and Vaccine Roll-out from March 2020 - July 2021 and a Program Specialist who was reassigned to support Vaccine Clinic Operations from January 2021- May 2021. Additionally other full-time and part-time program staff were redeployed to meal distribution, call centers, vaccine and testing clinics and other community supportive roles.

The two-full time Parks Division staff members expanded daily responsibilities to include constructing and maintaining hand-sanitizer dispensers at every county parks location as well as ensuring that both built and temporary restrooms were cleaned and sanitized.

In FY21, at the onset of the COVID State of Emergency, the Caroline County Commissioners froze capital spending. This impacted forward progress on a number of County Parks projects: Marydel Phase II, HVAC replacement at the Fretterd Community Center, Engineering for Choptank Dredging, Pavilions at South County Park, and municipal capital project management in partnership with the Towns of Greensboro and Federalsburg.

B. Caroline County LPPRP Goals and Objectives - 2022-27

Goal 1: Preserve public recreation facilities and programs in Caroline County necessary to meet current and anticipated demand/need.

Parks & Capital Projects Division Strategies

- 1) Prioritize future development based on capacity for ongoing maintenance, development cost, and proximity to population centers, combined with creating equitable access for residents.
- 2) Through Joint Use Agreement with Caroline County Public Schools, maximize existing indoor facilities and fields to meet demand for recreation space in the County.
- 3) Collaborate with municipal leadership to maximize resources to meet public recreation needs of municipal and County residents.
- 4) Maintain and improve the network of public water access points that are distributed across the county.
- 5) Account for sea-level rise and climate change implications in park development planning.

Program Services Division Strategies

- 1) Prioritize program planning based on participant and non-participant feedback, Division resource capacity, and equitable access for all residents and visitors. Utilize baseline data from 2017-21 to establish program measurement metrics for 2021 - 2027.
- 2) Diversify access to recreational program opportunities by expanding delivery methods to incorporate traditional and emerging methods. (Esports, virtual workshops, classes, etc.)

Goal 2. Provide public access to attractive, well-maintained, safe and secure parks and facilities.

Parks & Capital Projects Division Strategies

- 1) Maintain the existing parks maintenance program to ensure residents have access to safe, well-maintained parks and facilities including features and amenities.
- 2) Increase parks maintenance human and operating capital to adequately meet the ongoing maintenance and operational needs of parks and facilities.
- 3) Develop a long-term capital maintenance plan for the General Fretterd Community Center to maintain the \$3.2 million renovation completed in 2008.

Program Services Division Strategies

- 1) Provide programming in parks and open spaces that encourages resident participation in outdoor spaces.
- 2) Increase the Division's human resources to expand available hours of operation to community users both for fee-based programs and for free public access.
- 3) Increase access to the Fretterd Community Center for public use.
- 4) Restore 7% loss in overall participation since 2017.

Goal 3: Provide adequate financial resources to support parks, facilities and programs at adequate levels to meet demand.

Overall Department Strategy

Within five years, increase the annual Department budget allocation to 5% of the overall non-education general fund budget.

- 1) By FY25, restore the Department's general fund allocation to its FY17 level of 3% of the county non-education budget. (In FY21 the Department represents 2.6% of the non-education general fund budget, a decrease of .4% since 2017).
- 2) In FY26, increase the recreation & parks allocation to 4% of the non-education budget.
- 3) In FY27, increase the recreation & parks allocation to 5% of the non-education budget.

Parks & Capital Projects Division Strategies

- 1) Increase Division capacity to maintain parks inventory by providing additional human resources to meet operational needs.
- 2) Leverage State and Federal funding sources with local county and municipal revenues to collaboratively meet the public priorities for recreation and parks
- 3) Ensure that County priorities align with the goals of Maryland's Program Open Space (POS), and Waterway Improvement Programs as well as with other prospective State and Federal funding sources.

Program Services Division Strategies

- 1) Increase Division capacity to meet new programming demand by providing additional human resources to meet operational needs
- 2) Maximize county investments in recreation by leveraging State, Federal and other funding sources to provide comprehensive programs for the County's children and youth in-out-of-school time programming.
- 3) Increase fee-based revenue from programming to invest in additional opportunities for county residents.

Goal 4: Promote Recreation and Parks facilities and programs to increase usage and participation.

Overall Department Strategies

- 1) Implement emerging tools/technology, combined with traditional means to distribute information about parks, facilities, and recreation opportunities to increase usage and engagement.
- 2) Provide adequate human and fiscal resources to effectively manage the Department's marketing and promotion needs.

Goal 5: Recruit, retain and reward a workforce of committed, passionate parks and recreation professionals.

- 1) Foster an environment that promotes each staff member to find their own work - home balance.
- 2) Recruit for passion and vision, train for expertise.
- 3) Provide high quality professional development, training and educational opportunities for all staff.

C. Alignment with State Goals

The State's goals for recreation, parks, and open space complement and provide guidance to the County's recreation goals. The State's goals primarily address consistency with broad land use goals. The County's goals and strategies are more detailed and address the effective operation of a County recreation and parks department. The State goals are listed below, along with a description of each goal's relationship to County goals.

State Goal	County 2022-27 Goals and Strategies
<p>1. Make a variety of quality recreational environments and opportunities readily available to all its citizens and thereby contribute to their physical and mental well-being.</p>	<p>Goal 1: Retain public recreation facilities and programs in Caroline County necessary to meet current and anticipated demand/need.</p> <p>Goal 2: Provide public access to attractive, well-maintained, safe and secure parks and facilities.</p>
<p>2. Recognize and strategically use parks and recreation facilities as amenities to make communities, counties, and the State more desirable places to live, work, play and visit.</p>	<p>Goal 1: Retain public recreation facilities and programs in Caroline County necessary to meet current and anticipated demand/need.</p> <p>Goal 2: Provide public access to attractive, well-maintained, safe and secure parks and facilities.</p>
<p>3. Use State investment in parks, recreation and open space to complement and mutually support the broader goals and objectives of local comprehensive/master plans.</p>	<p>Goal 1: Retain public recreation facilities and programs in Caroline County necessary to meet current and anticipated demand/need.</p> <p>Goal 2: Provide public access to attractive, well-maintained, safe and secure parks and facilities.</p> <p>Goal 3: Provide adequate financial resources to support parks, facilities and programs at levels to meet demand.</p>
<p>4. To the greatest degree possible, ensure that recreational land and facilities for local populations are conveniently located relative to population centers, are accessible without reliance on the automobile, and help to protect natural open spaces and resources.</p>	<p>Goal 1: Retain public recreation facilities and programs in Caroline County necessary to meet current and anticipated demand/need.</p> <p>Goal 2: Provide public access to attractive, well-maintained, safe and secure parks and facilities.</p>
<p>5. Complement infrastructure and other public investments and priorities in existing communities and areas planned for growth through investment in neighborhood and community parks and facilities.</p>	<p>Goal 1: Retain public recreation facilities and programs in Caroline County necessary to meet current and anticipated demand/need.</p> <p>Goal 2: Provide public access to attractive, well-maintained, safe and secure parks and facilities.</p> <p>Goal 3: Provide adequate financial resources to support parks, facilities and programs at levels to meet demand.</p>
<p>6. Continue to protect recreational open space and resource lands at a rate that equals or exceeds the rate that land is developed at a Statewide level.</p>	<p>Goal 3: Provide adequate financial resources to support parks, facilities and programs at levels to meet demand.</p>

6. County Implementation Program

This section describes the framework in which Caroline County plans, acquires, develops, and operates recreation and parks facilities and open space, including sources of funding.

A. Organizational Structure

1. Recreation and Parks Advisory Board

The Caroline County Board of Commissioners appoints a 14-member board to work in an advisory role with the Department of Recreation and Parks on recreation and park-related issues in the County. The Advisory Board provides policy recommendations and serves as a community advocate for the Department.

2. Department of Recreation and Parks

The Caroline County Department of Recreation and Parks is the largest parks and recreation provider and coordinator in the County. The Department has ten full-time employees, and is divided into three divisions: (1) Program Services, (2) Parks and Capital Projects, and (3) Administration.

The Director of Recreation and Parks oversees the Department and functions as the liaison between the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board, the County Commissioners, and Department staff.

The Parks and Capital Projects Division manages the diverse system of County parks, public grounds, and community centers: playgrounds, a marina, public boat ramps, irrigated athletic fields and related facilities, historic sites, and natural resource areas. Division efforts are synchronized with the Department of Public Works for capital projects and emergency weather response, and historically with the Department of Corrections for maintenance labor via inmate work-release programs. The Division Chief coordinates capital projects for the Department and serves as a professional resource for park management issues for local municipalities and non-profit groups.



**Caroline Summerfest - Annual Car Show,
Denton Maryland**

The Program Services Division operates recreation, special event, and enrichment activities and programs. The services are often produced in partnership with other local government and non-profit organizations. The overwhelming demographic focus of these services is children, youth, and families. Services delivered annually include more than 200 distinct programs, equivalent to 160 hours of programming each week.

Programs include a comprehensive afterschool and summer programs delivered in partnership with Caroline County Public Schools. Division services also include sports, wellness, and general interest programs for youth and adults. Examples include sports leagues, club level sports (gymnastics, wrestling, and karate), art

classes and dance programs. The Division's special event component includes County-wide events (i.e. Caroline Summerfest) and smaller events with a more local appeal (Fun Runs, Trips & Tours, holiday-themed events, etc.). In addition, the Division offers music, theater, and other entertainment performances in collaboration with the local arts council and library system. Collectively, these services attract approximately 19,000 attendees each year.

A significant portion of the Program Services Division's programs are self-sustaining, and do not rely on County general funds. Funding sources for these services include registration fees, sponsorships, competitive grants, and donations. Several programs and events rely heavily on volunteer leaders.

The work of the Parks and Program Services Divisions are supported by an Administration Division which includes the Director, Deputy Director, Office Manager and two Administrative Assistants.

3. Incorporated Towns

Incorporated towns play an important role in providing parks, open space and recreation services for County residents. Approximately 40 percent of the publicly-owned recreation land in the County lies within the incorporated towns. Both the development and ongoing maintenance of municipal parks are coordinated through municipal government. The larger towns of Denton, Federalsburg, Greensboro and Ridgely generally perform maintenance on parks within their boundaries. Parks development within these municipalities have occurred primarily through funding from the Community Parks and Playground program through the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, with additional support in some cases from the county Program Open Space allocation. The County's Parks and Capital Development Division assists smaller towns with both the project management for new development and ongoing maintenance. This includes Maryland, Templeville, Henderson and Hillsboro.

4. Other County, State, and Non-Governmental Organizations

The County Recreation & Parks Department works closely with other County agencies, private organizations, individuals and State agencies to coordinate comprehensive access and support for parks, open space and recreation activities. Key partnerships include:

- Collaboration with the County Department of Public Works on capital reconstruction projects at established parks and facilities.
- Utilization of gym and classroom facilities inside the County's public schools, as well as athletic fields on school grounds, per the terms of a formal Joint Use Agreement between the Board of Education and the Department.
- Partnership with the Maryland State Parks to offer recreational programs at Martinak State Park and Tuckahoe State Park.
- Partnership with local community organizations such as the Greensboro and Preston Lions' Club to improve and expand existing park facilities.
- Coordination with volunteer youth sports organizations to provide broad access to county residents for recreational opportunities.

B. Funding

There are two aspects of funding for recreation and parks: the operating budget and the capital budget.

The Department of Recreation and Parks' Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Operating Budget is approximately \$1,152,130, equivalent to 2.8% of the County's non-educational budget and a loss of nearly half a percent of share since FY2018 when the department represented 3.2% of the County's non-educational budget. In FY22 the Department also manages an additional \$968,445 in enterprise accounts primarily related to its fee-based recreational program offerings and grant funds that support program services offerings like afterschool and summer learning programs.

The County's Capital Budget allocation to Parks in FY22 is \$3.1 million. The County general fund allocation to the annual capital fund has varied significantly over the past five years and reflects the special project-specific grants in addition to an annual allocation of POS funding. For example, Choptank Marina's dredging project (\$400K) and the North County Regional Park's \$1.1M award to address erosion and stream tributary stabilization are outside of the traditional scope of annual POS/WWI allocations. The FY22 allocation is also higher because the County Commissioners placed a freeze on capital projects in FY2020 in response to the Pandemic. This created a backlog of projects that are now in process

The general fund investment in public park projects generally follows the state and federal funding resources available, and is often 10 to 15% of the total capital program. For FY 2022, the general local fund appropriation share of the total capital program was \$262,669, just under a 10% share of the total park development plan. Program Open Space (POS) and the Waterway Improvement Program are the primary funding sources for acquisition and development of recreation space for the County. Table II-7 shows the County's annual POS and Waterway Improvement Program apportionments since 2017.. The Department of Recreation and Parks Capital Improvements Program (CIP) for FY22-FY28 27 includes 37 projects at a cost of approximately \$16.3M, or an average of \$3.2M annually. These projects will fully encumber the annual POS allocation and competitive Waterway Improvements funds, but will also require significant capital funding appropriations from other project-specific, competitively-awarded sources such as federal Land Water Conservation Funds, capital bond appropriations through the Maryland State Legislature, or publicly backed low interest loans. Even at 10%, the general fund investment would average \$362K annually with 90% of the capital project balance generated from funding sources outside the local county budget.

Table II-7 Caroline County POS and Waterway Improvement Program Apportionments, FY2017-2021

Year	POS Apportionment	Waterway Improvement Fund Apportionment
2017	\$112,145	\$96,000
2018	\$144,298	\$99,000
2019	\$279,577	\$138,000
2020	\$252,013	\$287,422
2021	\$231,890	\$400,000
TOTAL	\$1,019,923	\$1,020,422

The County assists its municipalities in applying for funds from the Community Parks and Playgrounds program, a competitive State grant program that provides funds for development,

improvement, or expansion of municipal parks. The towns of Marydel, Goldsboro, Ridgely, Greensboro, Denton, Preston and Federalsburg have received grants through this program in the past five years.

The County has also leveraged local POS funds directly in support of specific municipal park projects. Recent examples include the Sharp Road multipurpose field in Denton, Marydel Community Park, and the recent land acquisition in Hillsboro.

The County's (CIP), guided by the LPPRP, establishes priorities for spending, guiding decision-makers in utilizing available funds and preparing grant applications. However, the County and State funds combined are clearly not approaching the level needed for full implementation. County revenues are limited by the rural character that is prized by County residents. The County is rich in agricultural and forest lands that do not generate the tax revenue of developed land, while the modest income levels of County households (relative to other jurisdictions and the State) limit income tax revenues.



Drop-in Soccer, Marydel Park, Marydel Maryland

The County depends upon the additional funding sources of Program Open Space, Waterway Improvement, and Land Water Conservation Fund to accomplish its goals. While overall these have been dependable resources for the County to access, because they are linked to land transfers (POS) and to boat sales (Waterway Improvement) they cannot be relied upon from year to year as they are dependent on economic variables.

Beginning with the downturn of 2008, the Recreation and Parks Department has worked at "doing more with less," finding operational efficiencies wherever possible. As evidenced by its decrease in the overall share of non-educational County general funds, the Department continues to operate in scarcity mode. While capital funding to develop new parks may be available, the Department is limited to undertake development by the budget capacity to maintain, repair and manage its inventory. In particular, with a personnel budget that includes only the Parks Division Supervisor and one Parks Technician, and very limited part-time staff, the Department is understaffed to manage and maintain its current inventory of 159 acres of developed parks and its 324 acres of resource land. In addition as a part of its Joint Use Agreement with Caroline County Public Schools, the CCRP Parks Division maintains 40 acres of multipurpose and ball fields on elementary and middle school properties.

The Program Services Division relies heavily on registration fees and grant funding sources to deliver programming. Grant funding is not secure year to year and requires significant investment of staff time to compete for the funding and then to maintain the administrative support necessary to manage those grants. Programs may use the invaluable resources of volunteers to lead programming but require staff to organize, publicize, recruit, train and maintain quality.

A key consideration in the development of this LPPRP has been the realistic alignment of goals and objectives with the operational budget requirements necessary to maintain what is proposed for development in this plan.

C. Land Use Management Authority

Under the County's subdivision regulations (§ 162-36), major subdivisions (those creating five or more lots) must provide recreational or open space equal to five percent of the subdivision, in lots or areas of not less than $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre. The Planning Commission may require the dedication of a reasonable recreational or open space area beyond the minimum requirements based on the character of the site, surrounding area, or the nature of the proposed development. If the County does not accept dedication of this land, it is owned by a homeowner's association. A fee in lieu of dedication may be paid if both the County and the subdivider agree. Also, if the County and subdivider agree, the subdivider may provide to the County in-kind services and/or products at least equal in dollar value to the required fee in lieu, at a site determined by the County.

These requirements provide some limited funds (through the fee-in-lieu option) but are not likely to result in significant contributions to public recreation in the County. The Department's experience indicates that the acreage requirements described above often lead to dedication of land areas that are too small to provide usable open space, or are located in areas where potential to develop public recreation facilities is limited. Subdivision activity in the County is also very limited.

Greater potential to add to park land exists in the towns, the areas designated to receive most of the anticipated residential growth. If the County is able to collaborate with the towns to improve municipal subdivision regulations governing provision of municipal park land and pedestrian pathways, these standards could increase the supply and distribution of park land throughout the County.

7. Capital Improvement and Acquisition Priorities

A. Capital Projects

In response to the proximity and equity analyses as well as community engagement process, the County, along with its municipalities, have created a Long Range Capital Improvement Plan that includes a nine-year time frame. Table II-8 outlines the County priority projects for development of parks and recreation facilities within the County's inventory, including estimated costs and time frames. This table focuses on projects/phases that will be undertaken by 2028 and within the scope of the five-year plan and includes projects totalling 11,830,000. For long range projects/phases, see 2022 Capital Improvement Plan, Appendix C.

Table II-9 provides the same level and detail for municipal priority projects to be undertaken by 2028 and reflects priorities within the larger 2022 CIP located in Appendix C.

Table II-8 Caroline County 2022 LPPRP CIP Priority Projects Based on Allocation Estimates through 2027

Project	Location	Description of Land Preservation and Recreation Park Recommendations	Estimated Total Cost
Choptank Marina, Facility (Sea-level rise resiliency) , Land Acquisition	Village of Choptank, South of Preston	Maintenance dredging marina basin, includes restoration of dredge disposal site restoration	\$ 455,000
		Auxiliary Parking Lot repaving	\$ 150,000
		Design/build Floating pier installation for basin boat mooring with power and utility supply	\$ 1,500,000
		Expand boating fueling infrastructure (gas fuel station, power supply upgrades)	\$ 250,000
		Bathhouse, concession, storage renovation with marina supervisor work space; pedestrian access improvements on adjoining lot	\$ 250,000
		Safe Routes to Park Asset: village lot acquisition for pedestrian path access from public ramp parking to boat ramp and waterfront facilities (.3 acre lot)	\$ 75,000
Choptank Nature Park	Village of Choptank, South of Preston	New perimeter trail construction	\$ 350,000
Ganeys Wharf	West of Harmony, Choptank River	Kayak launch installation	\$65,000
		Land acquisition to expand public waterfront access	\$125,000
Gilpin's Point	West of Harmony, Choptank River	Shoreline stabilization of public waterfront access, Choptank River	35,000

Jonestown Park	South County, rural village north of Preston	Outdoor recreation facility expansion includes basketball court, playground reconstruction and paved walking trails; and natural trail surface extension	\$ 110,000
		Land use design and construction to reduce stormwater flooding of park spaces	\$ 45,000
		Safe Routes to Park design/build on adjoining bordering state road: traffic calming, pedestrian pathways, signage	\$ 10,000
		Adjoining land acquisition, 1.1 acres for wooded trail expansion; future easement connections to Kline Street	\$ 75,000
Harmony Community Park	South County, rural village north of Preston	Outdoor recreation facility expansion includes picnic pavillion, playground reconstruction and paved walking trails	\$ 175,000
		Safe Routes to Park design/build on adjoining bordering state road: traffic calming, pedestrian pathways, signage	\$ 10,000
South County Regional Park	County, rural location between Preston and Federalsburg	Installation of 2 park pavilions and utilities	\$ 120,000
		Expansion of existing paved and natural trail system; installation of composting toilet facilities.	\$ 396,000
		Acquisition of 1.5 acre parcel, subdivided farmstead from original parcel.	\$ 375,000
Marydel Community Park	County, within Marydel incorporated town limits	Phase II outdoor recreation development include second multi-purpose field, expanded paved trails, parking area, park maintenance facility and field irrigation system	\$ 600,000
		Permanent restroom facilities and concessionaire utility hub; paved court surfaces	\$ 150,000
		Safe Routes to Park design/build on adjoining bordering county road: traffic calming, pedestrian pathways, signage	\$ 10,000
North County Regional Park	North of Greensboro along Upper Choptank River	Phase I design/construction of outdoor recreation amenities according to community master plan including park entrance, multipurpose fields, parking, pavilions and playground, restroom facility and trail loops.	\$ 2,468,000
		Phase II design/construction additional paved and soft surface trails, Red Bridges road Choptank access stabilization, pedestrian bridge over tributary ravine, additional landscaping, shelters, sport court and parking	\$ 3,100,000
		Phase III design/construction additional outdoor amenities and maintenance facility per master plan	\$ 500,000
Henderson Community Park	County, north region, adjoins incorporated municipality	Outdoor recreation facility expansion includes paved court surface and playground reconstruction	\$ 110,000
		Safe Routes to Park design/build on adjoining bordering county road and nearby state road: traffic calming, pedestrian pathways, signage	\$ 25,000
		Land acquisition - corner Henderson lot adjoining park.	\$ 175,000
Cedar Lane Park	County, within	Adaptive reuse of underused ballpark for community dog	\$175,000

	the incorporated limits of Greensboro	park	
Caroline County 4-H Youth Park	County, south of Denton	Additional restroom to serve pavilions, barns and campsite; main building floor restoration.	\$ 96,000
		Main Assembly Building assessment and Infrastructure rehab and expansion (engineering design, utilities and HVAC/energy upgrades)	\$ 250,000
General James F. Fretterd Community Center	County, within incorporated limits of Denton	Facility improvements to mechanical systems, exterior building envelope and internal floor and wall surfaces	\$235,000

TOTAL \$ 12,465,000

Table II-9 Caroline County 2022 LPPRP CIP Priority Projects Based on Allocation Estimates through 2027

Project	Location	Description of Land Preservation and Recreation Park Recommendations	Estimated Total Cost
Chambers Park	Town of Federalsburg	Paved trail extension and existing trail rehabilitation; water access and other conservation and recreation amenity improvements to be determined.	\$ 215,000
Marina Park	Town of Federalsburg	Paved court surface restoration, resurface existing trail network.	\$ 165,000
Wheeler Park	Town of Denton	Rehabilitation of paved court surfaces	\$ 65,000
Sharp Road Community Park	Town of Denton	Athletic field development and trail connections to adjoining recreation areas; 1.5 acre land acquisition for support facilities of park	\$ 720,000
Future neighborhood park Land Acquisition	Town of Denton	Land acquisition to serve neighborhoods on the eastside of State 404	\$ 250,000
Hillsboro Community Park	Hillsboro	Trail and outdoor recreation amenity development of 2020 lot acquisition adjoining Hillsboro Community Park; CPP application pending	\$ 350,000
Hillsboro Land acquisition	Hillsboro	Parcel acquisition for small dog park and water quality improvements on the School House Branch	\$ 35,000
Railroad Park	Town of Ridgely	Trail expansion on railroad right-of-way to town limits; future connection outside of town limits to Tuckahoe State Park; connection to intermodal trail project: feasibility study and construction design	\$ 75,000
Martin Sutton Park	Town of Ridgely	Baseball Field, Tennis Court, basketball court restoration	\$ 300,000
Ober Community Park	Town of Greensboro:	Rehabilitation of existing paved courts and addition of new basketball, paved trail, pavillion improvements	\$ 310,000

Riverfront Park	Town of Greensboro	Rehabilitation of existing paved courts, spectator seating and shade improvements; future conservation and water trail access expansion	\$ 325,000
Templeville Community Park	Town of Templeville	Future upgrade of existing park to reflect community need and safe routes access easement from SHA 302	\$ 100,000
		Playground and other park furnishings install	\$ 175,000

TOTAL \$ 3,085,000

B. New Acreage Acquisition Goals

The 2017 LPPRP reflected a total of approximately 60 acres of potential land acquisition to be added to the Caroline County inventory by 2030. Between 2017 and 2021 no new acreage has been added. Several of these acquisition goals have been carried over into the 2022 Plan and are shaded on Table II-10 and II-11 to demonstrate this carryover. The County has shifted its priorities in acquisition to reflect a focus on acquisitions that enhance existing parks and improve access to existing parks. The acquisition goals for the 2022 Plan are reflected in Table II-11 and are based on input from residents as well as on proximity and equity analysis of existing parks/open space. Total acquisition goals to meet needs have been adjusted down to approximately 35.5 acres. Acreage for construction of a new community center has been removed from the list as the County has shifted its focus to expanding the Joint Use Agreement with Caroline County Public Schools to better coordinate use of existing indoor spaces within school facilities to make best use of existing built facilities and infrastructure.

Table II-10 Caroline County 2017 Parks and Recreation Acreage Goals

Updates

Open Space and Parks and Recreational Land Goals Established in 2017	Type and Specific Location	Acreage Needed	Acreage Acquired
By 2030 complete entry road improvements, parking, public access at Stoney Point Landing. Requires easement OR acquisition estimated at 3.5 acres	Stoney Point Landing, within County south of Town of Hillsboro	3.5	---
By 2030 acquire and develop 20 acre parcel as community/neighborhood park near or within the eastern growth area of Denton	East of Route 404 in Denton Town limits	20	---
By 2030 acquire lot between North County Regional Park and Christian/Red Bridges Park	County - North of Greensboro along Route 313	20	---
By 2030 acquire and develop a 1-2 acre parcel on the west side of Route 313 in or near Town of Henderson to provide safe access to a park on the west side of Route 313	In/Near Town of Henderson	2	---
By 2030 development of Countywide trail system that links state parks and towns	Countywide (focused on Ridgely, Denton areas adjacent/leading to state parks)	25	---

Table II-11 Caroline County 2022 Land Acquisition Goals Plan

Open Space and Parks and Recreational Land Goals 2022	Type and Specific Location	Acreage Needed	Plan for Meeting Need
By 2024 acquire village lot (or easement) for safe walking access between Choptank Marina and Choptank Nature Park and Parking Lot	Village of Choptank	0.3	Corner lot is currently held in an estate, discussions are underway with the trustee.
By 2024 acquire additional 1 acre adjacent to Ganey’s Wharf to expand public waterfront access	County, west of Harmony	1	Expand access to waterfront by adding to adjoining existing public park asset
By 2028 acquire additional 1.1 acres for wooded trail expansion, future easement connections to Kline Street	Village of Jonestown	1.4	Acquisition will improve walkability to park for residents.
By 2028, acquisition of the farmstead originally subdivided from South County Regional Park parcel when originally purchased in 1990’s	South County, outside of Preston	1.5	Infill lot acquisition; connects to existing park asset.
By 2028, acquisition of 1.5 acres for trail expansion to improve connection to other recreation facilities, Denton Elementary School	Town of Denton	1.5	Acquisition will improve walkability to park for residents.
By 2028 acquire and develop a 6 acre parcel as community/neighborhood park near or within the eastern growth area of Denton to address needs identified through proximity and equity analysis.	East of Route 404 in Denton Town limits	6	Municipal Project, in 2017, plan included 20 acre acquisition
By 2031 develop Stoney Point Landing into a shoreline destination - complete entry road improvements, parking, public access at Stoney Point Landing. Requires easement OR acquisition estimated at 3.5 acres	Stoney Point Landing, within County, south of Town of Hillsboro	3.5	Stabilize public access to waterfront and coastal resiliency improvements.
By 2028, parcel acquisition for small dog park and environmental improvements to School House Branch tributary of the Tuckahoe River	Town of Hillsboro	.3	Acquisition addresses community demand for a park asset; municipal project
By 2031 acquire lot between North County Regional Park and Christian/Red Bridges Park	County - North of Greensboro along Route 313	20	Enhance/stabilize public access to stream habitat; connect to existing park assets.

The following section of this plan addresses the capacity of the Department to effectively maintain and operate the park system. These two sections are equally important; capital

expansion must be balanced with the capacity to maintain operational, condition and safety standards at all County parks.

C. Summary of Capital Projects

Overview

In developing the project priorities in Table II-8, consideration was given to:

- County's needs, as discussed above.
- Equitable distribution of parks and open space, with special emphasis on historically marginalized villages in unincorporated areas of the county.
- County land use policies. Developing the parks and recreation system in a manner that respects the rural nature of the County, incorporates good environmental stewardship practices and reflects the distinction between growth areas and rural/resource lands.
- Efficiency of recreation service delivery: continued joint use of recreation facilities at County schools; expansion of joint use of indoor space (school gymnasiums).

The capital project priorities listed in Table II-8 respond to the needs identified in this plan. The capital project priorities focus first on rehabilitation and improvements that enable existing facilities to be used to their full potential; secondly, on fully developing park land owned by the County and suitable for recreation; and thirdly, on a few focused land acquisitions to support safe paths to parks. These priorities ensure that the County will make full use of existing park resources.

Regional Parks

South County Regional Park's development goals from the 2017 LPPRP have been carried over to the 2022 LPPRP and included construction of two pavilions scheduled to be completed in 2022. Mid and long-term plans include further development of trails and fields. Development of the new North County Regional Park is currently focused on environmental stabilization.

These two parks will satisfy several of the County's specific recreational needs. The parks will provide ball fields, multi-purpose fields, trails, playgrounds, and picnic areas. The South County Park already provides a primary location for athletic league play. The future development of multipurpose fields at North County Park will offer additional regional opportunities for sports activities as well as for an array of outdoor recreational activities.



Adkins Arboretum within Tuckahoe State Park

Trails

Table II-8 includes additional trails at a number of locations across the county. The comprehensive CIP in Appendix C also indicates that the interest in longer trails, Safe Paths to Parks, and Rails-to-Trails are also trail projects that will be pursued in the course of the next decade.

Consideration is given to trail connections in and around the towns to improve Safe Routes to Parks, a

critical component of ensuring that parks are accessible to all. County subdivision and land development regulations should be used to ensure that every opportunity is taken to develop trails (or enhanced sidewalks) that connect existing park and recreational resources

School Recreation Parks and Indoor Fitness and Community Centers

The public school systems inventory of outdoor playing fields and open spaces along with indoor courts continue to be essential to meet demand for recreation space. The County Recreation & Parks Department will look to partner with Public Schools to be the conduit for other service providers to be able to utilize school indoor facilities

A new Greensboro Elementary School opened in 2021 and includes a new regulation size gymnasium with an independent public entrance to facilitate public access outside of the school day. This indoor infrastructure provides the Department of Recreation & Parks and non-profit organizations with a new location to offer basketball, soccer, adult fitness and other programming. Preston Elementary School was similarly redesigned and renovated and opened in 2016.

Swimming Pools

Every five years when this Plan is completed, access to public swimming pools is a high priority for community members. This 2022 Plan is no different. Currently the Department has not included the development of a swimming pool in its CIP. Caroline County Government does not have adequate resources to maintain a public pool. None of the county's municipalities currently have plans for construction of a swimming pool. The YMCA of the Chesapeake has secured an agreement with Caroline County Government to build a full facility YMCA on property currently owned by the County on Double Hills Road in Denton. The YMCA's plans include both indoor and outdoor swimming pools.

Water Access

Water access is a high priority for county residents as indicated in the community engagement process. The County will continue to maintain and develop public water access sites throughout the county. The CIP includes seven projects addressing water access, including improvements to boat ramps, water access for kayaks/canoe, trails, piers, parking areas, river clearing and wetland restoration. Its network of water access points benefits the County by providing access to outdoor recreation and nature. This is both a direct benefit to residents and attracts visitors to the County providing benefits to local businesses. The major water related projects included in the 2022 CIP is the dredging of the basin at Choptank Marina as well as the restoration of the perimeter seawall and street side retaining wall, and additional floating piers. The addition of fuel pumps and power supply upgrades for boat owners will be a benefit to both commercial and recreational boat owners. There are additional water access projects scheduled for Ganey's Wharf, Gilpin Point and Greensboro's Riverfront Park. In particular these will focus on shoreline stabilization to address sea level rise with resiliency and mitigation measures.

In addition, access to the North County Regional Park shoreline of the Choptank River is a part of the Master Plan completed in 2019. Shoreline stabilization, resilience and mitigation measures are also part of this Plan.

Sports Facilities

In response to the demand for multipurpose fields if the County population grows, the priorities list includes new fields within the North County Regional Park, Jonestown Community Park, the Ridgely Athletic Complex, the Sharp Road Athletic Field Complex, Marydel Community Park and North Caroline High School.

New outdoor basketball courts can be accommodated by the addition and/or renovation of paved court areas (Ober Park and Choptank River Park in Greensboro, Jonestown Park in the Village of Jonestown and Martin Sutton Park in Ridgely) and can also be considered in the master planning for the North County Regional Parks.

No deficit is apparent now for baseball/softball fields, but the priority list provides potential to add fields if need increases. In addition, particular fields could be added at South County Regional Park and North County Regional Park as well as at several municipal community parks, for example Sharp Road in Denton and the Ridgely Athletic Complex.

Dog Park

The priorities list includes location of dog parks within an existing County park, within one mile of a population center. Two potential locations have been identified in the priorities list: Cedar Lane Park in Greensboro and on a proposed land acquisition in Hillsboro.



Future Park Possibilities

D. Funding

Cost Estimates

The program priorities through 2027 comprise approximately 33 county projects and 13 municipal projects that would cost approximately \$15.5 million. Of this total, \$ 935,000 would be for acquisition. Most of the expense, a total of \$6.4 million, will be needed for new facility development, and \$8.1M for rehabilitation projects. Cost estimates are approximate and based on recent land acquisitions, real estate values, and facility development and rehabilitation costs. They do not take into consideration inflation.

County and State Funds

The County expects to rely heavily on existing funding sources to pay for recreation facility needs, especially POS, Waterway Improvement Program funds, and County capital budget funds. However, these sources are insufficient to meet all acquisition and development needs as outlined in the 2022 CIP. The total program cost through 2027 is approximately \$12.5 million.

Although important for the quality of life of County residents, the recreation and parks system has difficulty competing for limited funds with road system repair, law enforcement funding and similar needs. This lower priority will stretch the timeline to satisfy community recreation demands.

Unless new funding and facility development sources are developed, the County must accept these constraints. As funding becomes available, capital projects for new parks and facilities must be balanced with the staff resources to manage them.

Funding for Town Projects

The Department of Recreation and Parks will continue to work closely with the incorporated towns to secure funding through the Community Parks and Playground to support rehabilitation of existing parks and open spaces within towns. This is important to the County goals, as the parks inside town limits are often the most easily accessible and critical to meeting both municipal and county residents' needs for parks/open space. In Table II-9 municipal priority projects are listed and the County will collaborate with towns to assist with accessing funding.

E. Operational Strategies

Department of Recreation and Parks

The Department of Recreation and Parks' Divisions of Parks & Capital Development and Programs Services is currently operating at or beyond the capacity of its full-time staff of two. The Parks Division maintains 159 developed acres of parks and open space. Over the past five years the maintenance responsibilities of the Division have expanded to include operations at the 4H Park, the new playground and fields installed at Marydel Park, new structures at South County Regional Park, 2.7 miles of mowed trails at the North County Regional Park and new parks features in the neighborhood parks in Templeville and Hillsboro, which do not have town staff to maintain them. In addition, the two-man Parks Division is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of 6 public water access points including a 72-slip marina, and the grounds of the County Courthouse. The Department has also identified the development of additional features and amenities to be added to the inventory over the next five years at existing parks locations as well as the potential acquisition of an additional 42 acres of property. In order to effectively manage the maintenance and upkeep of county properties, additional manpower is critical before further development can occur.



Caroline County 4H Park, Denton Maryland

Since the 2017 LPPRP was drafted, the Parks Division has added two part-time Parks Technicians to its staff to support additional responsibilities for the County 4-H Park and expanded needs at Choptank Marina however the Parks Division remains understaffed to meet the maintenance demands of the network of county parks.

The broad scope of the 2017 Capital Implementation plan was dependent on a number of factors. This included the County having both the financial and human capital necessary to implement these recommendations. Due to staffing and fiscal constraints combined with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department was unable to meet all the 2017 objectives on its priority project list.

Over the past five years, the Program Services Division programs had a combined participation of approximately 15,000 individuals. . Current changes in the out of school time arena to better support students' academic recovery from the Pandemic will have a direct impact on the existing afterschool and summer programs offered by the Department and may include the need to expand services to additional locations and to more children and youth. This will also have an impact on the Department's ability to meet the demand for other recreational programs and activities.

Over the past five years the Department has undergone significant leadership changes and anticipates additional changes with the impending retirements of key staff including the current director who has served in the role for more than 35 years. Her retirement is scheduled to occur in December 2022.

As outlined in the Goals and Strategies Section of this Chapter, the two divisions have specific areas to focus their attention on moving forward. The Department's leadership must balance the desire to continue to develop additional acreage and programming options with the capacity of fiscal and human resources.

Coordination

Over the next five years, the Department's Parks Division leadership should continue to take on an increasingly strong facilitation and support role in its work with municipalities as the emphasis on creating parks and recreation opportunities that promote equitable access for all, particularly in the provision of parks and open spaces in close proximity to population dense areas. The continued development of County-municipal partnerships will be integral to meeting the future needs of the County's residents – both those inside municipal boundaries and without. The County Recreation & Parks Department is best suited to act as the convener in these efforts, providing expertise and technical support to smaller local governing bodies.



Riverfront Park, Upper Choptank River in Greensboro MD

Over the past five years the Department has developed strong formal and informal partnerships over the past two decades. The Department's Joint Use Agreement with Caroline County Public Schools should be revisited to determine how the two entities can expand the partnership to provide better access to indoor court spaces at various school locations. Formalization of existing informal partnerships should also be a goal in the next five years as the Department undergoes the change in leadership currently anticipated. In order for partnerships to outlast individual relationships, it will be critical to develop formal partnerships where informal partnerships have worked well in the past.

Towns

The 2017 Plan explored the concept of implementing county- municipal intergovernmental agreements (IGAs), that formalize co-planning efforts to develop future public parks and open space projects and opportunities. Between 2022 and 2027, Caroline County Recreation & Parks will continue to formalize its relationship with towns as technical advisor for parks master planning and project implementation. With the shift in focus to the proximity and equity of parks, municipalities play a key role in meeting the needs for all residents. Caroline County municipalities have a varied inventory of parks within their town limits from a high in Federalsburg to one 4 acre park in Hillsboro. Coordination and support of each other's recreation offerings should also be a consideration for municipal leaders as well as for the county.

Non-Governmental Sector

Private, quasi-public, and nonprofit entities play an important role in meeting recreation demand and, thereby, free up public resources to meet other needs. While the Department of Recreation

and Parks has built strong informal relationships with many of these organizations to assist in meeting the recreational demands of County residents, these informal relationships need to be formalized and strengthened to ensure that the collaborations remain in place into the future.

The Department will continue to create formal, renewable Memorandum of Agreement with organizations that co-sponsor programs and events including independent youth sports organizations, the YMCA of the Chesapeake, the Ridgely and Denton Lions Club, Caroline County Council of the Arts and the Caroline County Library.

In addition, the Department must seek out opportunities to create relationships with newly identified organizations and individuals with specific interest in emerging County needs as identified in this plan. This will include investigating the potential of creating “Friends of” groups to support various projects including: development and maintenance of the trail system at North County Park and development of and maintenance of a dog park on an existing County or town owned property.

Summary of Action Items

The planning process for this LPPRP has resulted in the development of a series of operational action items that can be undertaken by the Department of Recreation & Parks to enhance access to parks, open spaces and recreational services in Caroline County and better serve its citizenry.

These action items are:

- Through its county budgeting process, increase the number of Parks Technicians to two.
- Refine the Department’s enterprise funds to implement full and partial cost recovery benchmarks in both Program Service program options and in Parks.
- Implement data tracking measures for both program services and park use to increase understanding of participation and park usage, the needs of the citizenry and the department’s ability to best meet these needs. Include integration of an annual public satisfaction and needs assessment survey.
- Implement routine (no less than one time per year) process to reflect on and refine this plan as it relates to current conditions.
- Strengthen existing partnerships and forge new partnerships with citizen groups and with private and quasi-public organizations to enhance both parks and program services offered by the County.
- Expand participation in recreation programs by recruiting participation from afterschool and summer program participants.
- Identify safe and accessible locations to provide additional community-based activities for children and youth.



Summer Learning Center, Greensboro Maryland

- Establish Inter- Governmental Agreements (IGAs) with the incorporated municipalities that formally define the working relationships between the County and the municipality as it relates to parks and open space development and management.
- For capital projects along the Upper Choptank, Tuckahoe Creek or Marshyhope Creek, incorporate resiliency and mitigation tactics to reduce the potential impact of storm surges on public investment.
- Further align County parks and recreation services with other local and State efforts to better support the health and wellness of the County citizenry through programming that engages residents in activities that get them outside and moving.

Chapter III Natural Resources Conservation

1. Executive Summary

Caroline County has an abundance of natural resources, including forested and estuarine habitats, mineral resources, and productive agricultural land. Natural resource lands addressed in this Chapter include forests, wetlands, streams and rivers, floodplains and other natural features. These abundant natural resources, particularly those associated with the County's waterways, contribute significantly to residents' quality of life.

Natural resource lands provide wildlife habitat, natural filtration for air and water pollutants, and opportunities for resource-based recreation. Properly managed, they form the natural framework around which the built environment is planned and developed, providing essential natural controls against flooding, erosion, and soil loss. They are an integral part of the County's rural character and beauty. Natural resource lands require few government services, provide opportunities for eco-tourism, and help enhance property values in developed areas.

The health and social benefits of public access to natural resources are defined by a growing body of social science and behavioral economics research. Public access to safe, well-maintained parks and trails is connected to increased rates of physical activity and personal health. Management of



natural resources involved County, State, Federal and private organizations. Purchase of lands, easements, agricultural management plans, regulatory and legislative protection of important lands, and point and nonpoint pollution control by regulatory and legislative means are all a part of a coordinated approach to protect and manage natural resources in Caroline County.

2. County Goals

This section lists County policies related to natural resource conservation and provides a summary of progress towards these goals since 2012. Ultimately, the LPPRP will be adopted into the Caroline County Comprehensive Land Use Plan in 2023 as an appendix.

A. Comprehensive Plan Goals

Several chapters of the Caroline County 2010 Comprehensive Plan address natural resources. The County's natural resource and agricultural policies complement each other, and the plan's objectives often address both. These goals and objectives are listed by corresponding chapter in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan.

Chapter 1, Land Use and Growth Management

Goal: Preserve agriculture, natural resources and the rural character of the County by continuing to direct future growth to existing population centers.

Objectives:

- Providing adequate planning and regulatory mechanisms for rural land use and growth management.
- Preserving valuable natural, historical, cultural, archeological and scenic resources.

Chapter 2, Water Resources

Goal: Identify suitable strategies for nutrient reduction to reduce point source and nonpoint source impacts to receiving waters now and in the future.

Chapter 3, Resource Conservation

Goal: Manage, protect and conserve natural resources.

Objectives:

- Enacting appropriate protection measures for environmentally sensitive areas;
- Responsibly managing forest resources;
- Improving surface water quality, specifically by reducing loads of nitrogen, phosphorus and sediments into County waterways;
- Conserving groundwater resources and the integrity of those sources of water;
- Enhancing County programs for natural resource protection/conservation.

Chapter 4, Priority Preservation Areas

Goal: Preserve agriculture and forestry in rural areas as the dominant land use in Caroline County.

Objectives:

- Balance agricultural land use with environmental best management practices;
- Supporting public and private preservation and conservation programs and initiatives;
- Enhancing County programs for preservation and conservation;

B. Zoning Ordinance goals

The Zoning Ordinance reinforces the mutually complementary roles of agricultural land preservation and natural resource conservation. Section 175-12 states that the Rural District, in addition to providing for agriculture, *"...is also intended for purposes of protecting watersheds and water supplies; to provide for spacious development; to protect forest, wetland and scenic areas; to conserve fish and wildlife; to promote forestry, the growing of crops and grazing; and to prevent untimely scattering of more dense urban development."*

C. Progress Towards Goals

1. Strategies in 2017 LPPRP

The 2017 LPPRP included these strategies:

- Pursue park development related to natural resource conservation
- Initiate development of a forest management plan
- Develop the Phase III WIP
- Improve database capacity and information
- Explore making County GIS data available to the public
- Develop Low Impact Subdivision Standards
- Support Heritage Area and Scenic Byway Designations

Fiscal constraints have hindered the goal of increasing the pace of land conservation. However, the County has made progress in preserving its natural resources through its compliance with state policies, particularly the legal requirements for sensitive natural resource area protection. Important accomplishments since 2017 include the following:

Pursue park development related to natural resource conservation

The County's development of the 207-acre North County Regional Park (NCRP), located on the Choptank River north of Greensboro, includes a significant resource conservation component. A cooperative partnership including the County, University of Maryland Sea Grant Extension, Washington College, MD DNR and the US Army Corps of Engineers has secured grant funding for design and implementation of multiple environmental improvements at the Park including the creation of Delmarva Bay wetlands, extensive stream and wetland restoration, and installation of a regenerative stormwater conveyance system to provide capture and treatment of runoff before it reaches the Choptank River. The multiple projects will restore degraded stream channels, provide enhanced resiliency to increased precipitation events, and create and re-establish extensive bird and animal habitat and non-tidal wetlands. This phase will be complete by 2025.

The County partnered with the Town of Greensboro for the implementation of multiple environmental practices at the Choptank River Park beginning in 2016. This 13 acre park is separate from the County's North County Regional Park and within the municipal boundary. Since 2017, through funding provided by the MD DNR Coastal and Atlantic Bays Trust Fund, the first phase of environmental protection and conservation improvements have been installed at the park, including: submerged gravel wetlands, a constructed wetland, rain gardens, native wildflower meadow, native grass meadow, woodland meadow, removal of impervious surface parking area and replacement with pervious parking area, and a native meadow walking trail. Subsequent phases will include shoreline and wetland restoration projects, which are in the planning and design phase.

The County also completed stormwater improvements to Ganey's Wharf located on the Choptank River north west of Preston. Improvements included boat ramp channel dredging, replacement/expansion of existing fishing pier and storm water run-off improvements for boat ramp structure.

Initiate development of a Forest Management Plan

The County's Comprehensive Plan notes the importance of forests that are contiguous or connected with stream buffers throughout the County. A Forest Management Plan would map and evaluate strategies to protect forested corridors and large tracts of forest land.

The County is developing forest management goals and strategies in conjunction with the development of its Comprehensive Plan update. The goals and strategies will be coordinated with municipalities in the form of urban tree planting programs.

Develop the Phase III Watershed Improvement Plan (WIP)

For the development of the Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP), Maryland took a different approach to Phase II in setting local goals. The State met with County Planning and Codes staff and the Soil Conservation District (SCD) to discuss planned implementation efforts

up to 2025 and identify the challenges and strategies that could increase the pace of implementation. Working with State partners, County and SCD staff submitted Best Management Practice (BMP) planning scenarios to the State to run through the Chesapeake Assessment Scenario Tool (CAST) model to determine the nutrient loads generated by the scenarios and set reduction goals for each sector (agriculture, urban, septic and natural) for 2025. These local goals are summarized, by county, in Maryland's Phase III WIP; counties are no longer required to submit a separate Phase III WIP document. Maryland's Phase III was published on August 23, 2019. Caroline County's nitrogen reduction goal is 479,850 lbs by 2025.

Improve database capacity and information

In 2019 the Department of Planning and Codes completed a software transition to online permit processing, including a public-facing web platform for searching permit data on-line, creating an account to submit permit applications, tracking permit progress, and making payments. The new system for permit application and processing improves the granular level of data collection at the point of issue for land use permits, including forest conservation easements, floodplain and stormwater management and private (subdivision) open space.

Explore making County GIS data available to the public

The County is exploring the feasibility of expanding public access to GIS data in conjunction with the new online permit system. The County continues to work with Maryland Department of Planning on data sharing for the Maryland iMap portal, which citizens can access for extensive data on natural resources, environmental conditions and climate adaptation information.

Support Heritage Area and Scenic Byway Designations

The County has incorporated State and federal historic inventories into the County GIS catalog and is adding GIS data on local sites as the info becomes available.

2. MALPF Easements

Since 2017 the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Fund (MALPF) program has purchased six agricultural easements totaling 703 acres. The Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) was established by the Maryland General Assembly in 1977 and is part of the Maryland Department of Agriculture. The Foundation purchases agricultural preservation easements that forever restrict development on prime farmland and woodland. MALPF easement programs are administered at the local level through County MALPF administrators who coordinate the easement application development, review, and approval process with farmers and the State MALPF office.

The goals of the MALPF program, which include protecting agricultural farmland and woodland as open space, protecting wildlife habitat and enhancing the environmental quality of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, support the strategies of the LPPRP as well as the goals and objectives of the County's Comprehensive Plan.

3. Update of Critical Area Maps

In late 2017, the County completed a 2-year cooperative project with MD DNR to review substantive changes to Maryland's Critical Area Program and resulting impacts to the County's designated Critical Areas. The State worked with County staff to update the County's maps of the Critical Area. The 1998 maps showed 13,249 acres located landward within 1,000' of the tidal portions of the Choptank River, Tuckahoe Creek and Marshy Hope Creek. The updated Critical Area maps include 16,296 acres of land, an increase of 3,047 acres over the County's original Critical Area maps. The County's Critical Area mapping update allowed local Critical Area maps to be incorporated into the "Maryland iMap System," facilitating public access to official maps via the internet. The Critical Area maps can be easily updated as shoreline and wetland conditions evolve in the future.



4. County Recreation and Parks System

In 2018 Caroline County Recreation & Parks completed a master site plan for the North County Regional Park (NCRP). The 207-acre site is currently included in the Parks Inventory in Chapter II as resource land. One of the primary goals of the master site plan is to protect and conserve the natural resources of this park.. A large portion of the site - over 61 acres - will be managed as permanent, forested natural resource land under an easement. The Maryland Critical Areas Law and the Caroline County Critical Areas Program set guidelines for development of any land within 1,000 feet of the Choptank River tidal waters. At full buildout, North County Regional Park will be within this range, with approximately 70 percent in forests, wetlands and managed meadow areas.

Balancing development of portions of the park for recreation activities with resource conservation is a primary goal for this regional park. The land management strategy begins with the site's transition from cropland to one in which developed areas - roads, parking and active recreation facilities - combined with preserved natural areas and enhancement areas - planted meadows and reforested areas - create a more diverse park landscape. During each step of the park's transformation, there will be opportunities to enhance the park's natural resource base while creating new opportunities for visitors to access and use.

Currently underway and anticipated to be completed in 2022 is the maintenance dredging of the marina basin at Choptank Marina. This also includes dredge disposal site restoration to control for run-off and stormwater management.

5. State and Land Conservancy Purchases

There have been no additional easements completed since the 2017 LPPRP.

6. Other Easements

Since 2017, an additional 40.2 acres have been placed under Forest Conservation easement through the subdivision and site plan process.

7. Heritage Resources

The County’s Office of Tourism and Heritage Development continues to work with neighboring jurisdictions and the County’s Historical Society to promote and protect the resources within the County’s scenic byways and the Stories of Chesapeake Heritage Area.

3. State Goals

The State goals for conservation of natural resource lands, and County goals and programs that complement and support these policies, are as follows:

State Goal	County Goals & Programs
<p>Goal 1: Identify, protect and restore lands and waterways in Maryland that support important aquatic and terrestrial natural resources and ecological functions through combined use of the following techniques:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Public land acquisition and stewardship ● Private land conservation easements ● Local land use management plans to conserve natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas/minimize impacts to resource lands ● Support incentives for resource-based economies that increase the retention of forest, wetlands or agricultural lands ● Avoidance of impacts on natural resources by publicly funded infrastructure development projects ● Appropriate mitigation response, commensurate with the value of the affected resource. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GOAL: to direct growth to existing population centers, while enhancing the conservation of resource lands as part of a region-wide rural conservation area that protects both farmland and natural resources shall remain in the Land Use chapter in the County’s updated Comprehensive Plan in 2023. ● The Comprehensive Plan update will provide mechanisms for rural land use and growth management; preserving natural resources; support public and private preservation and conservation programs and initiatives. ● The County worked with Eastern Shore Land Conservancy (ESLC) in 2019 to expand County Rural Legacy Areas. The County’s total acreage in the Rural Legacy Area increased from 11,350 acres to 55,000, significantly expanding rural land preservation opportunities for property owners. ● The County will continue to work with private land conservation organizations that obtain easements on priority lands.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The County’s Critical Area: Forest Conservation and Stormwater Management regulations provide for mitigation when sensitive environmental areas are disturbed.
<p>Goal 2: Focus conservation and restoration activities on priority areas such as the Targeted Ecological Areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan in Chapter 3, Water Resources, and Chapter V, Natural Resources, establish the County’s intent to address surface and groundwater quality and impacts and to protect environmentally sensitive areas. The County’s Comprehensive Plan update process will incorporate these water quality strategies with additional strategies for climate adaptation and resiliency for ecological and biodiverse areas. • As part of the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation easement application process, the County ranks properties higher if they are in the Priority Preservation Area. The two Rural Legacy areas support creation of riparian buffers along Tuckahoe and Marshyhope Creeks through easement acquisition.
<p>Goal 3: Conserve and restore species of concern and important habitat types that may fall outside of designated green infrastructure (examples include: rock outcrops, karst systems, caves, shale barren communities, grasslands, shoreline beach and dune systems, mud flats, non-forested islands, etc.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development proposals are reviewed for impacts on State-identified habitat areas. • Forest Conservation requirements provide for protection of forested areas. • Chapter V of the Comprehensive Plan addresses the presence in the County of Delmarva Bays (a unique, freshwater wetland feature) and the need for project review for threatened and endangered species habitats. The update of the Comprehensive Plan will incorporate these resource needs with additional recommendations for the protection of habitats and creation of Delmarva Bays in conjunction with County water quality improvement goals.
<p>Goal 4: Develop a more comprehensive inventory of natural resource lands and environmentally sensitive areas to assist State and local implementation programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The implementation strategies in Chapter 5 of the Comprehensive Plan establish the County’s need to develop improved mapping of natural resources and sensitive areas. • The State database of sensitive lands is incorporated into the County GIS database and consulted in the land use application review process for property development to minimize the resource impacts. In addition, the State’s Sensitive Species Project Review Areas (SSPRA) database resources is consistently consulted by the County and includes: Natural Heritage Areas, Listed Species

	<p>Sites, Locally Significant Habitat Areas, Colonial Waterbird Sites, Waterfowl Staging and Concentration Areas, Nontidal Wetlands of Special State Concern, and Geographic Areas of Particular Concern.</p>
<p>Goal 5: Establish measurable objectives for natural resource conservation and an integrated state/local strategy to achieve them through State and local implementation programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Caroline County integrates State policies and regulations into County programs and regulations. ● Chapter 3 (Water Resources) of the Comprehensive Plan commits the County to supporting and participating in strategies to reduce point and nonpoint-source pollution of water resources. The update of the Comprehensive Plan will include these strategies with new recommendations for incorporating climate adaptation and resiliency strategies into implementation plans and programs.
<p>Goal 6: Assess combined ability of State and local programs to achieve the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Expand and connect forests, farmland and other natural lands as a network of contiguous green infrastructure. ● Protect critical terrestrial and aquatic habitats, biological communities and populations. ● Manage watersheds in ways that protect, conserve and restore stream corridors, riparian forest buffers, wetlands, floodplains and aquifer recharge areas and their associated hydrologic and water quality functions. ● Adopt coordinated land and watershed management strategies that recognize the critical links between growth management and aquatic biodiversity and fisheries production. ● Support a productive forest land base and forest resource industry, emphasizing the economic viability of privately owned forestland. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MALPF and Rural Legacy programs will continue to expand green infrastructure. The County is committed to working with land conservancies, municipalities and other partners to create a green infrastructure network. ● The WIP stream buffers have been used to expand existing green corridors. ● Critical Area requirements protect water quality and habitat and the Critical Area buffers maintain and expand green corridors. The expansion of the County Critical Area in late 2017 will provide these protections to an additional 3,000 acres of land. ● Forest Conservation regulations require no net loss of forest cover. ● Habitats and biological communities are protected through the State and County requirements for SSPRAs, perennial stream buffers, floodplains and non-tidal wetland regulations. ● Most of the County is zoned R-Rural, which permits only minor subdivisions and supports natural resource conservation as well as farmland. Sensitive areas are separated from new subdivision lots by the establishment of buffers.

4. Inventory of Natural Resource Lands

In Caroline, 6385 acres of land (Table III-1) in the County is protected for purposes of natural resource conservation. Most of the protected natural resource land in the County has been preserved by the State or through private quasi-public easements or purchases. The Maryland DNR is the major owner of natural resource land (Map III-1). State ownership is approximately 3.2% of the total Caroline land mass (205,054 acres).

Table III-1 Natural Resources Land by Ownership

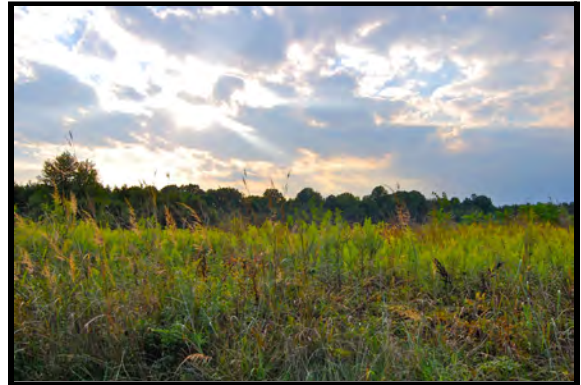
Ownership Category	Acres
County	324
Towns	30
State (including forest conservation)	4564
Private/Quasi Public	1467
Total	6385

Source: Department of Planning and Codes

A. Parks and Preserves

Natural resource lands that are owned and maintained for resource protection and recreation include the following:

- **Adkins Arboretum** is a 288-acre State-owned public garden dedicated to the preservation of natural vegetated landscapes and the cultivation of native plant species within Tuckahoe State Park. The Arboretum sustains a successful outreach program that educates amateur arborists and gardeners on sustainable landscaping techniques. It also preserves a large stand of intact riparian woodland along Tuckahoe Creek.

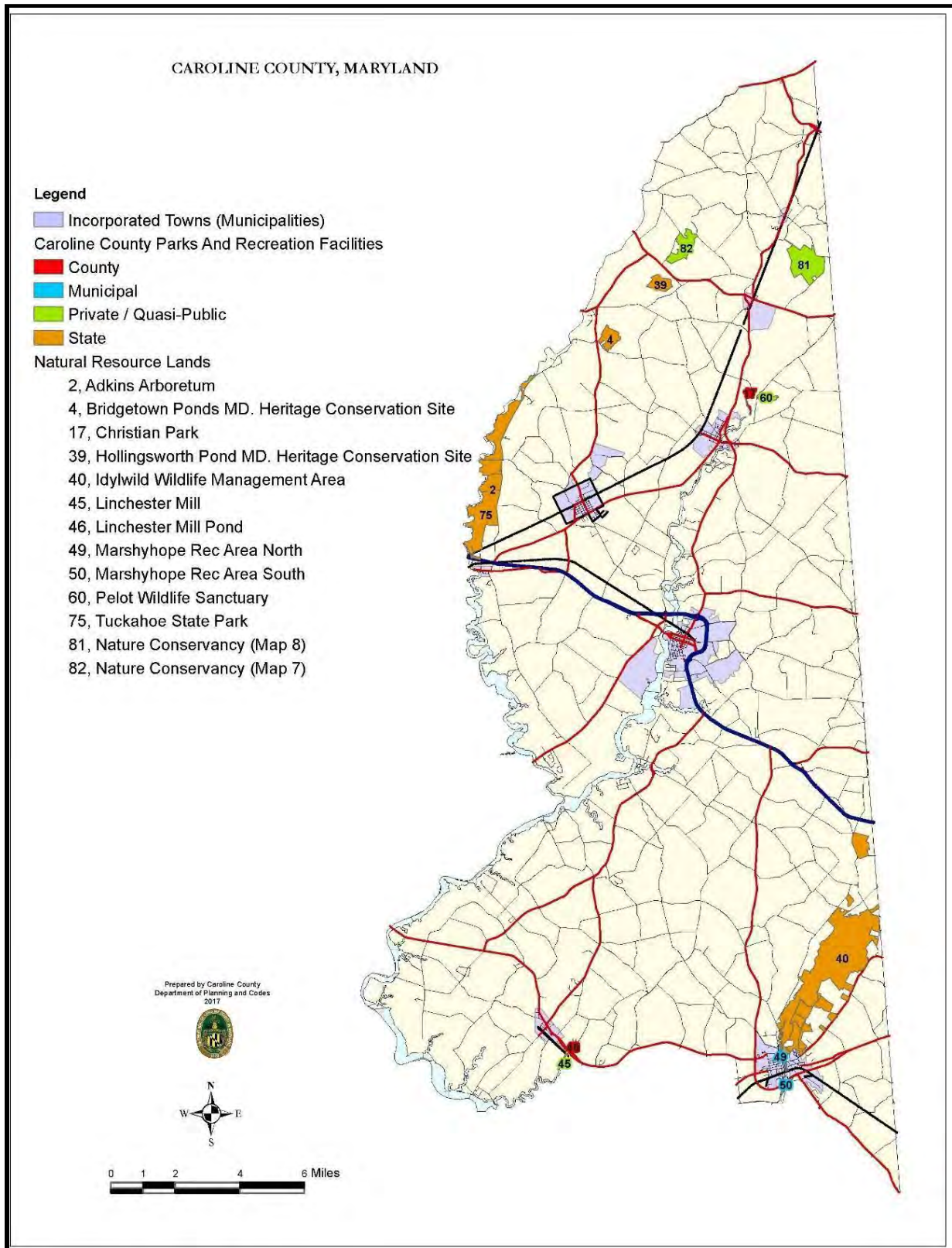


- **Bridgetown and Hollingsworth Ponds** are preserved by the State, and consist of approximately 290 acres of natural land. These areas contain sensitive wetland communities and rare geologic formations that are unique to freshwater wetlands on the Delmarva Peninsula.
- **Choptank Wetlands Preserve**, owned by The Nature Conservancy, is approximately 275 acres of tidal wetland habitat in the Choptank River in the southwest corner of the County.
- **Delmarva Bays** are also owned by the Nature Conservancy and include approximately 800 acres of land in the northern portion of the County. This acreage includes an area of seasonally flooded wetlands, unique to the Delmarva Peninsula, known as Delmarva Bays. These are an unusual type of shallow, irregularly inundated, freshwater depression wetland considered to be significant because they are uncommon and their features provide irreplaceable habitat for rare species. The sites support academic research and have received planning or financial support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Maryland Department of the Environment, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

- **Idylwild Wildlife Management Area**, owned by the State, contains nearly 3,600 acres of forested area in the headwaters of the Marshyhope Creek. It is managed by the State as wildlife habitat and as a public hunting area. It protects sensitive riparian forest and wetlands and constitutes one of the largest interior forested tracts in the County.
- **Lynch Preserve at Robins Creek**, a 206-acre riverside preserve south of Denton that was donated to the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy in 1999. Bordered by both the Choptank River and Robins Creek, the preserve includes forest and unpaved walking trails that opened to the public in 2012.
- **Pelot Wildlife Sanctuary** is a 50-acre wildlife sanctuary near Greensboro. It is owned by the Maryland Ornithological Society.
- **Locally owned natural resource lands** include the County-owned Christian Park, Linchester Mill and Mill Pond, and the Marshyhope Recreation Area, owned by the Town of Federalsburg.



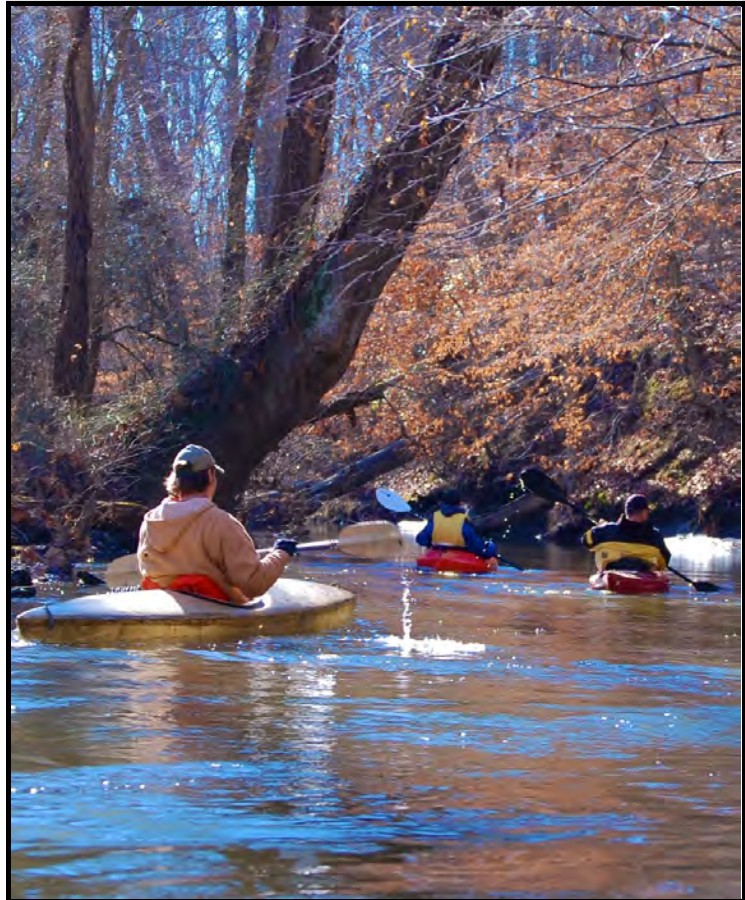
Map III-1 Natural Resource Lands by Ownership



B. Natural Resource Land Protected by Easement

The County's easement acquisitions protect both farmland and natural resource land. Although the easement acquisition programs are geared primarily to agricultural land preservation, portions of the easement lands are non- agricultural resource lands, especially woodlands and wetlands. The County has various easement lands held by different easement holders (MALPF, Rural Legacy, ESLC, and the Maryland Environmental Trust –MET). These easements are listed in Chapter IV, Agricultural Land Preservation.

The Tuckahoe and Eastern Shore Heartland (formerly Marshyhope) Rural Legacy Areas were established with the goal of protecting large contiguous areas of riparian buffer along Tuckahoe and Marshyhope Creeks and the Choptank River as well as preserving swaths of farmland. The 3,314 acres of purchased easements within the Rural Legacy Areas have successfully protected riparian buffers along these creeks. Because parts of these waterways are within the Critical Area, these buffers adjacent to the tidewater are also protected by Critical Area stream buffer requirements. This acreage is privately owned and therefore not included in the acreage listed in Table III-1, but the acreage is listed in the protected easement acreage in Chapter IV, Agricultural Land Preservation.



C. Natural Resource Land Protected through the Development Process

The County's development process requires protection of Critical Area buffers, stream buffers, wetlands, floodplains and certain forests. Because the rate of development within the County is slow, the total acreage protected through development is not large. Nevertheless, these areas, shown on subdivision plats and site development plans and protected from disturbance, are an important element of the County's program to protect natural resources.

5. County Implementation Program

This section discusses components of the County's implementation program for natural resource land conservation.

A. Comprehensive Planning Context

The County's Comprehensive Planning program provides the framework for integrating natural resource conservation and land use. The framework has three basic elements.

1. Encourage development to locate in designated growth areas.

The County's land use strategy directs growth to the municipalities and discourages diffuse growth elsewhere in the County. This approach focuses growth in and around towns, and away from environmentally sensitive or resource-rich lands outside of towns.

2. Maintain the agricultural land base, thereby also conserving natural resource lands.

Preserving agricultural lands is essential to the County's natural resource conservation strategy because much of the County's sensitive natural area, including wetlands, forests, and natural stream buffers, are located on privately owned farmland. Preservation of the County's agrarian economy combats sprawl and discourages development of environmentally sensitive land.

3. Protect valuable natural resources through federal, state and local regulations and special programs.

Sensitive resources are protected through a range of regulations and programs, including zoning and subdivision regulations, water quality standards, and watershed protection strategies. A summary of local regulations is provided in Section V.B.3.a below.

B. Watershed Planning and Tributary Strategies

The Maryland DNR has divided Maryland into 138 large (8-Digit) watersheds. Six of these are wholly or partially located in Caroline County; most of the County falls within either the Upper Choptank, Tuckahoe Creek or Marshyhope Creek watershed (Figure II-3). State and County environmental planning for water quality focuses around watersheds, as described in this section.

1. Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs)

TMDLs are regulatory mechanisms used to identify both point and nonpoint-source discharges into water bodies and to implement controls.

On December 31, 2010 EPA promulgated a TMDL for the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, specifically for nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) and sediment. The TMDL is designed to ensure that all pollution control measures needed to fully restore the Bay watershed are in place

by 2025. The TMDL is supported by rigorous accountability measures to ensure cleanup commitments are met, including short and long term benchmarks, a tracking and accountability system for jurisdiction activities, and federal contingency actions that can be employed if necessary to make progress. Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs) detail how and when Maryland and its local governments will meet pollution allocations.

Aside from the nutrient and sediment limits imposed by the Chesapeake Bay TMDL and its resultant WIPs (see below), no new TMDLs for other pollutants have been established for the Choptank and Tuckahoe Rivers.

2. Watershed Implementation Plan

Caroline County's watersheds exhibit a range of health characteristics per Maryland's Phase II Watershed Implementation Plan.

All the 8-digit watersheds in the County are listed as Category 1 Priority (Restoration) watersheds. Category 1 Watersheds are those watersheds that are on the EPA's list of impaired waterways (known as the "303(d)" list, reflecting the section of the Clean Water Act that establishes the list), or that are not on the 303(d) list, but require restoration to meet other (two or more) natural resource goals.

In Caroline County, all but the Lower Choptank Watershed are also listed as Category 3 Priority (Protection) watersheds, which indicates that these watersheds are biologically significant in such a way that requires the prioritization of high standards for water quality, natural resources, and/or landscape conditions. Despite varying degrees of impairment, Caroline County's waterways retain desirable natural characteristics that merit protection.

Statewide Phase III (WIP) Goals include river- specific cleanup strategies to reduce the nutrients and sediments flowing into the Chesapeake Bay. These strategies outline how local efforts will develop and implement "best management practices" (BMPs) to minimize pollution.

Since 2002, Caroline County has engaged in watershed characterizations and planning efforts and developed numerous watershed plans that address nutrient pollution and strategies for reduction. In 2012, the County completed its local Phase II WIP, which identifies best management practices (BMPs) to reduce nutrient pollution in surface waters in each watershed in the County.

Development of the State's Phase III WIP was completed in 2019 and is being implemented at the State level in coordination with local jurisdictions.

Since 2012, the WIP has been implemented through agricultural BMPs and preserved stream buffers, managed by the Soil Conservation District and the Maryland Department of Agriculture. Urban stormwater BMPs are implemented by County and municipal local governments and non-governmental organizations; septic system BMPs are implemented through the County Department of Environmental Health, and wastewater treatment plant upgrades implemented by municipal governments. County policies support the creation of agricultural stream buffers and

protection of water quality through the BMPs, but this implementation is led by the Maryland Department of Agriculture and accomplished by State agencies. The County does not receive records on where the extensive agricultural buffers are required.

C. Green Infrastructure

Maryland's Green Infrastructure initiative is a DNR-led State-wide effort to identify large, contiguous blocks of ecologically significant natural areas (hubs) and to link them with natural corridors to create an interconnected network of natural resource lands across the State.

Since its establishment in the 1990s, the Green Infrastructure initiative has evolved over the years into a program called Maryland GreenPrint, which identifies Targeted Ecological Areas (TEAs) that are preferred for Statewide Program Open Space funding based on their high ecological value.

Map III-2 shows the TEAs in Caroline County. These include major hubs along Marshyhope Creek and in the northern portion of the County, as well as smaller hubs and corridors that follow the County's major stream valleys.

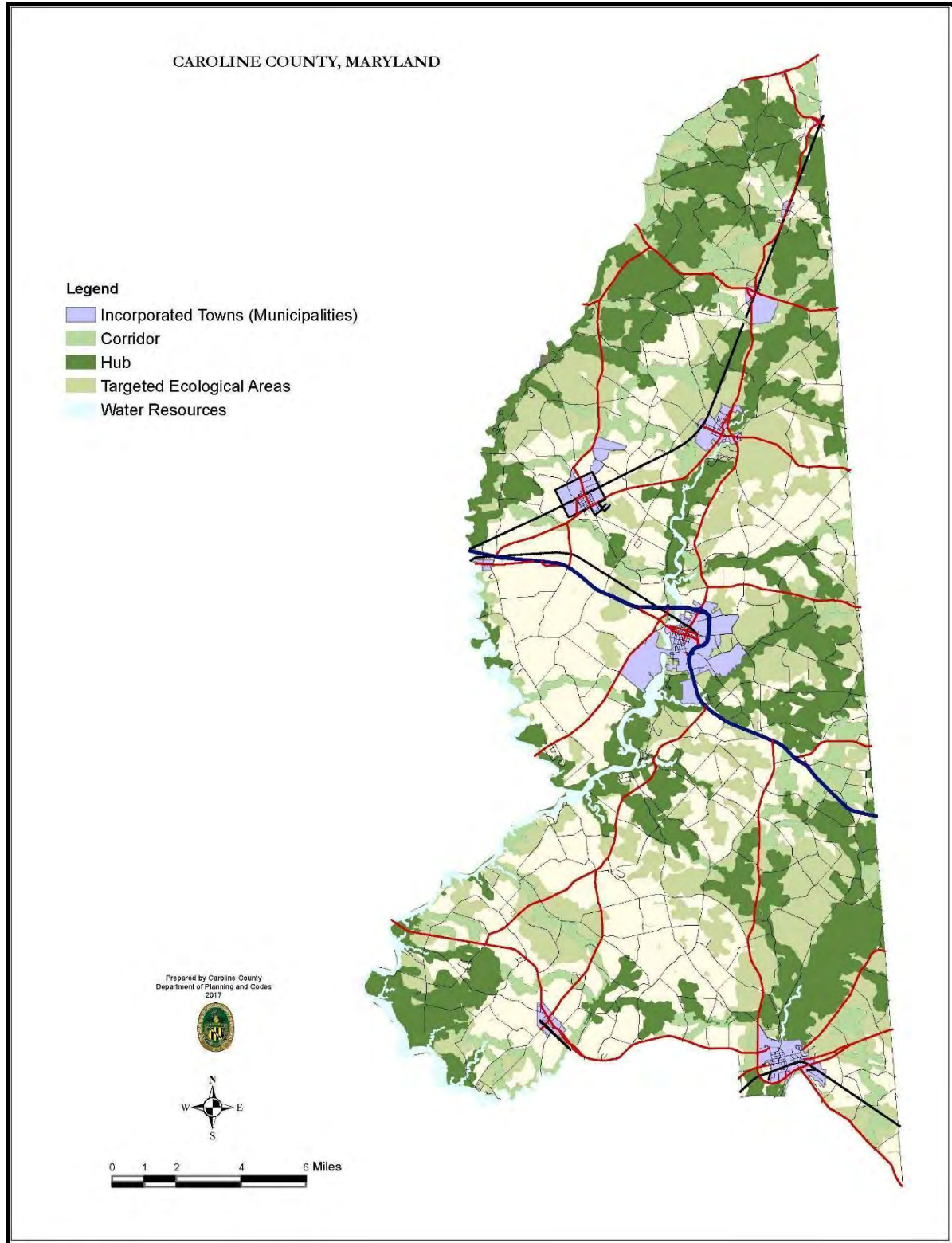
D. Land Development Regulations

State and federal requirements for the protection of environmental features are incorporated into the County's subdivision and zoning regulations and implemented through the development review process. The incorporated towns have their own regulations.

County requirements that support goals for natural resource protection include:

- Limits on subdivision in the Rural Zoning District. Only minor subdivisions are permitted (up to four lots), except in receiving areas which have been selected through the comprehensive planning process for rural residential development. Lots must be located in a manner that provides for compliance with environmental standards.
- Chesapeake Bay Critical Area: The County's Critical Area regulations, incorporated into the Zoning Regulations and enacted in accordance with the State's Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Law, protect surface water quality and habitat within 1,000 feet of the tidal high water line. Natural buffers are required within 100 feet of the tidal high water line.
- Streams: The local zoning regulations require 100 foot and 25 foot buffers from all perennial and intermittent streams, respectively. Agriculture and timbering within the stream buffers are governed by appropriate management plans and subject to approval by the Natural Resource Conservation Service or the County. Clearing of stream buffers for other purposes is discouraged and strictly managed to achieve no net loss of vegetated cover within riparian areas.

Map III-2 Targeted Ecological Areas



- Floodplain Ordinance (Chapter 108 of the County Code): The floodplain regulations are primarily intended to guard against loss of life and property, but have the added benefit of protecting sensitive riparian forest and riverine wetlands by restricting new construction within the 100-year floodplain. Federal and State floodplain standards are implemented through the Floodplain Overlay District.
- Forest Conservation Ordinance (Chapter 109 of the County Code): This ordinance, adopted in compliance with Maryland’s Forest Conservation Act, requires conservation of high-value forest resources when development occurs. The requirements are implemented through the County’s subdivision review process.
- Wetlands: Federal and State regulations protecting wetlands are implemented through the County’s development review process.
- Habitats of Threatened/Endangered Species: These are designated by the DNR. Projects located within a SSPRA are submitted by County reviewers to the State; comments received are addressed during the County’s review process. Areas identified by DNR as containing Forest Interior Dwelling Species are also addressed during the County’s project review and, if in the Critical Area, are sent to the Critical Area Commission for review.
- Stormwater Management (County Code Chapter 158) and Erosion and Sediment Control regulations (County Code Chapter 103): These requirements are essential for protected water quality when development occurs. Caroline County’s ordinances follow current Maryland standards, which require use of environmentally sensitive design.

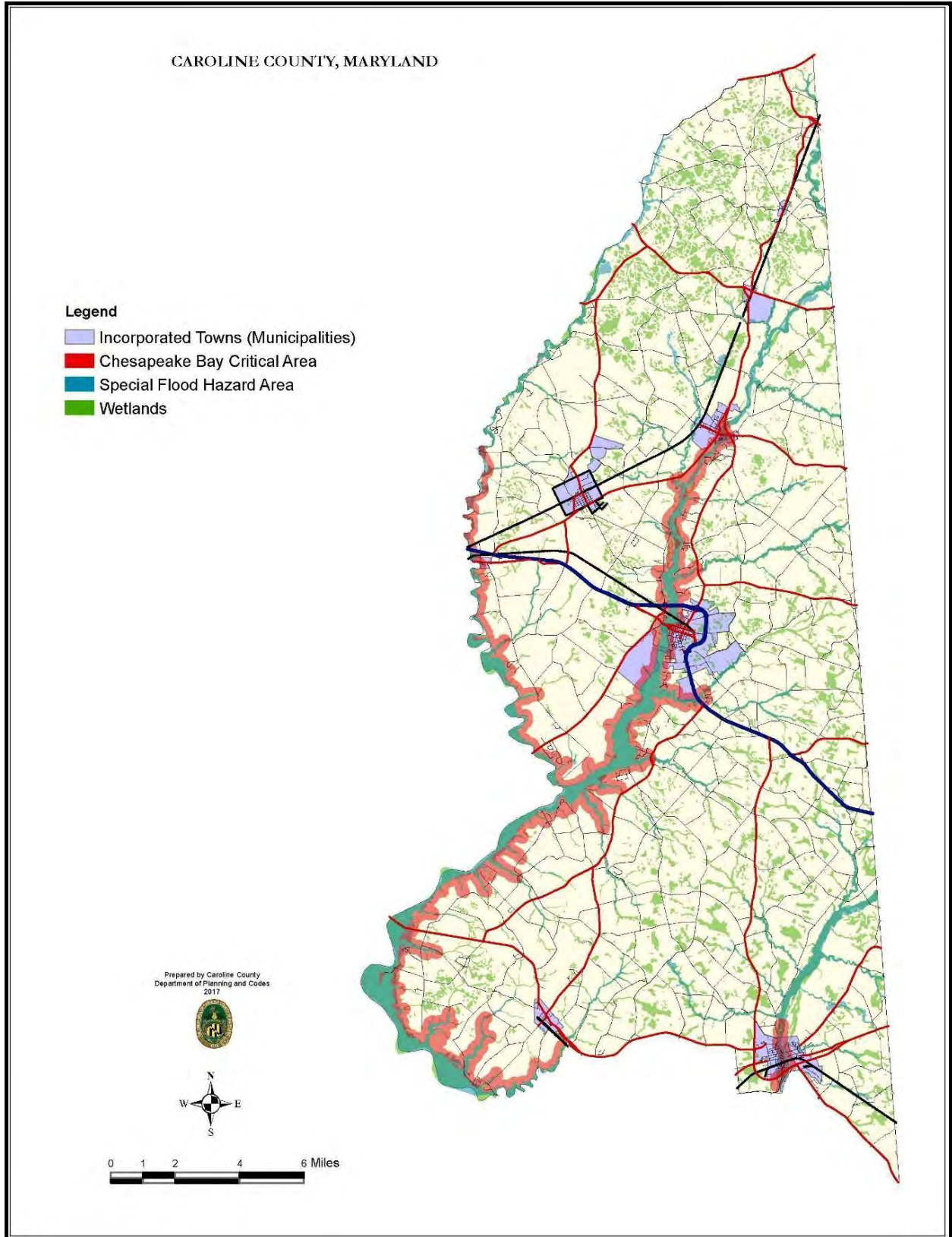
Map III-3 shows environmentally sensitive areas of the County that are specifically protected by development regulations that address water quality, habitat and flood vulnerability. Map III-4 shows habitat areas identified by the State that must be considered in the County’s review of development proposals. The County’s development regulations support the Maryland green infrastructure goals.



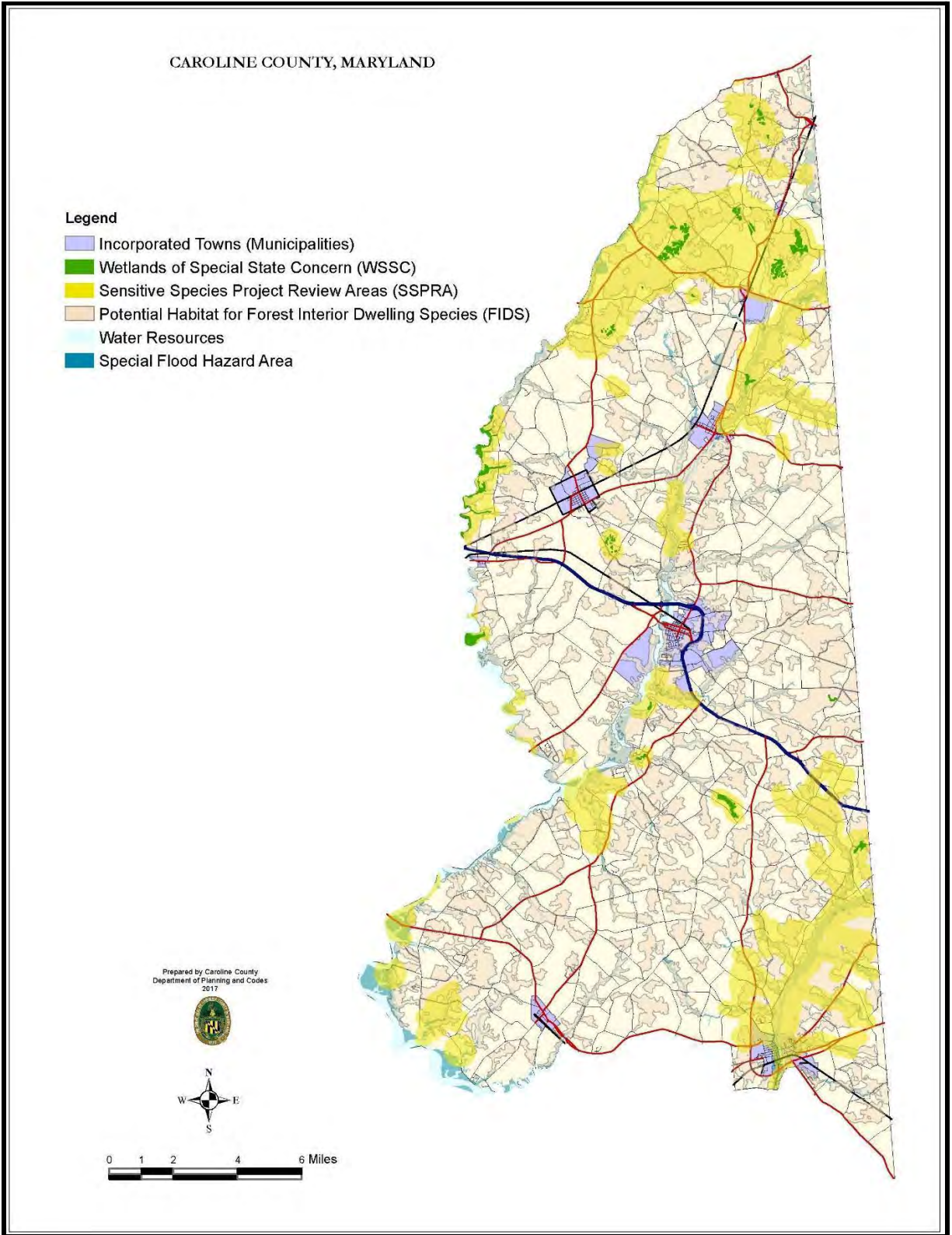
Photo by Will Parson/Chesapeake Bay Program

The data contained in these maps are separated to facilitate the reader’s understanding of the depth of natural resource protection policy applied in the land development review process. Map III-3 protection areas (Critical Areas, Flood Hazard Zones and Wetlands) are protected in federal or state law with prescriptive policy that limits the scope and density of development. The FIDS and SSPRA areas reflected in MAP III-4 require consideration, but state and federal laws do not restrict development in these areas like the required restrictions in the areas reflected in Map III-3.

Map III-3 Sensitive Areas Protected by Development Regulations



Map III-4 Habitat Areas



E. Data and Inventories

For County planning and review of development proposals, data on natural resources lands and protected areas are essential. The programs and requirements discussed generate information on natural resources. The County has data on land cover, natural resource lands, protected lands, and other features that impact development options. This includes GIS data from the State and aerial photographs.

The Department of Planning and Codes maintains information on resource land and preserved land resulting from subdivision and site plan approvals. The development process may create open space, forest reserve areas, stream buffers, critical area buffers, easements and similar features. These records are available primarily in paper files. A limited amount of the available data is integrated into a GIS database.

In 2016, the County contracted with the Geographic Technologies Group, Inc. to create a more detailed GIS database on parks and recreation sites owned by the County, State and municipalities. The database has detailed information on County-owned sites, and more limited information on municipal and State park land. Additional material will be added to this database.

6. Strategy for Natural Resource Conservation

This section describes Caroline County's program development strategy for natural resource conservation based on the background in this chapter.

The County has the physical resources and planning framework in place to achieve County and State goals for natural resource land conservation. The large State parks, County parks, Rural Legacy Areas, and private conservation areas provide a base of preserved land. The County's zoning, subdivision, stormwater management, Critical Area and floodplain regulations provide the regulatory framework to implement State and federal requirements that protect water quality, streams buffers, habitat and forests.

Fiscal constraints are an unavoidable reality. In concert with State, federal, municipal and private conservation partners, the County needs to use limited funds wisely, following policies established by the Comprehensive Plan and State programs. Strategies for the County's natural resource conservation goals include:

- **Continue to incorporate natural resource conservation and protection strategies in park development projects.**
 - The County will continue to set priorities for achieving natural resource conservation goals in conjunction with park acquisition and development goals. As parkland is developed and improved, the County will coordinate with partners to implement resource and environmental protection practices to create habitat, enhance water quality, improve stormwater management, and promote climate resiliency. These initiatives will provide opportunities for communities to engage

in local resource conservation efforts and connect with the land and water around them in a meaningful way.

- **Initiate development of a forest management plan.**
 - The 2010 Comprehensive Plan notes the importance of forests that are contiguous or connected with stream buffers throughout the County. The plan recommends that the County consider development of a Forest Management Plan:
 - A County Forest Management Plan would map and evaluate strategies to protect forested corridors and large tracts of forest land. At the urban scale, the Plan would recommend tree planting initiatives to enhance urban tree canopy and improve water quality in developed unincorporated areas of the County as well as municipalities. High priority areas may include locations next to natural drainage paths, where the volume of flow is high, and areas next to expanses of impervious surfaces – pavement and hard surfaces where water cannot infiltrate the ground.
- **Develop the Phase III WIP.**
 - The County will work with partners in the Maryland DNR and MDE to implement the strategies developed for the Phase III WIP for waterways in Caroline County.
- **Improve database capacity and information.**
 - Continue to refine and improve the granular level of data collection at the point of issue for land use permits. Include forest conservation easements and private (subdivision) open space.
 - Explore making County GIS data available to the public.
- **Develop Low Impact Subdivision Standards.**
 - The Comprehensive Plan recommends that the County enact low impact standards within its zoning, subdivision, and sediment and erosion control regulations. Such guidelines could provide for environmentally sensitive designs for site plans and for larger subdivisions within receiving areas or within the R-1 Residential zoning district.
- **Support Heritage Area and Scenic Byway Designations.**
 - The certified Heritage Area and Scenic Byways provide opportunity to coordinate County land preservation, economic development, historic preservation and park development goals. Continue to work with the initiatives found in the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area Management Plan and the Chesapeake Country (Mid-Shore) Corridor Management Plan, including focusing on the development of the Choptank Nature Park and the Medford House Interpretive Center in the Village of Choptank, which is on a branch of Michener's Chesapeake County Scenic By-Way and less than ¼ mile from the Choptank Marina.

Chapter IV Agricultural Land Preservation

1. Executive Summary

This chapter reviews Caroline County's implementation strategies to achieve State and County agricultural land preservation goals. Caroline County is among the 16 counties statewide with Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) and Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Funding (MALPF) certified agriculture land preservation programs.

Protecting farmland and natural resources from development and encouraging growth in and around identified growth areas are the fundamental goals of the Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Ordinance. The Comprehensive Plan emphasizes the rural character of Caroline County and the desire for agriculture to remain the predominant land use. Although suburban development and cultural changes are now encroaching on Caroline, it remains firmly committed to agriculture as its main industry, with agricultural preservation one of its highest priorities. The County has remained an agricultural community for over 300 years and farming continues to be a vital component of the regional economy as well as a defining aspect of County culture and daily life. Historically, the County has been identified as a leader in agricultural land preservation. The preservation of agriculture and forestry in rural areas as the dominant land use is a primary County long-range planning goal. The County has enacted local development codes designed to support and protect agriculture.

The County's Transferable Development Rights (TDR) Program was enacted in 1989 to direct future development away from rural, agricultural areas and towards areas in close proximity to infrastructure and more suitable for development. The County also is a robust partner in land preservation and conservation programs, including the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF); Rural Legacy; and Program Open Space (POS).



2. Agricultural Industry

Blessed with productive land and a rich cultural farming heritage, Caroline County has been an agricultural community for over 300 years. Agriculture is a vital component of the local economy and a defining aspect of the County's landscape and character.



The reported number of farms and acreage of farmland in Caroline County increased from 1997-2012 (Table IV-1). The USDA Census of Agriculture definition of a farm, which has not changed during this time, is “any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, in the census year.” The 2017 Census reported 128,052 acres of farmland. Leading crops in terms of acreage are soybeans, corn, and wheat.

	1997		2007		2012		2017		Change 1997 to 2017	
	Acres	% Acreage	Acres	% Acreage	Acres	% Acreage	Acres	% Acreage	Acres	% Change
Land in County	204,744		204,744		204,744		204,744		0	0%
Number and Acreage of Farms										
Number of Farms	556		574		658		588		32	6%
Land in farms	111,316	54%	131,277	54%	150,357	73%	128,052	63%	16,736	15%
Average farm size	212		229		229		218		6	3%
Land in Farms										
Cropland	94,605	85%	107,137	82%	121,386	81%	108,968	85%	14,363	15%
Woodland	12,714	11%	16,573	13%	18,615	12%	13,740	11%	1,026	8%
Other 1	3,997	4%	7,567	6%	10,355	7%	5,344	4%	1,347	34%
Total	111,316	100%	131,277	100%	150,357	100%	128,052	100%	16,736	15%
Selected products										
Grain	55,471	50%	69,993	53%	77,603	52%	60,063	47%	4,592	8%
Vegetables	6,756	6%	6,687	5%	6,897	5%	6,673	5%	-83	-1%
Poultry (broiler sales, thousands)	40,533	36%	50,524	38%	62,703	42%	59,634	47%	19,101	47%

U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1997, 2007, 2012, 2017

The 150,400 acres in farms reported by the 2012 Census is higher than the 116,000 acres shown as “agriculture” in Table IV-1, which is based on interpretation of satellite imagery. The Census of Agriculture is based on a census of farm operators, and would include other land categories (forest, barren and wetland acreages) located within working farms.

Some key points from Table IV-1 and Table IV-2 include:

- Average farm size, 218 acres in 2017, changed little from 1997-2012.
- Acreage and value of products increased in major sectors: crops, poultry, and other livestock.
- In 2012, crops generated 33 percent of the market value of production and livestock generated 67 percent.
- Poultry is the leading agricultural product, accounting for \$158 million, 92 percent of the livestock market value.

Agricultural Product	1997		2007		2012		\$2,017		Change 1997 to 2012	
	Market Value of Production \$ millions	Percent Production Value	Market Value of Production \$ millions	Percent Production Value	Market Value of Production \$ millions	Percent Production Value	Market Value of Production \$ millions	Percent Production Value	Market Value of Production \$ millions	Percent Change
Crops (including nursery & greenhouse)	\$28.7	30%	\$48.9	26%	\$85.5	33%	\$70.8	26%	\$42.1	47%
Livestock (including poultry)	\$66.4	70%	\$137.0	74%	\$172.4	67%	\$206.6	74%	\$140.2	111%
Total	\$95.1	100%	\$185.9	100%	\$257.9	100%	\$277.4	100%	\$182.3	92%
Poultry, eggs (subcategory of livestock)	\$61.0	64%	\$126.7	68%	\$157.8	61%	\$193.3	70%	\$132.3	117%

U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1997, 2007, 2012, 2017

3. Inventory of Preserved Agricultural Land

A. Overview

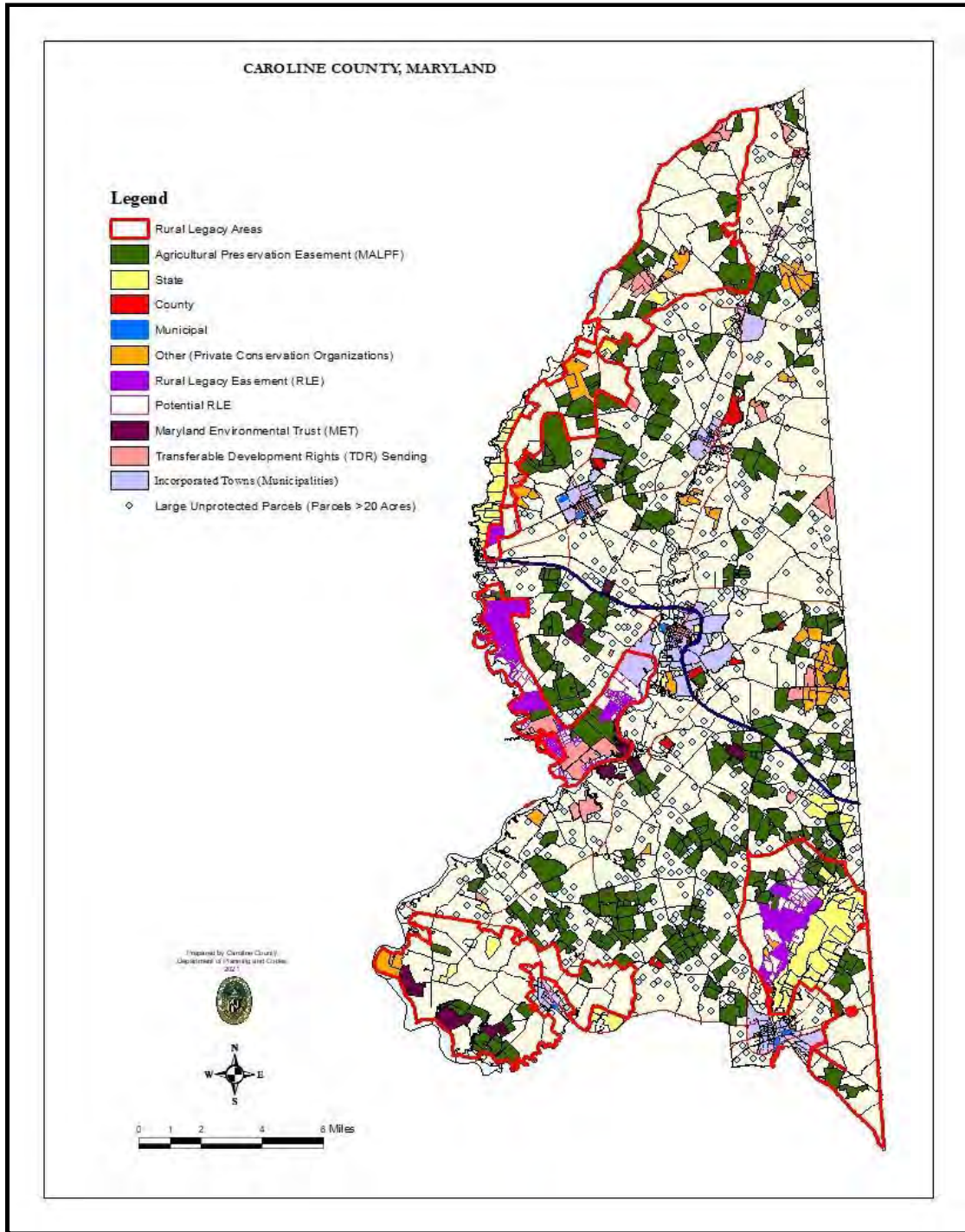
Caroline County uses easement acquisition and land use regulations to achieve farmland preservation goals. In addition, Caroline County recognizes the importance of maintaining agriculture as an economically viable industry. A healthy farm economy is the foundation of a successful agricultural land preservation program.

As indicated by Table IV-3, the County has 42,754 preserved acres as of September, 2016. Permanent easements protect most of this acreage - easements established by the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, Rural Legacy program and private land trusts or conservancies. The managed forest lands are owned by or preserved through conservation easements held by DNR and used for forestry. Table IV-3 and Map IV-1 summarize these organizations' accomplishments in permanently protecting private lands with conservation easements.

Agricultural Lands	Acres
Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation	33,388
Rural Legacy – Eastern Shore Heartland	1,390
Rural Legacy - Tuckahoe	1,924
Maryland Environmental Trust/Eastern Shore Land Conservancy	1,748
Managed forest lands	3,331
TDR's Sent (Development Rights Lifted)	2,571
Total Preserved Agricultural Lands	42,754

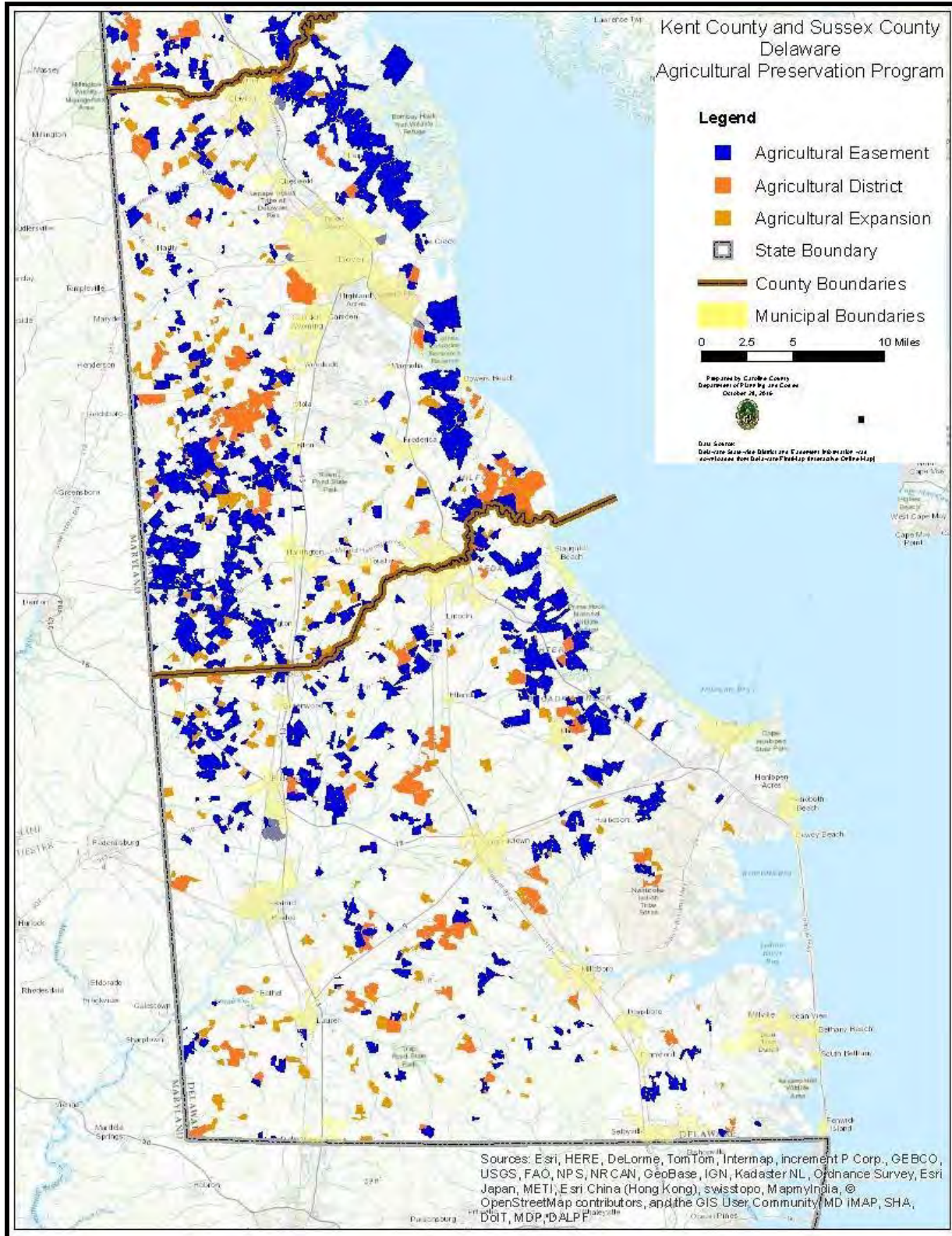
Source: Department of Planning and Codes

Map IV-1 Caroline County Preserved Agricultural Land and Large Unprotected Parcels



Caroline County borders Kent and Sussex Counties, Delaware. Map IV-2 shows the agricultural preservation program in these counties. A concentration of agricultural districts and easements east of Caroline County's eastern border, roughly between MD 404 and MD 287 (DE 10), forms the potential for an interstate swath.

Map IV-2 Regional Land Preservation, Kent and Sussex Counties, Delaware



Source: Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Foundation

B. Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF)

As of June, 2020, Caroline County had 33,388 acres permanently preserved through MALPF. Caroline County has participated in the MALPF Program since 1980 and ranks second in the State for number of acres preserved under the program.¹ MALPF easements and districts are located throughout the County but with concentrations in the southern part of the County between Denton and Federalsburg, and in an arc, west of Denton extending clockwise from MD 328 to Goldsboro and Henderson (Map IV-1).

C. Rural Legacy Areas

The County and State have designated two rural legacy areas (RLA) in Caroline County: the Eastern Shore Heartland and the Tuckahoe areas. The Rural Legacy Program, run by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, delineates a geographic area of a County in need of focused land conservation efforts, and acquires easements from willing landowners within that area. Caroline County's portion of the Tuckahoe RLA totals approximately 24,998 acres between Denton and Hillsboro south of MD 404. Caroline County's portion of the Eastern Shore Heartland RLA totals approximately 29,483 acres north of Federalsburg and west of Marshyhope Creek. (Map IV-1).

As of October, 2021, 3023.58 acres have been preserved under easement in the County Rural Legacy Areas. Both RLAs were established in 1998 as part of a roughly 400,000-acre area known as the "Agricultural Security Corridor."² This area of the mid-eastern shore involves portions of five counties, and is defined by the presence of high quality agricultural soils, a concentration of agricultural infrastructure, and extensive agricultural easements.

D. Managed Forest Lands

More than 3,300 acres in the County are owned by and/or subject to conservation easements held by DNR and managed for timber harvesting and sustainable forestry. These include Caroline County's portion of the Chesapeake Forest Lands, totaling approximately 1,280 acres. This is a fraction of the entire Chesapeake Forest Lands, more than 58,000 acres of timber harvesting area in five eastern shore Counties, now owned and managed by the State as sustainable forest. In addition to maintaining a forestry industry, these lands provide natural resource benefits by preserving forest, wetlands, and Forest Interior Dwelling Bird Habitat. They serve as a model for sustainable forestry practices that could be implemented at other managed forests. These lands are available to the public for hunting.



¹ Source: MD Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, FY2020 Annual Report. Carroll County is the leading County.

² The Agricultural Security Corridor concept was developed by the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy.

E. Land Trusts

The Eastern Shore Land Conservancy (ESLC), based in Queen Anne’s County, holds approximately 1,700 acres in easements in Caroline County. Most are co-held with the Maryland Environmental Trust. The ESLC helped sponsor the Eastern Shore Heartland and Tuckahoe Rural Legacy Areas and has engaged in broader land preservation activities including the development of Eastern Shore 2010: A Regional Vision. The Maryland Environmental Trust (MET), a statewide land trust, holds the easements on some of the Rural Legacy areas and co-holds easements with the ESLC.

F. TDR Sending Areas

The remaining acreage is preserved not by easements, but through recorded subdivision plats as required by the County’s Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program, described below in the section on Implementation.

4. County Implementation Program

To achieve the County’s goal of permanently preserving 135,000 acres of agricultural land, an additional 92,246 acres would need to be protected through the implementation programs described in this section.

A. Priority Preservation Areas and Growth Tiers

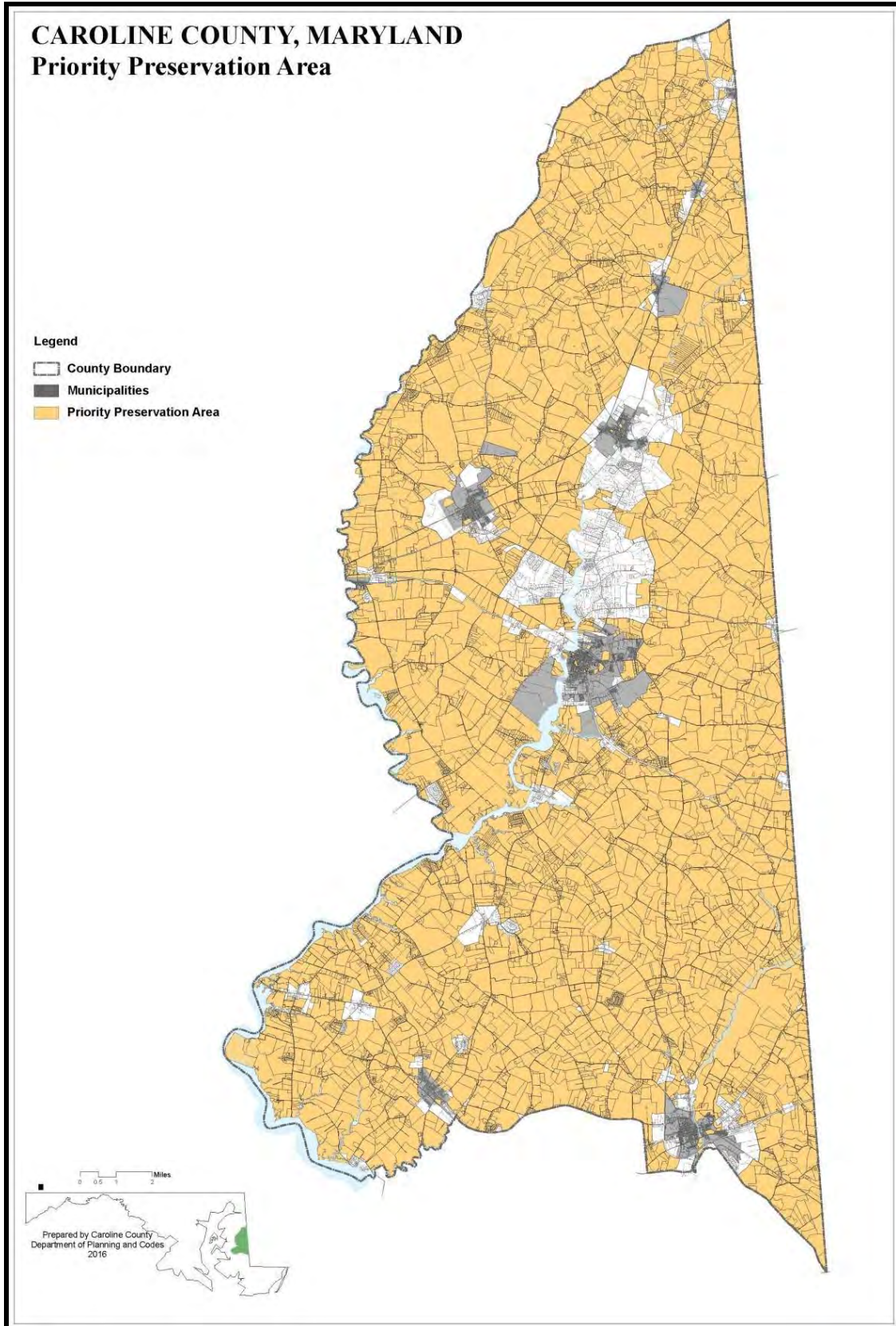
A Priority Preservation Area (PPA) is an area delineated by the County and certified by the State as “can support agricultural activities”, governed by local policies that limit development, and suitable to be the focus of the County’s efforts to preserve farmland.

The 2015 update to the County’s Comprehensive Plan designates a PPA encompassing 178,192 acres (Map IV-3). This PPA was defined after the County completed its comprehensive zoning process in 2013 and includes all areas zoned R (Rural) except parcels that the County Commissioners have designated as TDR Receiving Areas; these are portions of the R zone more suitable for residential development.

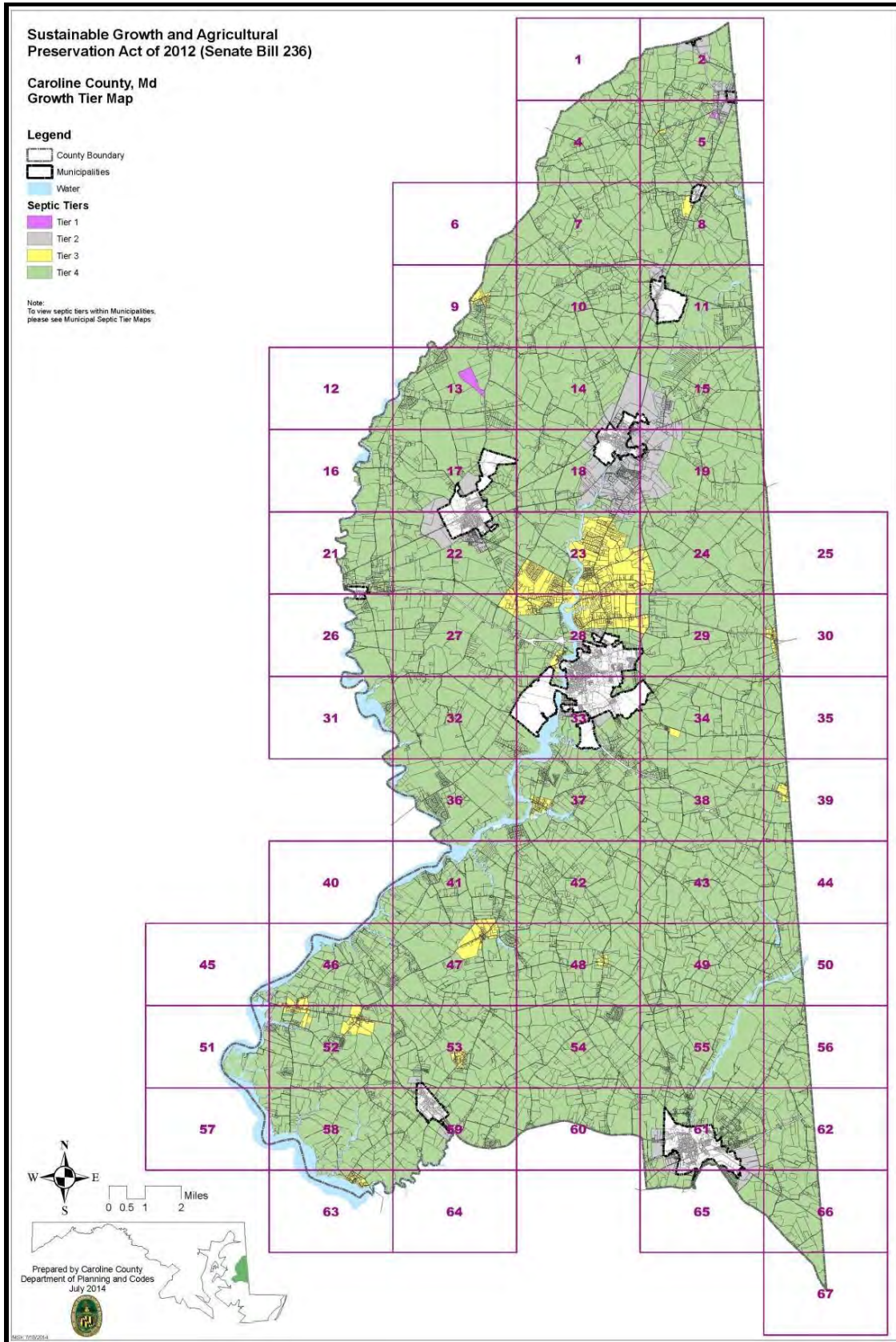
In 2014, the County Commissioners adopted the Growth Tiers Map required for compliance with Maryland’s Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012 (Map IV-4). Within the Tier 4 area, only minor subdivisions (up to four lots) are permitted. The Tier 4 areas include all land in the R zoning district, except the receiving area for the TDR program.

In the R zoning district, major subdivisions are permitted only in TDR “receiving areas” (Map IV-5). Major subdivisions can only occur by transferring development rights off land in the predominant, “sending” portions of the Rural district.

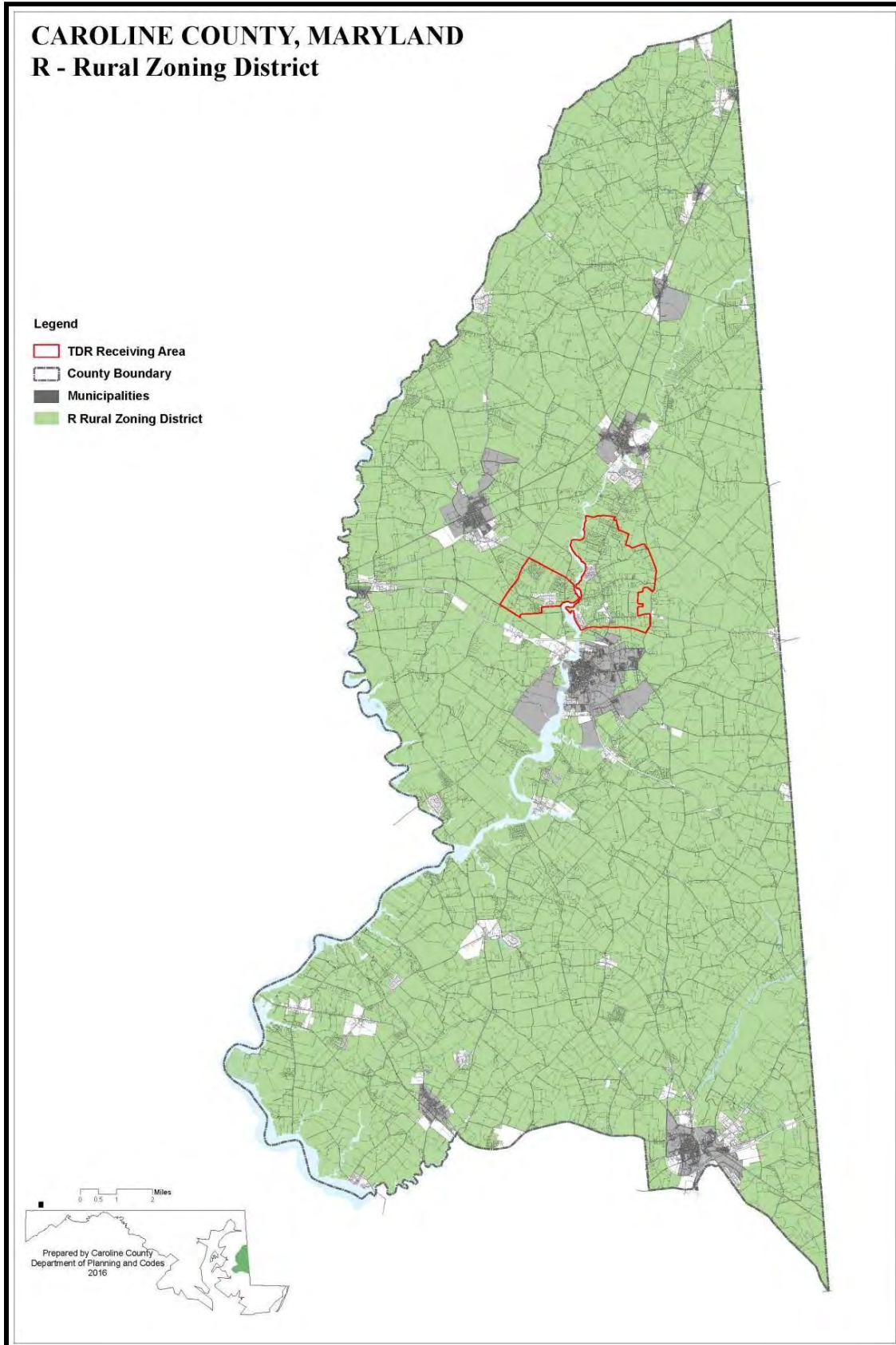
Map IV-3 Caroline County Priority Preservation Area



Map IV-4 Caroline County Growth Tiers, 2014



Map IV-5 Caroline County Rural District and TDR Sending Areas, 2016



The County's PPA, Tiers map and TDR program together focus farmland preservation efforts in areas of the County where preservation will most effectively support the long-term sustainability of farming. To achieve the County's goal of preserving 135,000 acres, a total of 76 percent of the PPA would need to be preserved. The 42,754 acres already preserved (Table IV-2), all located in the PPA, represent 24 percent of the PPA and almost a third of the County's 135,000-acre goal.

The 178,192-acre PPA is an increase from the 176,760 acres identified as the PPA in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan. The 2010 PPA included all areas not within a municipal growth area or priority funding area, or designated to be TDR receiving areas. The 2015 PPA update reflected changes to County zoning adopted in 2013, including the following major changes:

- Adding to the PPA land that was rezoned from R-1 (Residential) to R (Rural) and removing from the PPA any land in the R-1 zoning district.
- Removing land within small rural villages that was rezoned to Village Center or Village Neighborhood.
- Removing land around the Towns of Denton, Greensboro and Marydel have been identified as future growth areas.

B. Funding for Easement Acquisition

The State of Maryland has provided most of the easement purchase funding in Caroline County, supplemented by local and federal funds. The County has used a variety of funding sources to supplement the MALPF program funds, including its portion of the County's agricultural transfer tax and a County excise tax. Table IV-4 summarizes this funding since 1994.

1. Agricultural Transfer Tax

When agricultural land in Maryland is sold for development, a small percentage of the transaction value, known as transfer taxes, is paid to recapture, in part, the preferential taxation rate the land has enjoyed due to its previous agricultural use. In FY 2011, the County's Land Preservation Program obtained certification by the State. Thus, the County retains 75% of agricultural transfer taxes. The remainder of the transfer taxes is forwarded to the State for use on statewide agricultural land preservation.

2. Rural Legacy

Since 1998 the State has awarded almost \$4 million in Rural Legacy funds for easement acquisitions in the Tuckahoe and Eastern Shore Heartland Rural Legacy Areas (Table IV-3).

3. Federal Funds

The Federal government has provided relatively small amounts of funding for the purchase of development rights through the Farmland Preservation Program of the Natural Resource Conservation Service in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Since 1998, Caroline County has received approximately \$1,164,000 which was applied to the MALPF matching funds program.



4. County Funds

In December 2018 Caroline County switched from the excise tax to an impact fee, and no longer received income from impact fees. Since 2018 the County Commissioners decided to transfer monies into this fund on a predetermined yearly basis. Annually the Commissioners determine an amount. Since 2018 this has been \$20,000. (Table IV-4).

Table IV-4 Agricultural Preservation Funding Summary

Year	County funding: Agricultural Transfer Tax*	County funding: Excise Tax	MALPF**	Federal Farmland Protection Program	Tuckahoe Rural Legacy	Marshyhope Rural Legacy	Total
1994	\$ 51,363	\$ 450	\$ 165,929				\$ 217,742
1995	\$ 25,281	\$ 1,600	\$ 73,333				\$ 100,214
1996	\$ 32,784	\$ 4,500	\$ 157,902				\$ 195,186
1997	\$ 41,606	\$ 5,850	\$ 330,097				\$ 377,553
1998	\$ 42,781	\$ 4,850	\$ 576,059	\$ 77,777	\$ 539,808		\$ 1,241,275
1999	\$ 51,711	\$ 8,750	\$ 492,252				\$ 552,713
2000	\$ 78,336	\$ 11,250	\$ 1,186,898		\$ 530,280	\$ 130,235	\$ 1,936,999
2001	\$ 54,645	\$ 17,500	\$ 319,833		\$ 109,994	\$ 209,896	\$ 711,868
2002	\$ 84,330	\$ 16,950	\$ 631,006	\$ 108,720	\$ 1,299,539	\$ 1,127,429	\$ 3,267,974
2003	\$ 122,313	\$ 16,050	\$ 469,181	\$ 217,400			\$ 824,944
2004	\$ 338,262	\$ 31,150		\$ 370,000			\$ 739,412
2005	\$ 201,007	\$ 45,750	\$ 530,834				\$ 777,591
2006	\$ 361,345	\$ 19,750	\$ 2,032,151				\$ 2,413,246
2007	\$ 154,345	\$ 21,500	\$ 3,173,893				\$ 3,349,738
2008	\$ 67,814	\$ 24,850	\$ 2,499,096				\$ 2,591,760
2009	\$ 12,758	\$ 9,850	\$ 668,172	\$ 390,000		\$ 285,235	\$ 1,366,015
2010	\$ 112,399	\$ 13,700					\$ 126,099
2011	\$ 212,139	\$ 14,450	\$ 507,157				\$ 733,746
2012	\$ 17,272		\$ 546,587				\$ 563,859
2013	\$ 7,818						\$ 7,818
2014	\$ 17,043				\$ 70,000		\$ 87,043
2015	\$ (830)		\$ 1,229,320		\$ 544,040		\$ 1,772,530
2016	\$ 1,320		\$ 707,399				\$ 708,719
2018	\$ 1,482		\$ 576,413				\$ 577,895
2019	\$ 10,155	\$ 20,000					\$ 30,155
2020	\$ 11,679	\$ 20,000					\$ 31,679
Total	\$ 2,111,158	\$ 308,750	\$ 16,873,512	\$ 1,163,897	\$ 3,093,661	\$ 1,752,795	\$ 25,241,939
						Annual Average	\$ 970,844

*Before FY2011, the County retained one third of this amount for use on agricultural land preservation activities. As of FY2011,, 75% is retained.

**Years 2003-2004, 2009-2010, 2011-2012, 2013-2014 and 2015-2016 were combined due to funding constraints.

C. Land Use Management Authority

1. Zoning and Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program

The R-Rural zoning district, in conjunction with the TDR program, is protective of farmland and the rural landscape. The Rural District comprises approximately 185,000 acres, 96 percent of the County.

The County's 2013 Comprehensive Zoning strengthened the protection of the rural landscape by increasing the area covered by the R-Rural zoning district from about 130,000 acres to 185,000 acres. Most of the area rezoned was previously in the R-1 (Single-Family Residential) zoning district. Future residential subdivision in the County will be directed to the growth areas around the municipalities (generally after annexation), infill within rural villages, and infill within the R-1 areas.

Caroline County's Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program preserves a "sending" parcel by allowing the landowners there to sever the right to develop the land and then sell that development right to a "receiving" area where development is desired. This TDR program, created in 1989 and refined several times since, has resulted in the removal of subdivision rights on 2,571 acres. Further subdivision on the sending parcel is prohibited by the recorded subdivision plat and the County's zoning ordinances.

Receiving areas for the TDR program are evaluated and defined each year by the County Commissioners and currently encompass 4,640 acres. The receiving areas are portions of the Rural district located primarily between the towns of Denton and Greensboro. This area already had several large subdivisions at the time the TDR program was developed. State Highway 313 connects the two towns and bisects the receiving area.

The receiving area is also bisected by the Choptank River. Protection of the river corridor is important when subdivision occurs, and is accomplished through the Critical Area 100-foot buffer along the river. The Comprehensive Plan recommends that the County enact compact subdivision guidelines or standards for receiving areas.

The Rural zoning district does not permit major subdivision except in designated TDR receiving areas, limiting subdivision elsewhere to no more than four lots from each original parcel.

2. Right to Farm

Caroline County adopted a right to farm ordinance in 1997 to encourage the protection of the County's agricultural lands by preventing nuisance lawsuits that could arise from residential growth in agricultural areas. These provisions thus help to protect the economic viability of farming in Caroline County.

D. Evaluation of the Land Preservation Program

1. Funding

Since 1982, Caroline County has used State and local funding to place permanent easements on over 40,000 acres of agricultural land.

Caroline County relies primarily on the MALPF program for permanent preservation of agricultural land. Although the number of applications varies, interest in the program is still substantial. Table IV-5 shows that in all the years since 1995 the number of easement applications has greatly exceeded the number of easement offers. In the past ten years, the interest has been greater than ever, with generally more than 50 applications per two-year cycle, while the number of easement purchase offers has been less than at any point during the program's history, with only one or two easements purchased per year.

Working with the ESLC, the County has made effective use of the Rural Legacy funds, although funding for this program has varied greatly over the years. Due to the uncertainty of annual funding, the County cannot place great weight on this program to achieve its land preservation goals, but will continue to use it to supplement other land preservation efforts.

2. Land Use Management Tools

Caroline County's zoning is very protective of agricultural land. In combination with relatively low development pressure, this zoning has been effective in helping protect the County's agricultural land base. However, the County has an imbalance of sending and receiving areas. If growth pressures increase and more landowners want to sell development rights from the sending areas, there would eventually be insufficient receiving areas to accommodate the development.

The County has sought to reach agreements with the towns to establish receiving areas. The towns have been responsive to these discussions but no concrete results have been achieved. Such a program would require carefully calibrated zoning in the towns, with two density levels depending upon whether transferable development rights were used.

Table IV-5 Caroline County Easement Applications under MALPF

Fiscal Year	# of Easement Applications	Applications Appraised	Easement Offers
2019	28	12	2
2018	39	12	4
2015/2016	52	8	1
2013/2014	53	8	2
2011/2012	37	16	1
2009/2010	55	16	4
2008	55	55	6
2007	41	41	12
2006	12	12	9
2005	17	13	13*
2003/2004	37	37	5
2002	35	28	13
2001	20	16	2
2000	39	31	16
1999	36	30	6
1998	39	31	7
1997	28	22	6
1996	25	20	2
1995	21	11	2

*Eleven of these were rejected reflecting a significant increase in fair market values.

Source: Caroline County Department of Planning and Codes

While coordination with the towns is a worthwhile goal that can be pursued over the long term, the County must also seek solutions within its own zoning districts to establish additional receiving areas to balance its TDR program. Current low development pressure provides a window of opportunity for this important planning effort.

3. Combined Performance of Preservation Tools

Since 1980 over 42,700 acres of farmland have been protected in Caroline County, and the rate of farmland loss has been less than in some other counties. In recent years, only minor subdivisions proposed (four or fewer lots) have been proposed in the County. No major subdivisions, Critical Area growth applications or municipal annexations are pending.

The healthy farm economy, low development pressure and protective zoning regulations are limiting loss of farmland to development. The amount of actively farmed land reported by landowners to the Census of Agriculture increased steadily between 1997 and 2012 (Table IV-1), pointing to the health of the farm industry. Demand for new homes has been met through minor subdivisions and some growth in the towns.

5. Strategy for Agricultural Land Preservation

A. Progress Toward Goals

The following table compares the strategies established in the 2017 LPPRP for continuing and improving the agricultural land preservation program.

Caroline County 2017 LPPRP: Strategies for Agricultural Land Preservation	Progress on Implementation since 2017
Develop an interjurisdictional TDR/PDR program in conjunction with the municipalities.	Progressing
As part of the Comprehensive Plan update, examine the balance between TDR sending and receiving areas and establish policies and procedures that balance TDR supply and demand.	No Progress
Develop and enact in the Subdivision Ordinance low impact subdivision standards that enhance the TDR program by encouraging or requiring receiving areas to use compact subdivision plans that retain some farmland or natural resource lands.	No Progress
As fiscal constraints allow, increase County funding of agricultural land preservation, especially if the amount of subdivision activity increases.	No Change
Continue to efficiently administer the easement application program to use available funds from the MALPF and Rural Legacy programs, supplemented where possible by County	Progressing

funds, to purchase easements from willing sellers in the County.	
Propose low impact development design regulations that would encourage compact subdivisions, thereby preserving the remainder for active farming and open space	Not yet accomplished. This is still a goal for the County and is included as a strategy both in this chapter and in Chapter V, Natural Resource Conservation.
Work to increase Caroline average annual preservation acreage to 3000 acres through inter- jurisdictional TDR/PDR programs and an increase in the agricultural excise tax.	Annual preservation acreage has been low due to funding constraints and low development pressure. Absent a large County funding commitment, which is not realistic now, the County government has little control over the two factors that influence the rate of agricultural land preservation - the amount of subdivision activity in the County (which would result in more use of the TDR program) and State funding levels.
Continue to support agricultural land preservation with local funding. To the extent possible, considering fiscal constraints, the County should make every effort to continue the annual \$1 million fund, by making additional contributions in future years from the general fund or from other sources such as an expanded agricultural preservation excise tax program.	Not accomplished due to fiscal constraints.
Continue to support and work with the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy	The County continues to work with the ESLC.

B. Strategies for Agricultural Land Preservation

To continue to protect its agricultural land base and farm industry, the County must maintain its growth management tools - rural zoning, TDR program, and policies that direct most new growth to towns and villages where infrastructure and services are planned to serve new homes and businesses. In addition, the County must continue to use available funds for easement purchase.

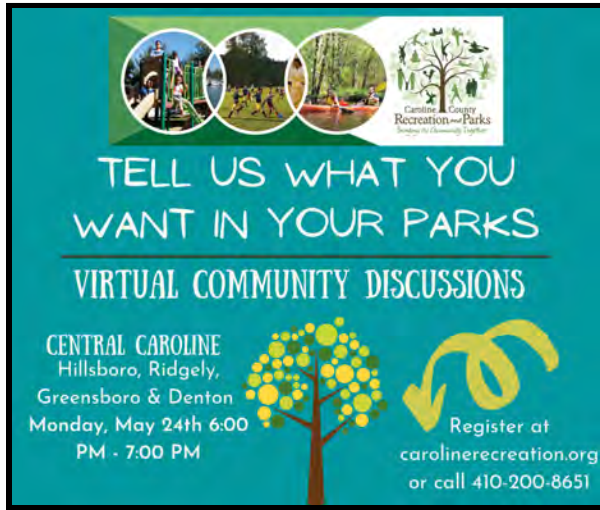
This LPPRP continues the following strategies to achieve its agricultural preservation goals:

- Develop an interjurisdictional TDR/PDR program in conjunction with the municipalities.
- As part of the Comprehensive Plan update, examine the balance between TDR sending and receiving areas and establish policies and procedures that balance TDR supply and demand.

- Develop and enact in the Subdivision Ordinance low impact subdivision standards that enhance the TDR program by encouraging or requiring receiving areas to use compact subdivision plans that retain some farmland or natural resource lands.
- As fiscal constraints allow, increase County funding of agricultural land preservation, especially if the amount of subdivision activity increases.
- Continue to efficiently administer the easement application program to use available funds from the MALPF and Rural Legacy programs, supplemented where possible by County funds, to purchase easements from willing sellers in the County.

COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUPS

SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTION



TELL US WHAT YOU WANT IN YOUR PARKS

VIRTUAL COMMUNITY DISCUSSIONS

CENTRAL CAROLINE
Hillsboro, Ridgely,
Greensboro & Denton
Monday, May 24th 6:00
PM - 7:00 PM

Register at
carolinerecreation.org
or call 410-200-8651

The promotional graphic features a teal background. At the top, there are four circular images showing park activities: a playground, a soccer field, a canoe on a river, and a tree with people. To the right is the logo for 'Caroline County Recreation and Parks' with the tagline 'Designed by Community Together'. The text is centered and uses a mix of white and yellow fonts. A stylized tree with yellow leaves and a yellow ribbon graphic are positioned on the right side.



TELL US WHAT YOU WANT IN YOUR PARKS

VIRTUAL COMMUNITY DISCUSSIONS

NORTH CAROLINE
Marydel, Henderson,
Templeville & Goldsboro
Thursday, May 27th 6:00
PM - 7:00 PM

Register at
carolinerecreation.org
or call 410-200-8651

This promotional graphic has a light green background. It includes the same four circular images and logo as the first graphic. The text is centered in a dark green font. A stylized tree with green leaves and a green ribbon graphic are on the right side.



TELL US WHAT YOU WANT IN YOUR PARKS

VIRTUAL COMMUNITY DISCUSSIONS

SOUTH CAROLINE
Preston & Federsburg
Tuesday, May 25th 6:00
PM - 7:00 PM

Register at
carolinerecreation.org
or call 410-200-8651

The promotional graphic features a yellow background. It contains the same four circular images and logo. The text is centered in a dark green font. A stylized tree with orange and green leaves and a green ribbon graphic are on the right side.

COMMUNITY FLYER

TELL US WHAT YOU WANT IN YOUR PARKS

VIRTUAL COMMUNITY DISCUSSIONS

CENTRAL CAROLINE

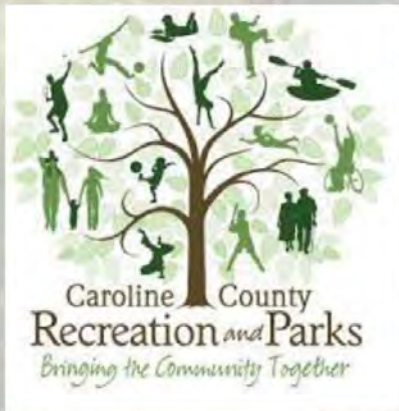
Hillsboro, Ridgely,
Greensboro & Denton
Monday, May 24th
6:00 PM - 7:00 PM

SOUTH CAROLINE

Preston & Federalburg
Tuesday, May 25th
6:00 PM - 7:00 PM

NORTH CAROLINE

Marydel, Henderson,
Templeville & Goldsboro
Thursday, May 27th
6:00 PM - 7:00 PM



Register at
carolinerecreation.org
or call 410-200-8651



SCAN ME

COMMUNITY SURVEY PROMOTION

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS



COMMUNITY FLYERS

TELL US WHAT YOU
WANT IN YOUR PARKS

RECREATION & PARKS
COMMUNITY SURVEY



CUÉNTANOS QUE
QUIERES EN TUS
PARQUES

RECREACIÓN Y PARQUES
ENCUESTA COMUNITARIA



INSERT FOR WATER BILL



**CAROLINE COUNTY
RECREATION & PARKS
COMMUNITY SURVEY**



**TELL US WHAT
YOU WANT IN
YOUR PARKS**

Visit: carolinerecreation.org
OR use camera to read QR code



**CAROLINE COUNTY
RECREACIÓN Y PARQUES
ENCUESTA COMUNITARIA**



**CUÉNTANOS QUE
QUIERES EN TUS
PARQUES**

Visita: carolinerecreation.org
O use la camara de su telefono para leer el codigo



PARTNER FOCUS GROUP EMAIL INVITE



CAROLINE COUNTY REC & PARKS
LAND PRESERVATION, PARKS AND
RECREATION PLANNING

JOIN US FOR OUR PARTNER FOCUS GROUP!

Monday, August 2, 2021
3:00 - 5:00 PM
Caroline County
Recreation & Parks
107 South 4th St.
Denton, MD



SIGN UP NOW



APPENDIX A-2: Advisory Board Updates

RECREATION & PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

Wednesday, January 6, 2021; Fretterd Community Center, Ground Floor
Conference Room or Via ZOOM

Meeting: 6:30-7:45 p.m.

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://zoom.us/j/95803823653?pwd=Uzc1dk9BdlJlV0FIVDdFQUZPV1hxQT09>

Meeting ID: 958 0382 3653

Passcode: 597779

One tap mobile

8884754499,,95803823653#

US Toll-free

8335480276,,95803823653#

US Toll-free

Dial by your location

888 475 4499 US Toll-free

833 548 0276 US Toll-free

833 548 0282 US Toll-free

877 853 5257 US Toll-free

Meeting ID: 958 0382 3653

Find your local number:

<https://zoom.us/j/95803823653>

- I. Board President Welcome (Maureen Keogh) 6:30-6:35
 - Introduction of newest Board members and new slate of officers.
- II. NEW BUSINESS 6:35-7:00
 - a. 2022 Advisory Board Leadership Slate: Maureen Keogh, President; Ross Harper, Vice President; Chip Broadwater, Past President.
 - Board Action: Motion to accept slate
 - b. FY 2022 Budget Development Calendar for Department Requests
Staff update on current directives for budget submissions for July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022.
 - Board Action: Public Hearing Attendance
 - c. Capital Budget Request Draft
Staff discussion of project priorities for park and facility construction or repair, vehicle replacement or equipment purchase.
 - Board Action/Discussion: questions, revised priority recommendation, additional projects or shelved projects from FY2022 list
 - Invite motion to endorse capital budget request.

Three Minute Board Member Orientation Briefing: What is the budget plan and how are they monitored by the Advisory Board?

III. OLD BUSINESS<Action Items> 7:00-7:25

a. Public Support for Program Open Space

Staff update on progress following November discussion to enhance visibility of Program Open Space support. [Star Democrat article on Dec.30](#)

Three Minute Board Member Orientation Briefing: What is Program Open Space and why does it matter so much to Caroline County citizens?

b. Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan, 2022

Staff update on timeline implementation progress for submission of the state-required planning document. [Executive Summary of 2017 Plan.](#)

c. CCRP Advisory Board 2021 Board Orientation

What are the duties and [responsibilities](#) of Advisory Board membership?

IV. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS – SUBMITTED FOR BOARD MEMBER REVIEW 7:30-7:40 p.m.

Review/Approval of [Meeting Summary](#) from November, 2020 meeting

Division Updates [Program Services](#), [Parks and Capital Projects](#)

- Board Action/Discussion: Address any question, Request Motion to file for the record

V. BOARD MEMBER CONCERNS/UPDATES 7:45-7:55 p.m.

Opportunity to raise questions, request agenda time for upcoming meetings, and provide updates on public recreation related events, resources or concerns.

RECREATION & PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

Wednesday, September 1, 2021; Fretterd Community Center, Ground Floor
Conference Room or Via ZOOM

Supper: 6:00-6:30 p.m.

Meeting: 6:30-7:45 p.m.

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/9678156542>
Meeting ID: 967 815 6542
Passcode: 986085
One tap mobile
888 475 4499

MEETING POSTPONED UNTIL SEPTEMBER 8, 2021

- I. Board President Welcome (Maureen Keogh) 6:30-6:35
- Special Guest: Kat Stork-Blaher, Shore Strategies

- II. OLD BUSINESS 6:35-7:35

What does the public think about the status of community recreation and park services in Caroline County?

Preview of the LPPRP Public Engagement Process & Results

[Presentation](#) and *Board Discussion* facilitated by Kat Stork-Blaher

- III. NEW BUSINESS 7:35

There is no new business proposed for this meeting

- IV. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS – SUBMITTED FOR BOARD MEMBER REVIEW 7:35-7:45 p.m.

Review/Approval of [Meeting Summary](#) from May 2021 meeting

Division Updates [Program Services, Capital and Park Operations, Executive Administrative and Treasurer’s Report, Treasurer’s report narrative](#)

Board Action/Discussion: Address any question, Request Motion to file for the record

- V. BOARD MEMBER CONCERNS/UPDATES 7:45-7:55 p.m.

Opportunity to raise questions, request agenda time for upcoming meetings, and provide updates on public recreation related events, resources, or concerns.

RECREATION & PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

**Wednesday, November 3, 2021; Fretterd Community Center, Ground Floor
Conference Room or Via ZOOM**

**Supper: 6:00-6:30 p.m. Chicken Noodle Soup and sandwiches from Bullocks
Meeting: 6:30-7:45 p.m.**

- I. Board President Welcome (Maureen Keogh) 6:30-6:35
 - Proposed Turkey Trot challenge issues by President Keogh
- II. OLD BUSINESS 6:35-7:05

LPPRP Goals and Priorities Draft

Presentation of goals and priorities draft considered for 5-year master plan based on current public feedback, advisory board discussion and internal staff review/recommendations.

Board action/discussion: Confirm Goal direction and or amend

- III. NEW BUSINESS 7:05-7:20

FY2023 Budget Opportunities and Challenges

Presentation of the unique implications of budget planning for this fiscal year given staff retirements, robust general fund reserves, county commissioner elections, and current staff capacity.

- IV. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS – SUBMITTED FOR BOARD MEMBER REVIEW 7:35-7:45 p.m.
Review/Approval of [Meeting Summary](#) from September 8, 2021 meeting
Division Updates [Program Services](#), [Capital and Park Operations](#).

Board Action/Discussion: Address any question, Request Motion to file for the record

- V. BOARD MEMBER CONCERNS/UPDATES 7:45-7:55 p.m.
Opportunity to raise questions, request agenda time for upcoming meetings, and provide updates on public recreation related events, resources, or concerns.

Topic: Rec Parks' Zoom Meeting
Time: This is a recurring meeting
Meet anytime

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81439154248?pwd=cXVNMWpENGQ4Nk1qeWRBNk9GMVJCQT09>

Meeting ID: 814 3915 4248
Passcode: 194668
One tap mobile
8335480276,,81439154248# US
Toll-free
8335480282,,81439154248# US
Toll-free

Caroline County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation

Interim Update for CCRP Advisory Board
September 1, 2021

Objective:

Share outcomes of
the community
engagement
process



Community Engagement Process Overview



Community Engagement Efforts

- Community-wide online survey - 596 responses
- 16 community stakeholder interviews
- 3 Regional virtual focus groups
- In person Community Partner focus group
- Meetings with municipal staff, volunteers



Community Engagement Efforts

Parks:

- Availability
- Accessibility
- Amenities/Features



Recreation:

- Availability
- Accessibility
- Align with needs/desire for programs?



Community Survey

Community Survey Respondent Highlights

- 69% of households had 2 adults
- 12% were single headed households
- 19% had three or more adults in the home.



- 62% of households had children under 18 in the home including
 - 12% with preschoolers
 - 22% with elementary students
 - 18% with middle schoolers
 - 17% with High Schoolers
 - 9% with young adults (19+)

Community Survey Respondents



- 49.5% lived in the county
- 48.5% live in a town boundary
- 34% - \$100,000+ Household Income
- 41% - \$53,001-100,000
- 25% - \$53,000 or less Household Income (200% of poverty and the threshold for many assistance programs)



Community Survey Respondent Highlights

- 78% respondents identified as Female
- 20% respondents identified as Male
- 3% respondents identified as Gender Variant/Non-conforming or prefer not to answer



- 12% respondents were 65+
- 25% respondents were 50-64 years old
- 60% respondents were 25-50 years old
- 5% respondents were under the age of 24

- 91.6% White
- 8.4% Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC)
- 21 individuals preferred not to identify
- 3% of respondents identified as Hispanic.

Parks Visitation

- 86% visited Martinak or Tuckahoe in the past 24 months
- 55.5% visited a county park
- Of the respondents who lived within town limits, 86% indicated they visited one of their municipal parks
- Of those who visited parks, 66% went at least a few times a month, and one in four went to the park at least once per week.



Park Amenities Priorities

1 - Bathrooms



2 - Trash
Receptacles



3 - Shade



Popular Activities

1. Walking/Hiking/Biking
2. Picnic Areas
3. Playgrounds
4. Water Access
5. Boat Ramps
6. Shoreline Access (Boating, kayaking)
7. Shoreline Access (Fishing, crabbing, wading)
8. Soccer/Lacrosse
9. Court activities (basketball, tennis, pickleball)
10. Indoor facilities (4-H Park, Fretterd Center, School Gyms)



Parks & Facilities Satisfaction

- Nearly half (46%) of respondents were satisfied with the geographic distribution of parks, however 35% were ambivalent and 19% were not satisfied
- 72% of respondents were satisfied with parks maintenance; 13% did not feel the parks are well maintained and 15% were ambivalent
- Nine in 10 felt that parks should be a priority for the County.
- Six in 10 felt that access to indoor gyms should be a high priority for the County
- Swimming pools and indoor gym space both rated high in importance and low in adequate availability-accessibility

Recreational Offerings Satisfaction



- 30-40% were satisfied or very satisfied with the activities available for different ages
- 30-45% were “somewhat satisfied” with what is offered for depending on the age group.
- Respondents were most satisfied with activities for children 5 and under and elementary age (6-12)
- 50% of respondents were satisfied with preschool opportunities
- 44.5% were satisfied or very satisfied with activities for elementary school-age youth

Recreational Offerings Satisfaction

- There was a high level of dissatisfaction in offerings for teens with 36% responding unfavorably
- There was a high level of dissatisfaction in offerings for adults 65+ with 31% responding unfavorably
- 21% were not satisfied with the activities for adults ages 19-64



Survey Respondent Priorities



- 41% of respondents strongly agree that recreational programming should be a high priority for the county.
- 45% of respondents agree that recreation programming should be a high priority for the County.

Regional Focus Groups

Regional Focus Groups

- Conducted virtually in Spring 2021:
South, Central, North
- Total of 28 participants documented, however overall participation was hard to capture in the virtual environment
- Utilized Menti.com as a secondary platform to capture responses

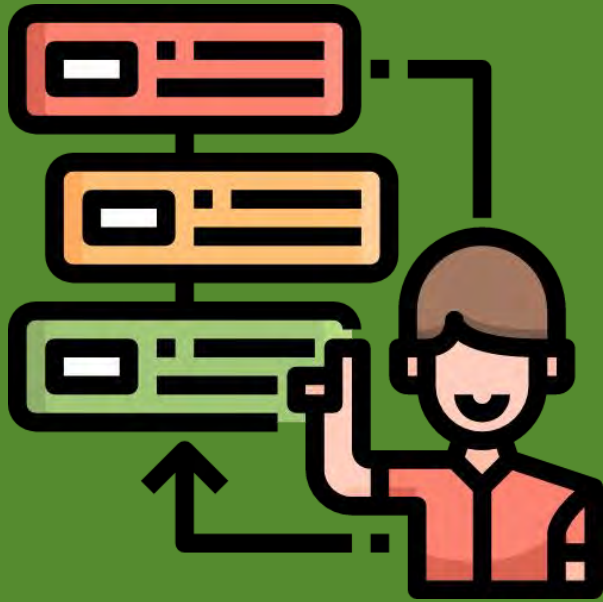


Parks & Facilities Feedback



- Majority of participants felt that park facilities meet the needs of their families
- Playgrounds and picnic areas are well distributed and available where participants reside
- Majority indicated that paved court surfaces were well distributed, several felt they were inadequate in certain areas (Preston, Denton). This included basketball, tennis, and pickleball courts in responses.

Recreational Offerings Feedback



Recreational Priorities:

- 1) Variety
- 2) Availability
- 3) Affordability
- 4) Accessibility

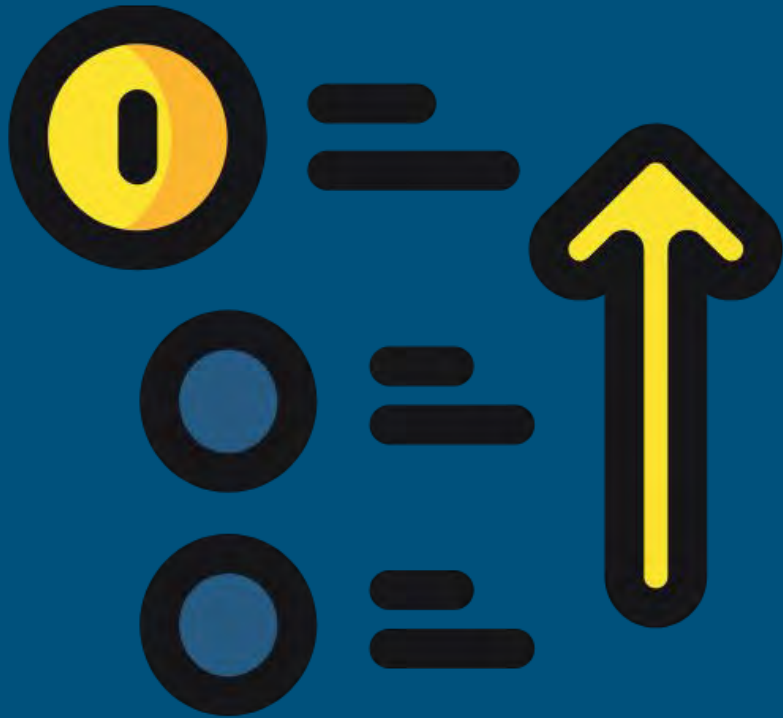
Top sports activities

- 1) Basketball
- 2) Tennis/Pickleball
- 3) Soccer

Top recreational activities

- 1) Special Events
 - 2) Walking/Hiking
 - 3) Afterschool/Summer Youth Programs
- Participants indicated that there was not enough accessibility for afterschool and summer youth programs, classes or workshops

Focus Group Priorities



- Priority for participants was on the features and amenities available in the parks
- Top priority for park features were:
 1. Walking/hiking/biking trails
 2. Picnic areas/playgrounds
 3. Sports fields
 4. Paved court surfaces
 5. Indoor gymnasium facilities

Stakeholder Feedback

Stakeholder Standouts

- Walkability/distance as barriers to accessibility for all
- Maintenance of existing parks and facilities needs to be a priority -- don't add more until can maintain what already exists
- Need for additional recreation opportunities for young teens (middle school)
- Need for additional programming for older adults



Stakeholder Standouts




- Access to spaces for sports activities that community teams can access for practice and play
- Need for a swimming pool
- Desire to have access to longer trail systems/more multi-use trails/rails-to-trails
- Need for additional ADA accessible playground equipment and trails

Questions?




Default Report

Explore the data behind your survey responses. Gain a better perspective of your survey data and uncover insights for further planning.

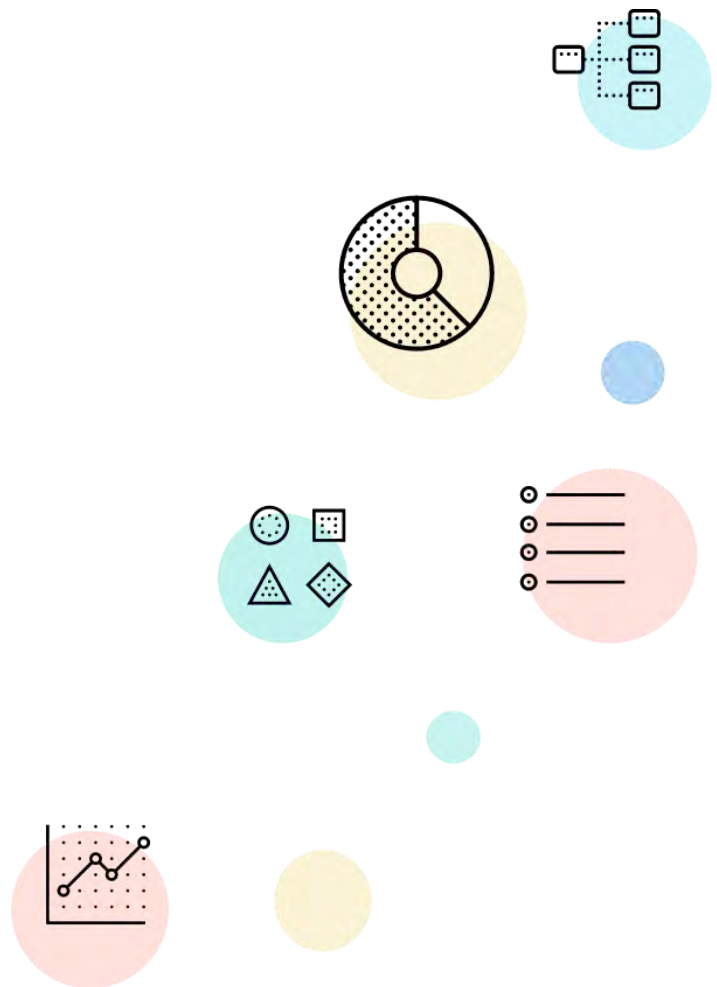
 Visited
1277

 Started
600

 Avg. Time to Complete
15m 35s

 Completed
459

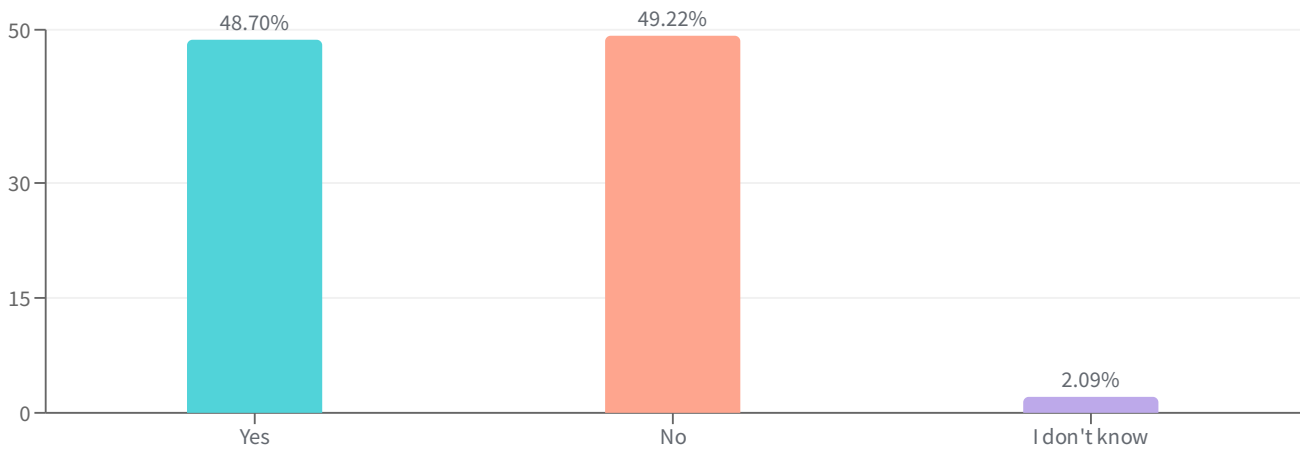
 Completion Rate
76.50%



QUESTION 02 | MULTIPLE CHOICE

Do you live in town limits?

Answered: **575** Skipped: **16**

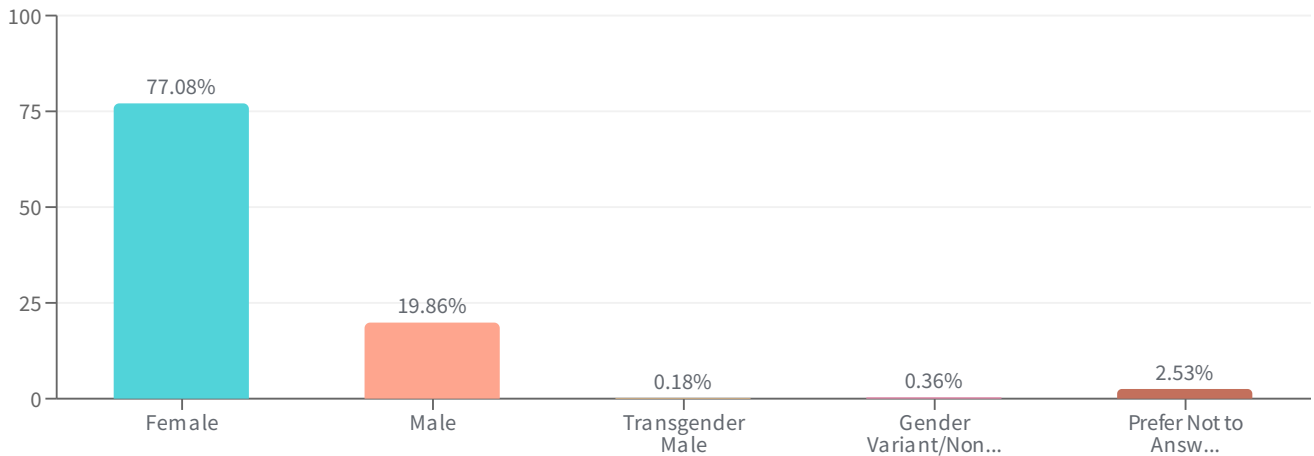


ANSWER CHOICES ▾	RESPONSES ▾	RESPONSE PERCENTAGE ▾
Yes	280	48.70%
No	283	49.22%
I don't know	12	2.09%

QUESTION 03 | MULTIPLE CHOICE

To which gender identity do you most identify?

Answered: **554** Skipped: **14**

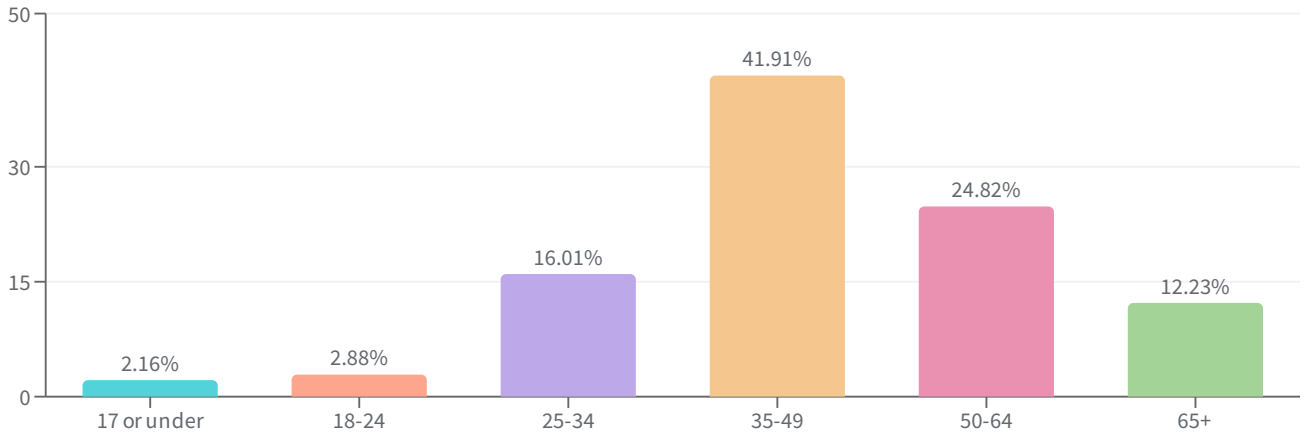


ANSWER CHOICES ▾	RESPONSES ▾	RESPONSE PERCENTAGE ▾
Female	427	77.08%
Male	110	19.86%
Transgender Male	1	0.18%
Gender Variant/Non-Conforming	2	0.36%
Prefer Not to Answer	14	2.53%

QUESTION 04 | MULTIPLE CHOICE

What is your age?

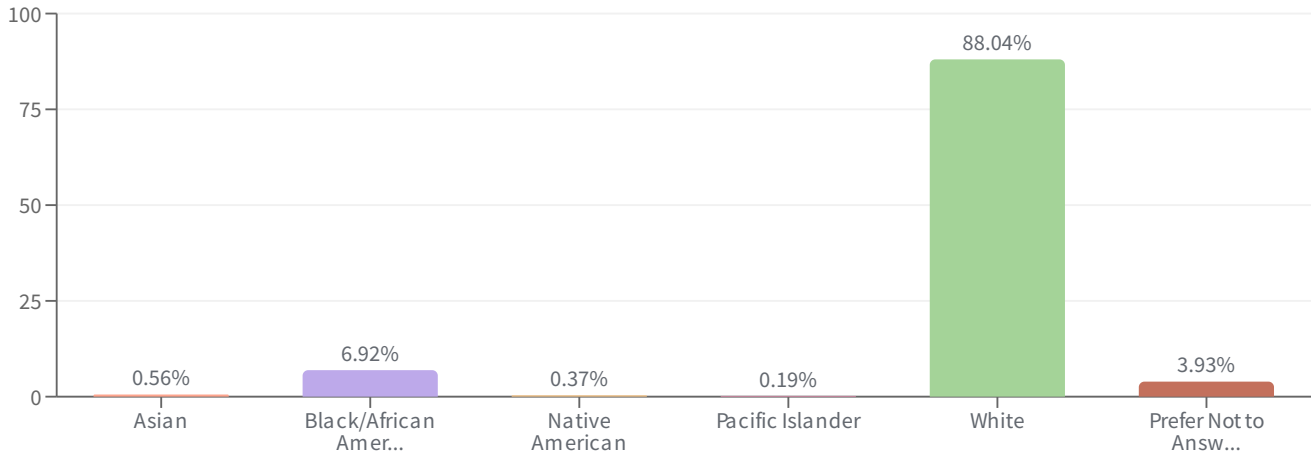
Answered: **556** Skipped: **10**



ANSWER CHOICES ▾	RESPONSES ▾	RESPONSE PERCENTAGE ▾
17 or under	12	2.16%
18-24	16	2.88%
25-34	89	16.01%
35-49	233	41.91%
50-64	138	24.82%
65+	68	12.23%

What is your race?

Answered: 535 Skipped: 27

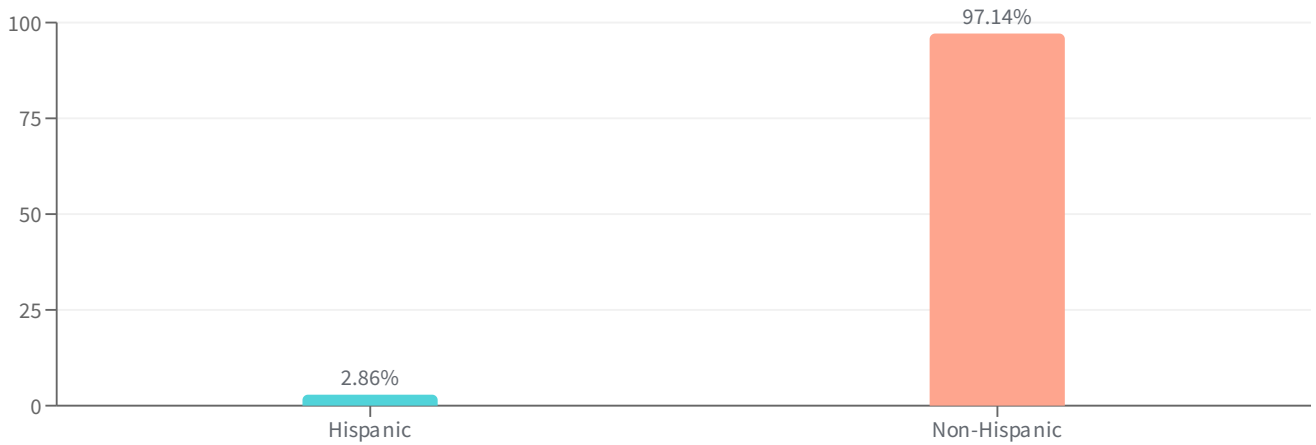


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	RESPONSE PERCENTAGE
Asian	3	0.56%
Black/African American	37	6.92%
Native American	2	0.37%
Pacific Islander	1	0.19%
White	471	88.04%
Prefer Not to Answer	21	3.93%

QUESTION 06 | MULTIPLE CHOICE

What is your ethnicity?

Answered: **524** Skipped: **33**

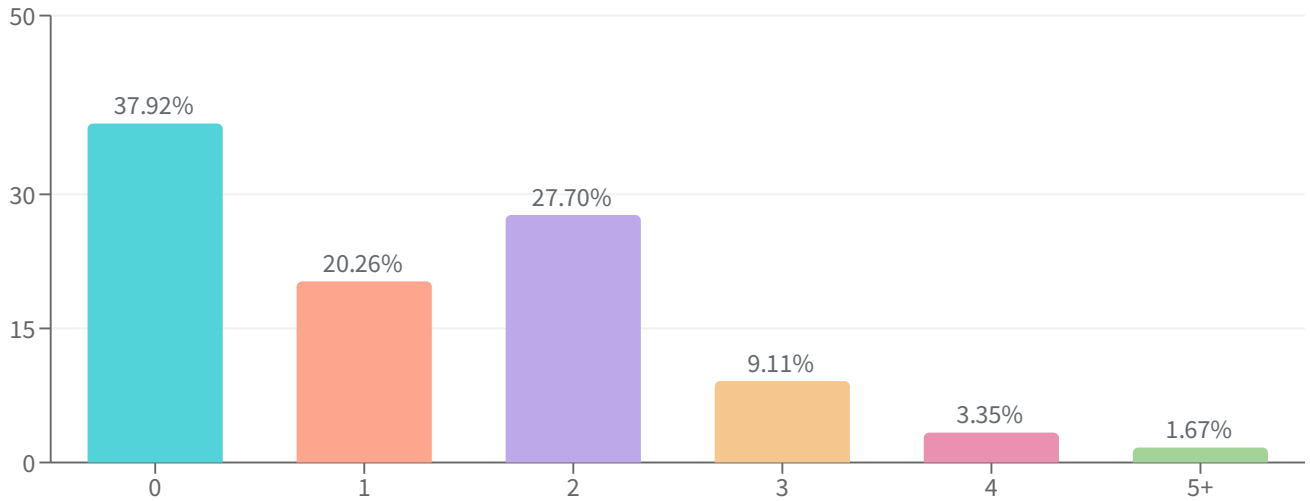


ANSWER CHOICES ▾	RESPONSES ▾	RESPONSE PERCENTAGE ▾
Hispanic	15	2.86%
Non-Hispanic	509	97.14%

QUESTION 07 | MULTIPLE CHOICE

How many children under 18 years old live in your home?

Answered: **539** Skipped: **15**



ANSWER CHOICES ▾

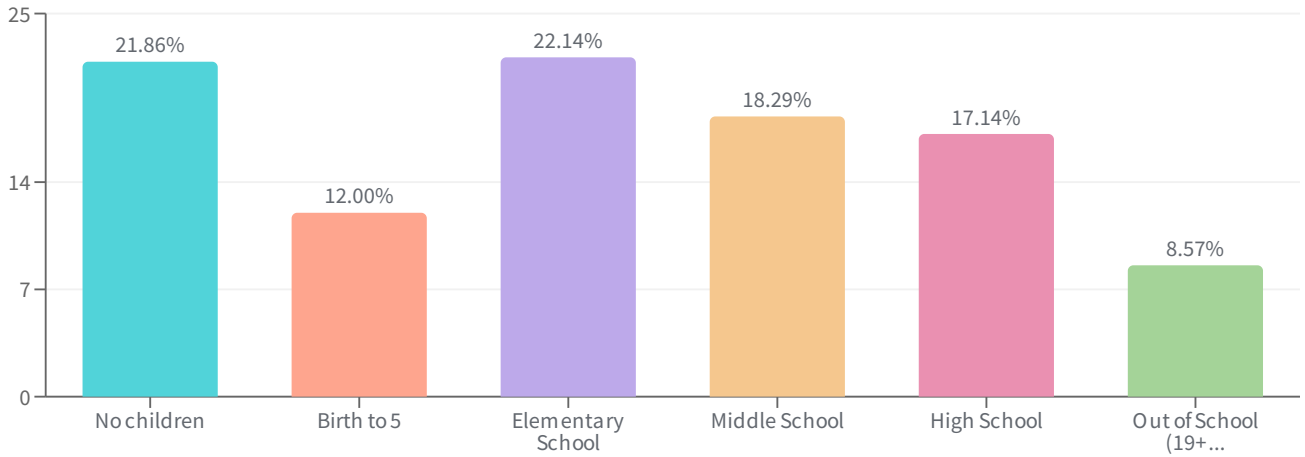
RESPONSES ▾

RESPONSE PERCENTAGE ▾

ANSWER CHOICES ▾	RESPONSES ▾	RESPONSE PERCENTAGE ▾
0	204	37.92%
1	109	20.26%
2	149	27.70%
3	49	9.11%
4	18	3.35%
5+	9	1.67%

What are the ages of the children living in your home?

Answered: **486** Skipped: **29**



ANSWER CHOICES ▾

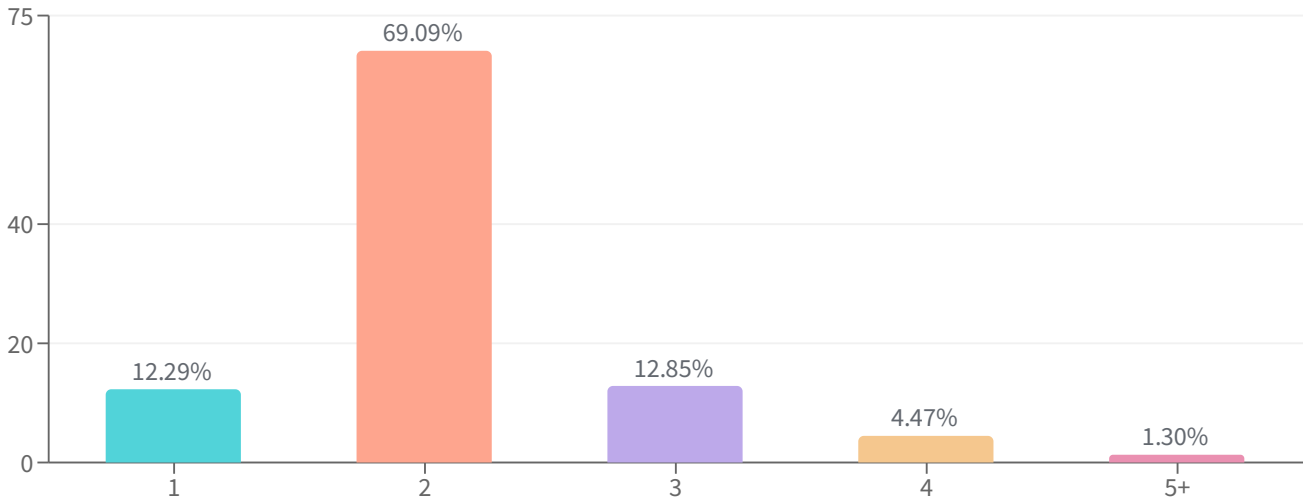
RESPONSES ▾

RESPONSE PERCENTAGE ▾

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	RESPONSE PERCENTAGE
No children	153	21.86%
Birth to 5	84	12.00%
Elementary School	155	22.14%
Middle School	128	18.29%
High School	120	17.14%
Out of School (19+)	60	8.57%

How many adults live in your home?

Answered: **537** Skipped: **14**



ANSWER CHOICES ▾

RESPONSES ▾

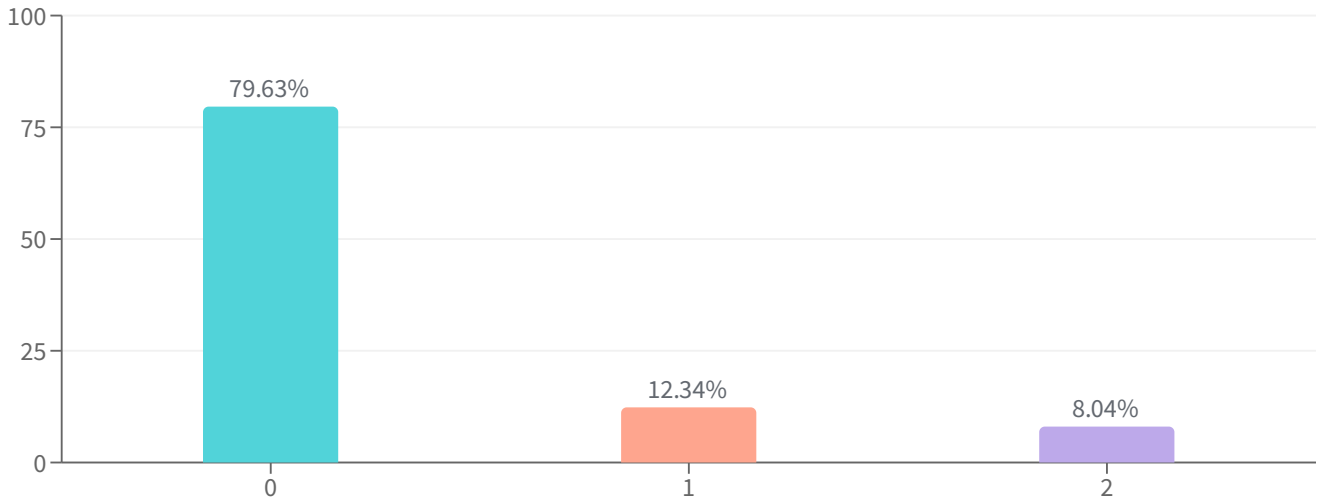
RESPONSE PERCENTAGE ▾

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	RESPONSE PERCENTAGE
1	66	12.29%
2	371	69.09%
3	69	12.85%
4	24	4.47%
5+	7	1.30%

QUESTION 10 | MULTIPLE CHOICE

How many adults over 65 years old live in your home?

Answered: **535** Skipped: **13**



ANSWER CHOICES ▾

RESPONSES ▾

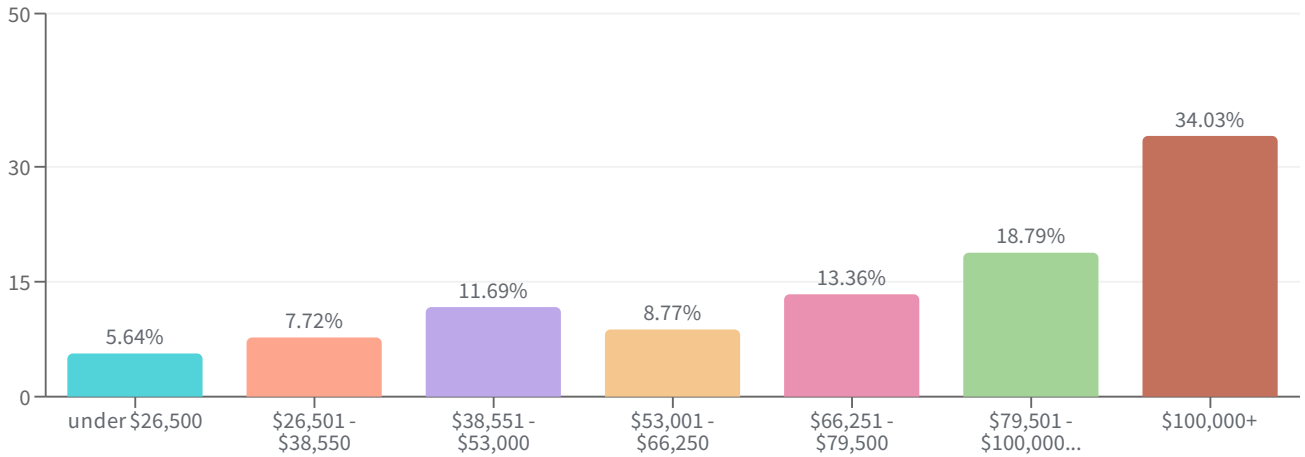
RESPONSE PERCENTAGE ▾

0	426	79.63%
1	66	12.34%
2	43	8.04%

QUESTION 11 | MULTIPLE CHOICE

What is your household income?

Answered: **479** Skipped: **61**



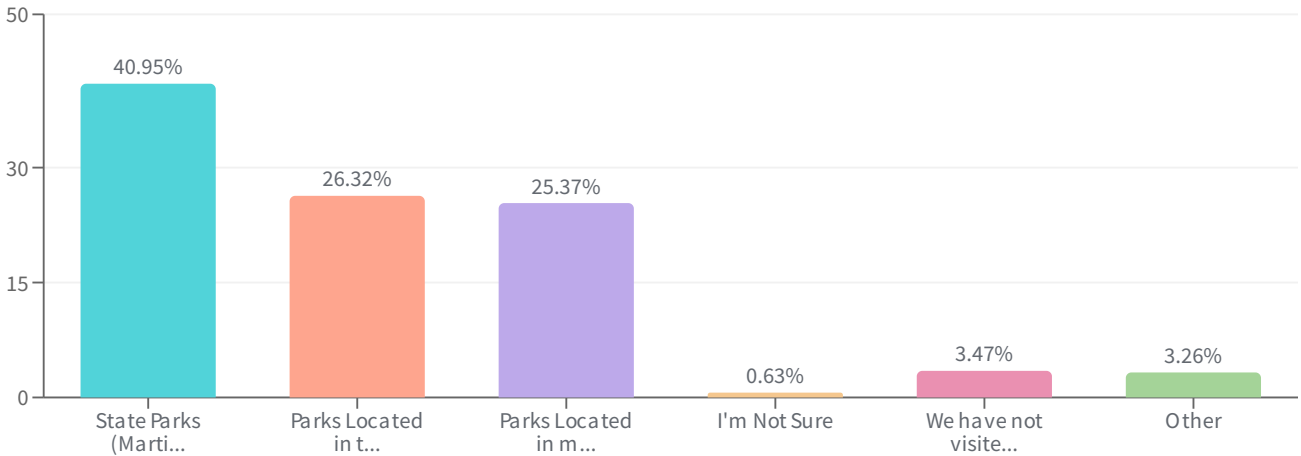
ANSWER CHOICES ▾	RESPONSES ▾	RESPONSE PERCENTAGE ▾
under \$26,500	27	5.64%
\$26,501 - \$38,550	37	7.72%
\$38,551 - \$53,000	56	11.69%
\$53,001 - \$66,250	42	8.77%
\$66,251 - \$79,500	64	13.36%
\$79,501 - \$100,000	90	18.79%
\$100,000+	163	34.03%

QUESTION 12 | MULTIPLE CHOICE

Have you or members of your household visited any of the following parks during the past 24 months?

Please check all that apply

Answered: **482** Skipped: **9**

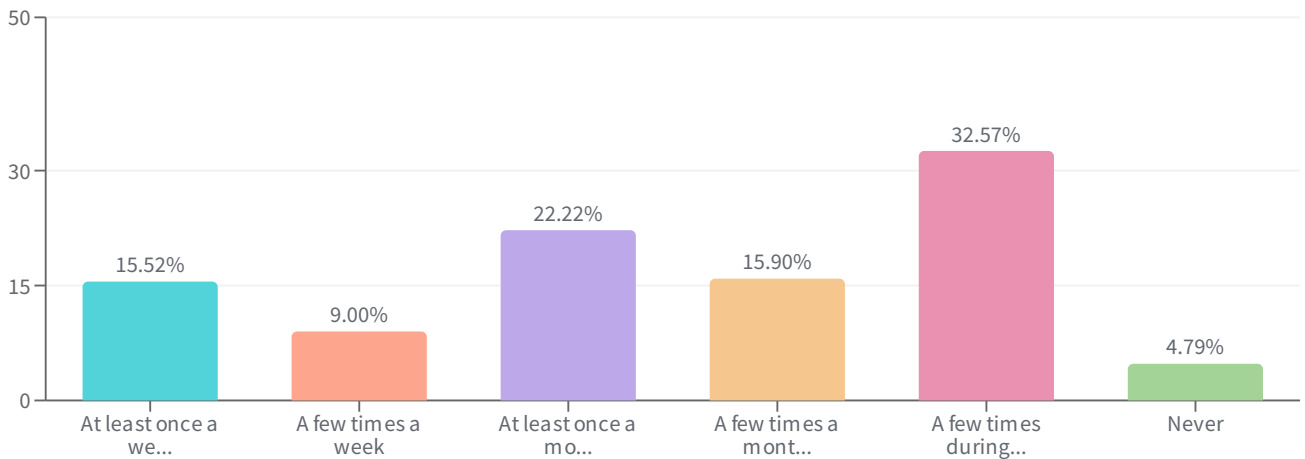


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	RESPONSE PERCENTAGE
State Parks (Martinak or Tuckahoe)	389	40.95%
Parks Located in the County	250	26.32%
Parks Located in my Town	241	25.37%
I'm Not Sure	6	0.63%
We have not visited any parks	33	3.47%
Other	31	3.26%

QUESTION 13 | MULTIPLE CHOICE

How often did you or members of your household visit a park during the past 24 months?

Answered: 522 Skipped: 13



ANSWER CHOICES ▾

RESPONSES ▾

RESPONSE PERCENTAGE ▾

At least once a week

81

15.52%

A few times a week

47

9.00%

At least once a month

116

22.22%

A few times a month

83

15.90%

A few times during the year

170

32.57%

Never

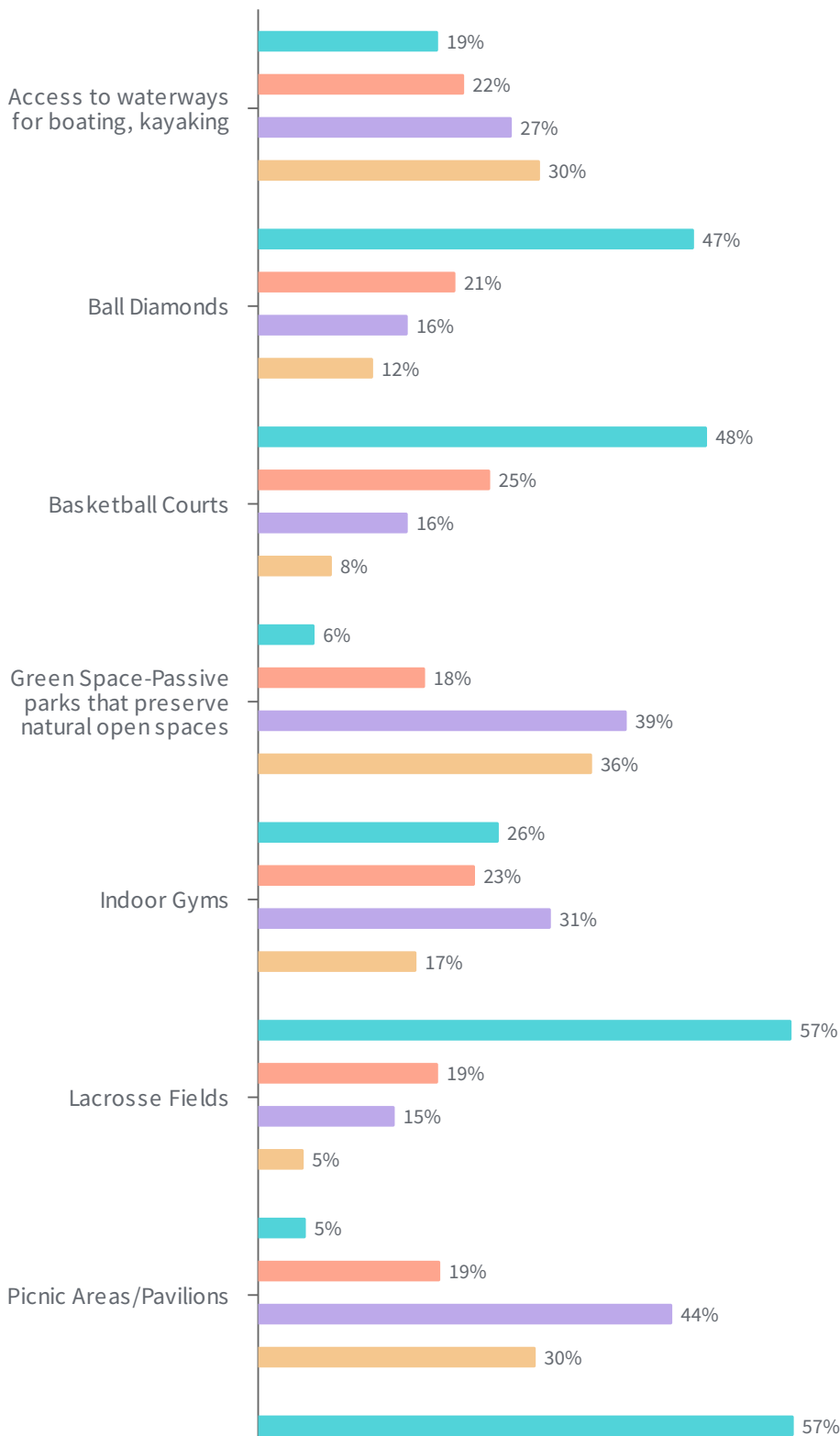
25

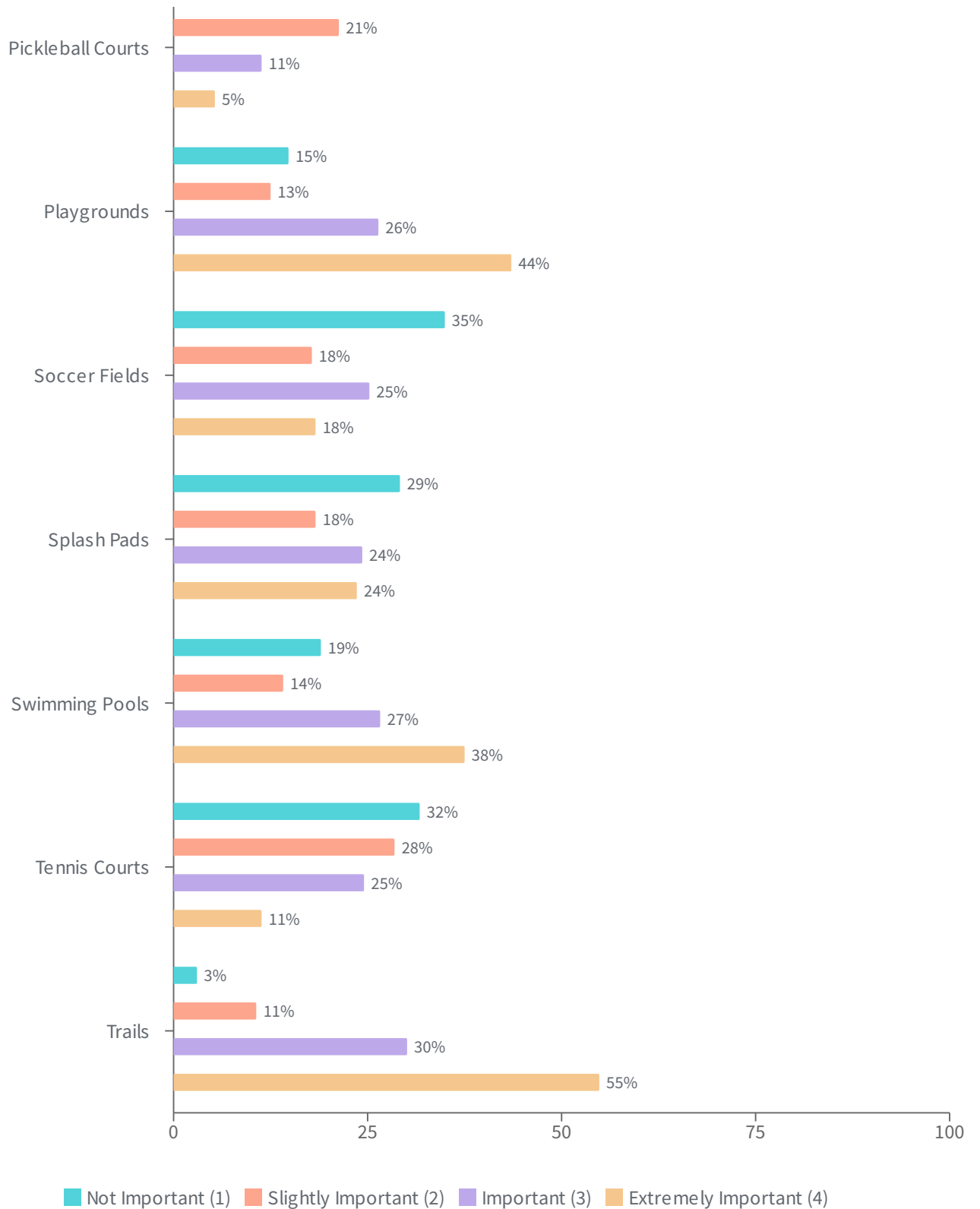
4.79%

QUESTION 14 | MATRIX

In general, how important are the following recreation spaces to your household?




Answered: 432 Skipped: 7






■ Not Important (1)
 ■ Slightly Important (2)
 ■ Important (3)
 ■ Extremely Important (4)

	■ NOT IMPORTANT (1)	■ SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT (2)	■ IMPORTANT (3)
Access to waterways for boating, kayaking	83 (19.21%)	95 (21.99%)	117 (27.08%)
Ball Diamonds	201 (46.53%)	91 (21.06%)	69 (15.97%)

	 NOT IMPORTANT (1)	 SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT (2)	 IMPORTANT (3)
Basketball Courts	207 (47.92%)	107 (24.77%)	69 (15.97%)
Green Space-Passive parks that preserve natural open spaces	26 (6.02%)	77 (17.82%)	170 (39.35%)
Indoor Gyms	111 (25.69%)	100 (23.15%)	135 (31.25%)
Lacrosse Fields	246 (56.94%)	83 (19.21%)	63 (14.58%)
Picnic Areas/Pavilions	22 (5.09%)	84 (19.44%)	191 (44.21%)
Pickleball Courts	247 (57.18%)	92 (21.30%)	49 (11.34%)
Playgrounds	64 (14.81%)	54 (12.50%)	114 (26.39%)
Soccer Fields	151 (34.95%)	77 (17.82%)	109 (25.23%)
Splash Pads	126 (29.17%)	79 (18.29%)	105 (24.31%)
Swimming Pools	82 (18.98%)	61 (14.12%)	115 (26.62%)
Tennis Courts	137 (31.71%)	123 (28.47%)	106 (24.54%)
Trails	13 (3.01%)	46 (10.65%)	130 (30.09%)
Total	1716 (28.37%)	1169 (19.33%)	1542 (25.50%)

	 EXTREMELY IMPORTANT (4)
Access to waterways for boating, kayaking	130 (30.09%)
Ball Diamonds	53 (12.27%)
Basketball Courts	34 (7.87%)
Green Space-Passive parks that preserve natural open spaces	154 (35.65%)

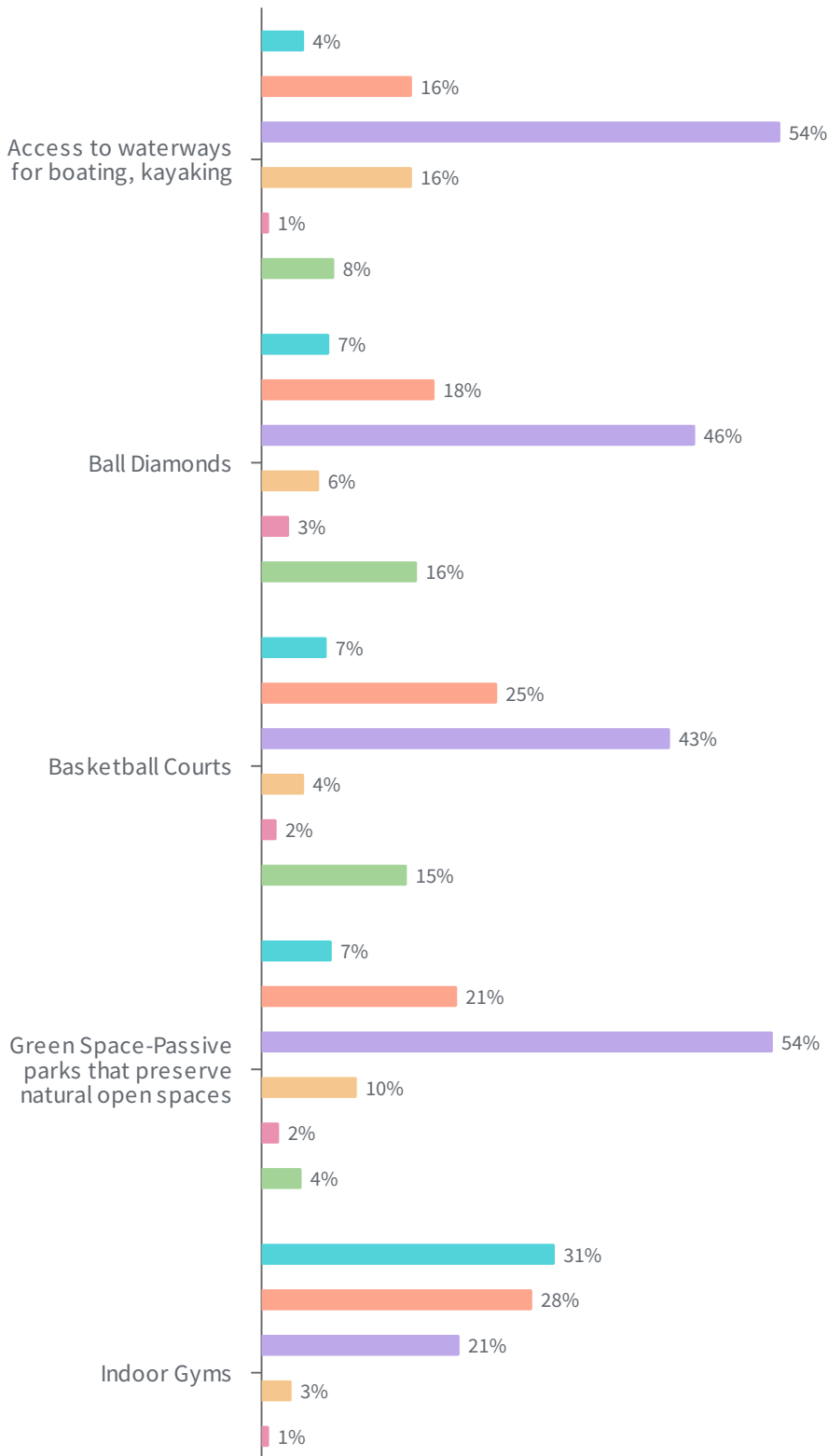

EXTREMELY IMPORTANT
(4)

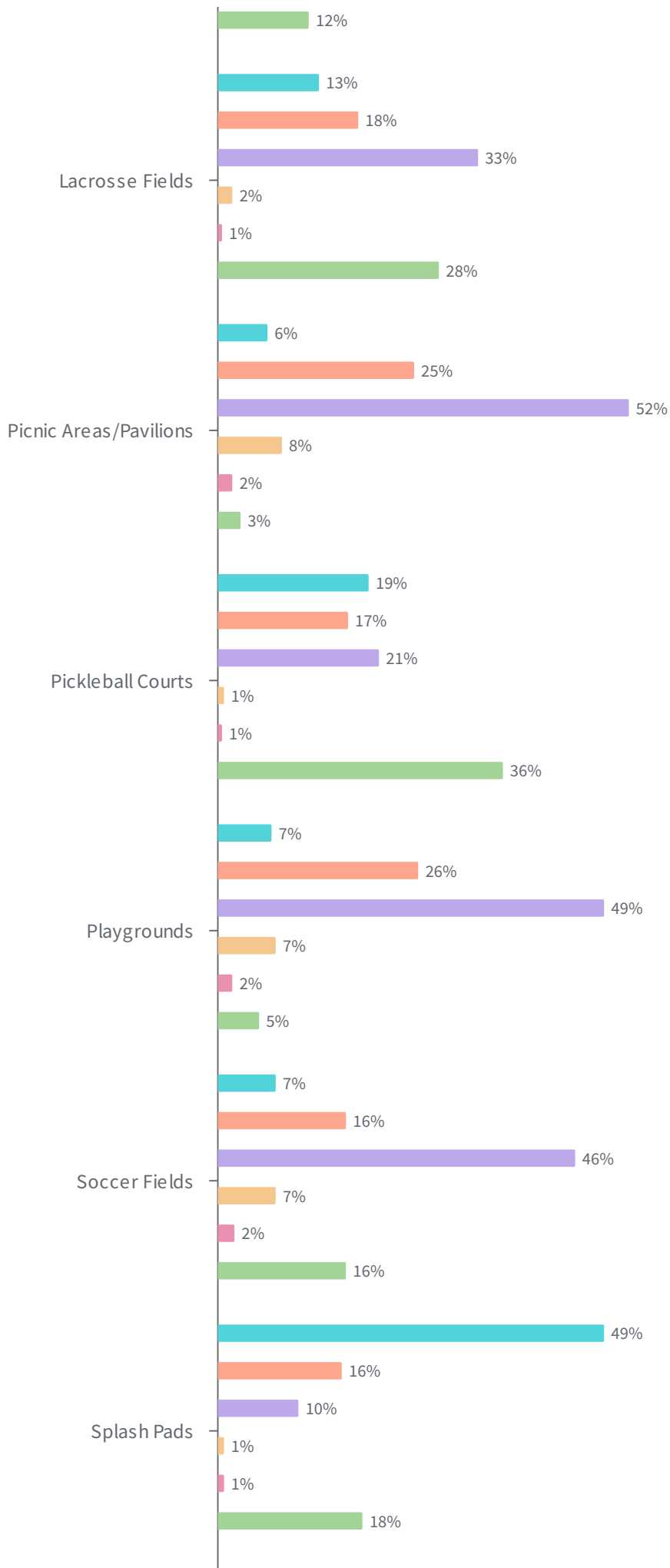
Indoor Gyms	73 (16.90%)
Lacrosse Fields	21 (4.86%)
Picnic Areas/Pavilions	128 (29.63%)
Pickleball Courts	23 (5.32%)
Playgrounds	188 (43.52%)
Soccer Fields	79 (18.29%)
Splash Pads	102 (23.61%)
Swimming Pools	162 (37.50%)
Tennis Courts	49 (11.34%)
Trails	237 (54.86%)
Total	1433 (23.69%)

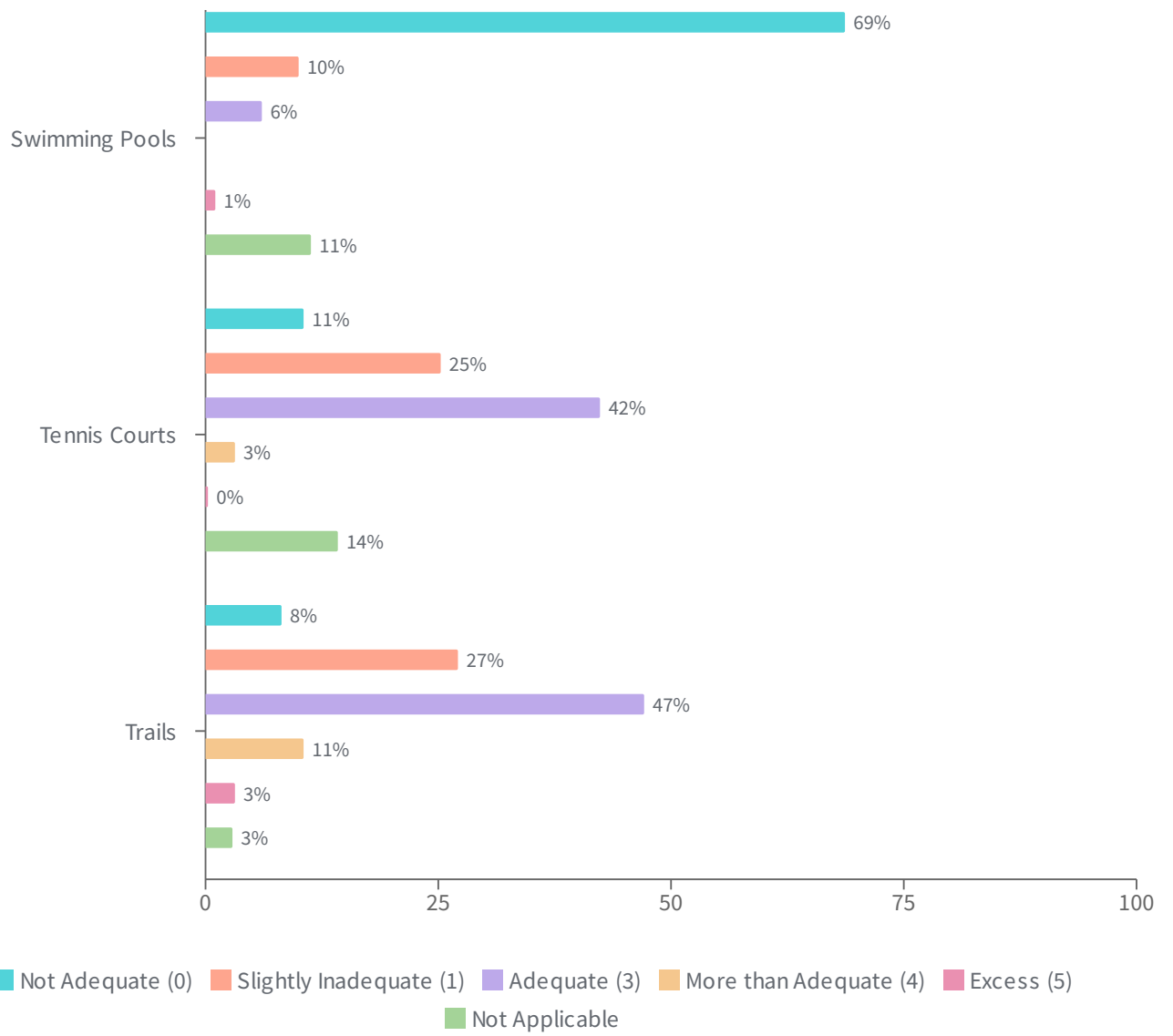
QUESTION 15 | MATRIX

Do you feel there is adequate availability of the following facilities in Caroline County?

Answered: 380 Skipped: 19



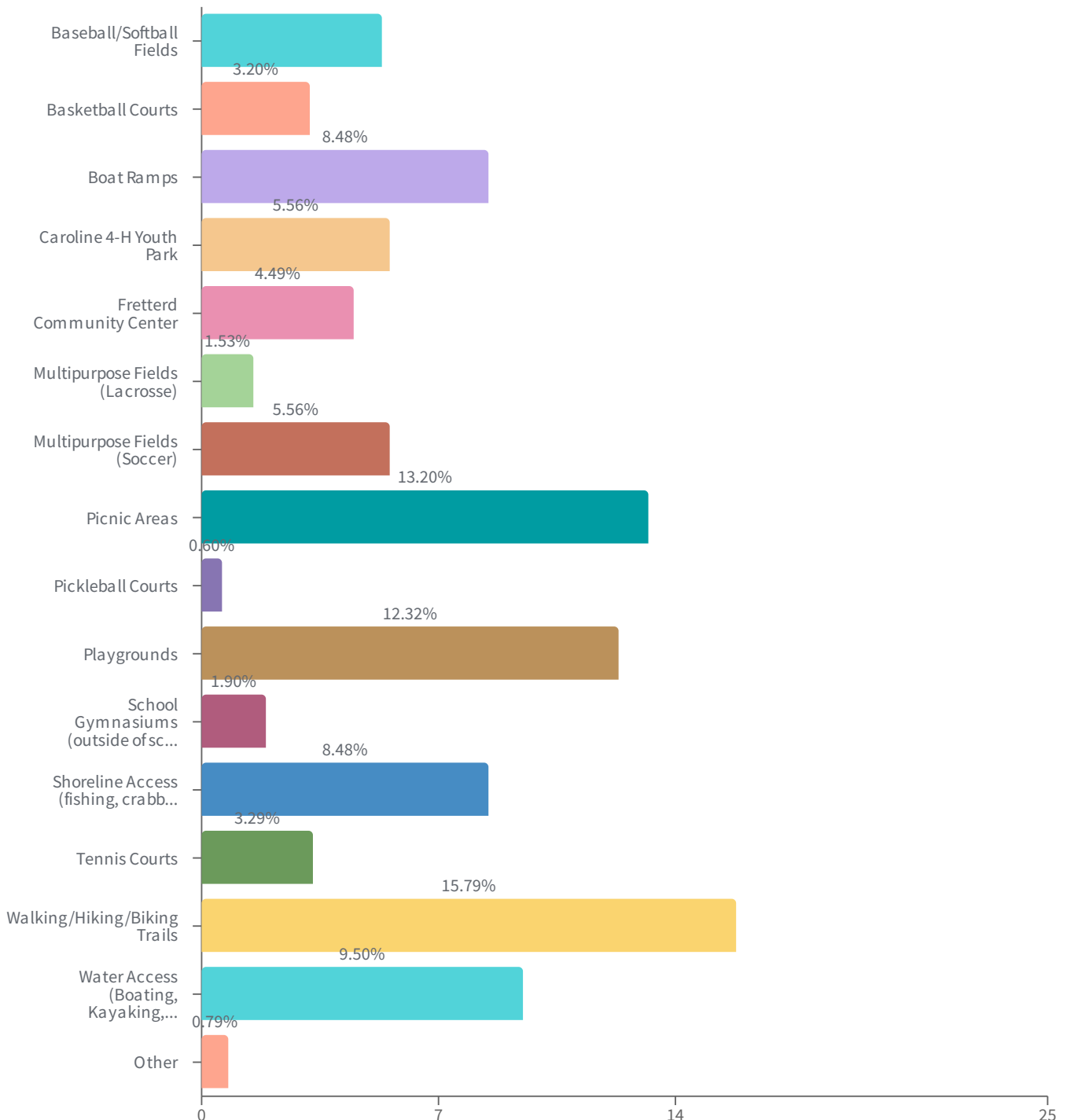




QUESTION 16 | MULTIPLE CHOICE

From the following list, please check ALL of the recreation facilities that you or members of your household have used in the past 24 months?

Answered: 422 Skipped: 17

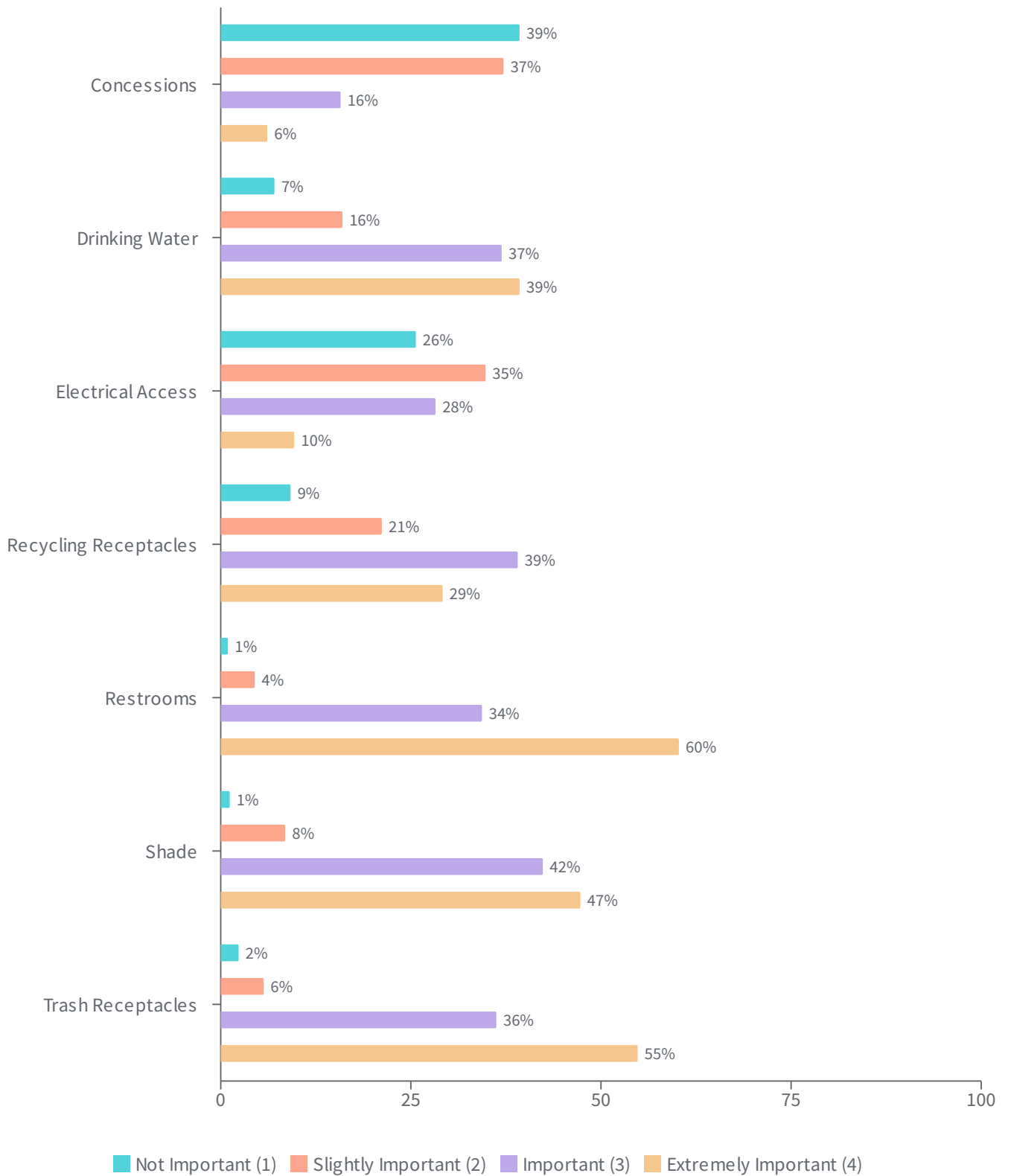


ANSWER CHOICES ▾	RESPONSES ▾	RESPONSE PERCENTAGE ▾
Baseball/Softball Fields	115	5.33%
Basketball Courts	69	3.20%
Boat Ramps	183	8.48%
Caroline 4-H Youth Park	120	5.56%
Fretterd Community Center	97	4.49%
Multipurpose Fields (Lacrosse)	33	1.53%
Multipurpose Fields (Soccer)	120	5.56%
Picnic Areas	285	13.20%
Pickleball Courts	13	0.60%
Playgrounds	266	12.32%
School Gymnasiums (outside of school sponsored activities)	41	1.90%
Shoreline Access (fishing, crabbing, wading, etc.)	183	8.48%
Tennis Courts	71	3.29%
Walking /Hiking /Biking Trails	341	15.79%
Water Access (Boating, Kayaking, C	205	9.50%
Other	17	0.79%




QUESTION 17 | MATRIX


In general, how important to you is availability to the following amenities within parks?

Answered: **425** Skipped: **6**



	NOT IMPORTANT (1)	SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT (2)	IMPORTANT (3)
Concessions	167 (39.29%)	158 (37.18%)	67 (15.76%)
Drinking Water	30 (7.06%)	68 (16.00%)	157 (36.94%)

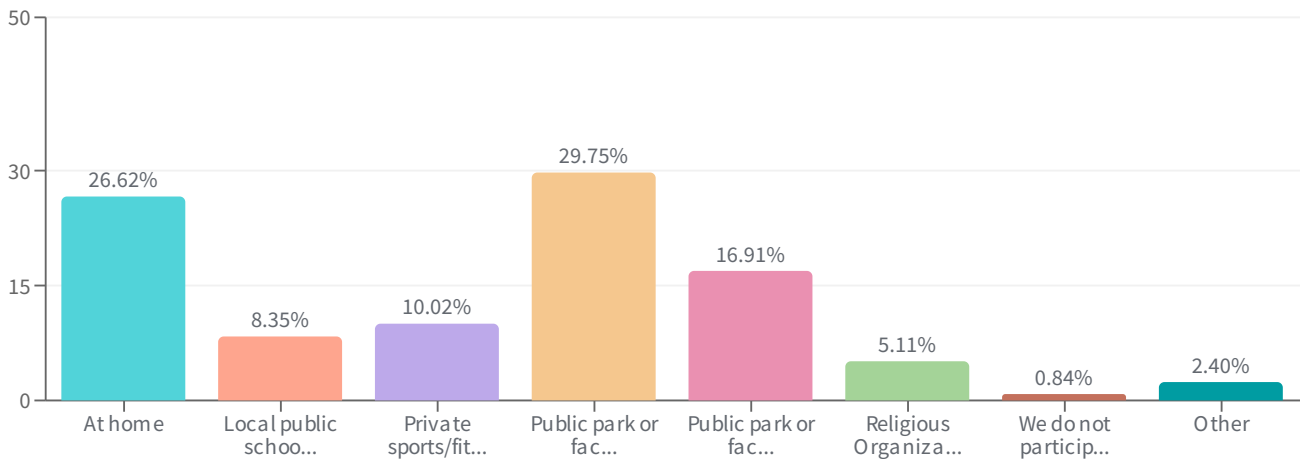
	 NOT IMPORTANT (1)	 SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT (2)	 IMPORTANT (3)
Electrical Access	109 (25.65%)	148 (34.82%)	120 (28.24%)
Recycling Receptacles	39 (9.18%)	90 (21.18%)	166 (39.06%)
Restrooms	4 (0.94%)	19 (4.47%)	146 (34.35%)
Shade	5 (1.18%)	36 (8.47%)	180 (42.35%)
Trash Receptacles	10 (2.35%)	24 (5.65%)	154 (36.24%)
Total	364 (12.24%)	543 (18.25%)	990 (33.28%)

	 EXTREMELY IMPORTANT (4)
Concessions	26 (6.12%)
Drinking Water	167 (39.29%)
Electrical Access	41 (9.65%)
Recycling Receptacles	124 (29.18%)
Restrooms	256 (60.24%)
Shade	201 (47.29%)
Trash Receptacles	233 (54.82%)
Total	1048 (35.23%)

QUESTION 18 | MULTIPLE CHOICE

Where do you and household members primarily participate in recreation activities?

Answered: 417 Skipped: 7



ANSWER CHOICES

RESPONSES

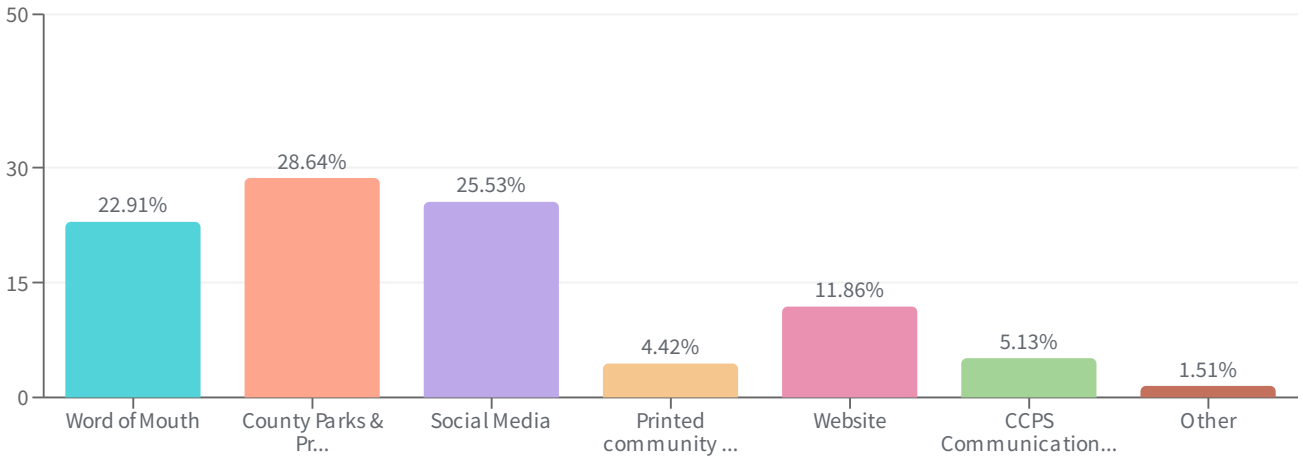
RESPONSE PERCENTAGE

At home	255	26.62%
Local public school	80	8.35%
Private sports/fitness facility	96	10.02%
Public park or facility in Caroline County	285	29.75%
Public park or facility in another county/municipality	162	16.91%
Religious Organization/House of Worship	49	5.11%
We do not participate in recreation activities	8	0.84%
Other	23	2.40%

QUESTION 19 | MULTIPLE CHOICE

How do you learn about recreation programming opportunities in your community?

Answered: 425 Skipped: 8



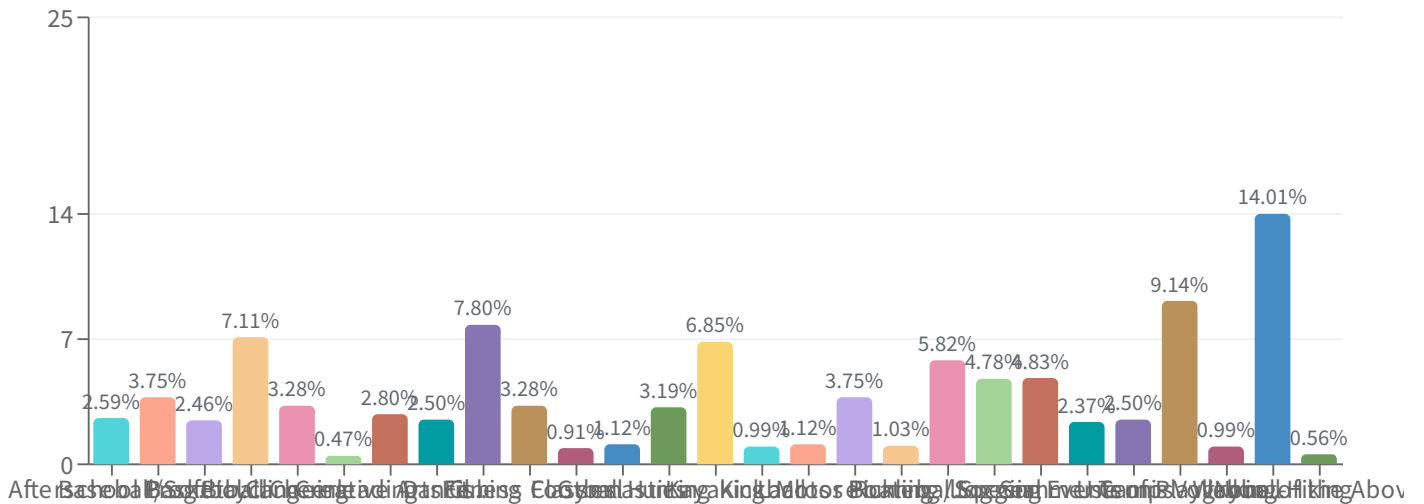
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	RESPONSE PERCENTAGE
Word of Mouth	228	22.91%
County Parks & Program Guide	285	28.64%
Social Media	254	25.53%
Printed community needs.	44	4.42%
Website	118	11.86%
CCPS Communications (Peach Jar)	51	5.13%
Other	15	1.51%

QUESTION 20 | MULTIPLE CHOICE

In the past 24 months, which of the following activities have you or anyone in your household participated in?

Check all that apply.

Answered: **435** Skipped: **11**



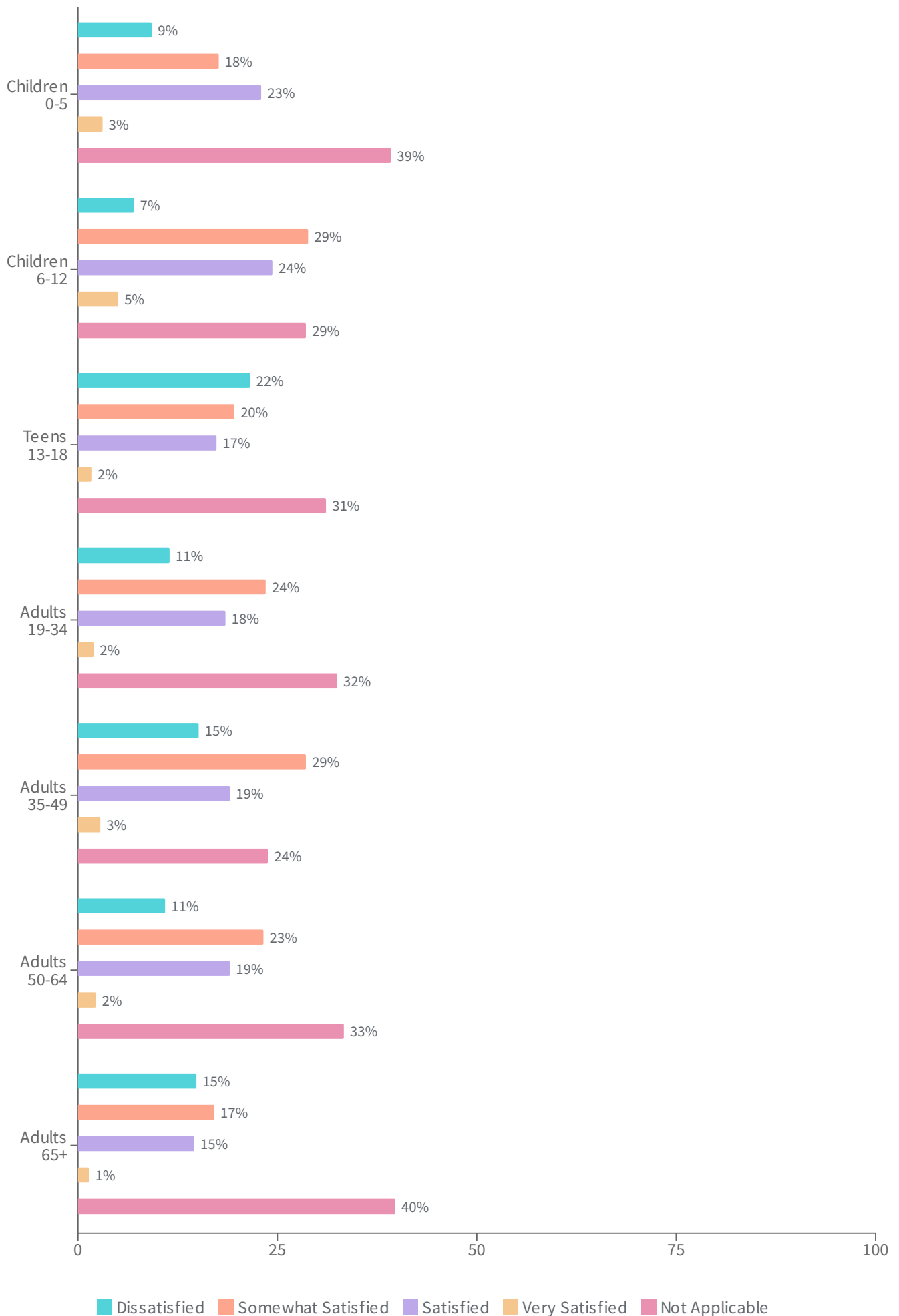
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	RESPONSE PERCENTAGE
After School Programs	60	2.59%
Baseball/Softball	87	3.75%
Basketball	57	2.46%
Bicycling	165	7.11%
Canoeing	76	3.28%
Cheerleading	11	0.47%
Creative Arts Classes/Workshops	65	2.80%
Dance	58	2.50%
Fishing	181	7.80%

ANSWER CHOICES ▾	RESPONSES ▾	RESPONSE PERCENTAGE ▾
Fitness Classes	76	3.28%
Football	21	0.91%
Gymnastics	26	1.12%
Hunting	74	3.19%
Kayaking	159	6.85%
Kickball	23	0.99%
Lacrosse	26	1.12%
Motor Boating	87	3.75%
Pickleball	24	1.03%
Running /Jogging	135	5.82%
Soccer	111	4.78%
Special Events	112	4.83%
Summer Camps	55	2.37%
Tennis	58	2.50%
Use of Playground Equipment	212	9.14%
Volleyball	23	0.99%
Walking-Hiking	325	14.01%
None of the Above	13	0.56%




QUESTION 21 | MATRIX



What is your level of satisfaction with the recreation activities available for the following age groups?

Answered: **357** Skipped: **28**



■ Dissatisfied
 ■ Somewhat Satisfied
 ■ Satisfied
 ■ Very Satisfied
 ■ Not Applicable

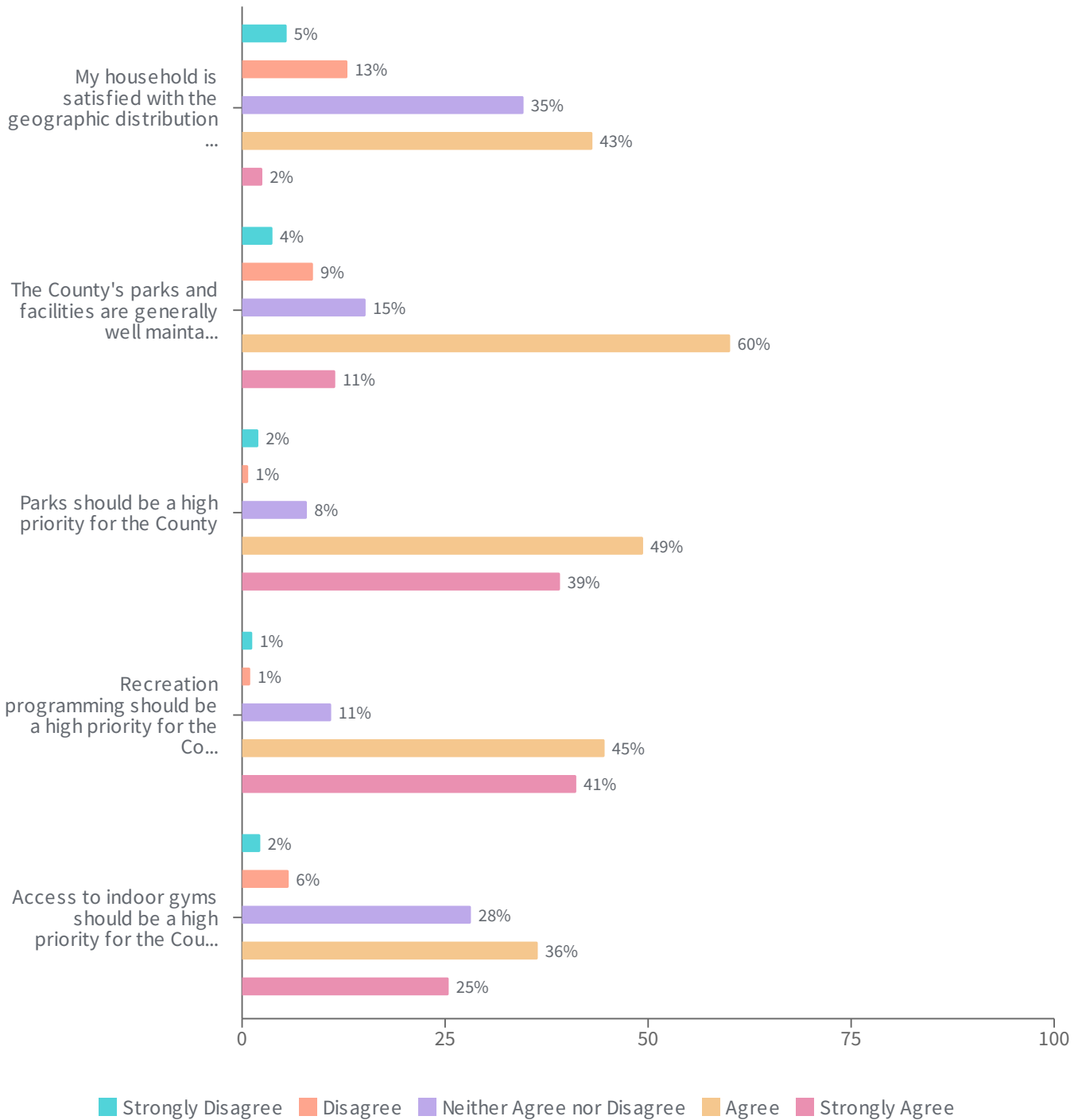
	 DISSATISFIED	 SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	 SATISFIED
Children 0-5	33 (9.24%)	63 (17.65%)	82 (22.97%)
Children 6-12	25 (7.00%)	103 (28.85%)	87 (24.37%)
Teens 13-18	77 (21.57%)	70 (19.61%)	62 (17.37%)
Adults 19-34	41 (11.48%)	84 (23.53%)	66 (18.49%)
Adults 35-49	54 (15.13%)	102 (28.57%)	68 (19.05%)
Adults 50-64	39 (10.92%)	83 (23.25%)	68 (19.05%)
Adults 65+	53 (14.85%)	61 (17.09%)	52 (14.57%)
Total	322 (12.89%)	566 (22.65%)	485 (19.41%)






	 VERY SATISFIED	 NOT APPLICABLE
Children 0-5	11 (3.08%)	140 (39.22%)
Children 6-12	18 (5.04%)	102 (28.57%)
Teens 13-18	6 (1.68%)	111 (31.09%)
Adults 19-34	7 (1.96%)	116 (32.49%)
Adults 35-49	10 (2.80%)	85 (23.81%)
Adults 50-64	8 (2.24%)	119 (33.33%)
Adults 65+	5 (1.40%)	142 (39.78%)
Total	65 (2.60%)	815 (32.61%)

QUESTION 22 | MATRIX

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

Answered: 401 Skipped: 13



	 STRONGLY DISAGREE	 DISAGREE	 NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE
My household is satisfied with the geographic distribution of parks in the County	22 (5.49%)	52 (12.97%)	139 (34.66%)
The County's parks and facilities are generally well maintained	15 (3.74%)	35 (8.73%)	61 (15.21%)
Parks should be a high priority for the County	8 (2.00%)	3 (0.75%)	32 (7.98%)
Recreation programming should be a high priority for the County	5 (1.25%)	4 (1.00%)	44 (10.97%)
Access to indoor gyms should be a high priority for the County	9 (2.24%)	23 (5.74%)	113 (28.18%)
Total	59 (2.94%)	117 (5.84%)	389 (19.40%)
	 AGREE	 STRONGLY AGREE	
My household is satisfied with the geographic distribution of parks in the County	173 (43.14%)	10 (2.49%)	
The County's parks and facilities are generally well maintained	241 (60.10%)	46 (11.47%)	
Parks should be a high priority for the County	198 (49.38%)	157 (39.15%)	
Recreation programming should be a high priority for the County	179 (44.64%)	165 (41.15%)	
Access to indoor gyms should be a high priority for the County	146 (36.41%)	102 (25.44%)	


AG REE


STRONGLY AG REE

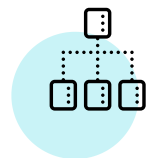
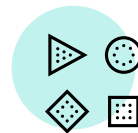
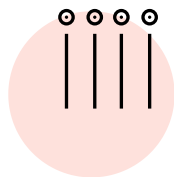
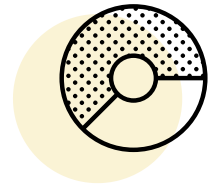
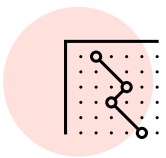
Total

937 (46.73%)

480 (23.94%)

Thank You !

We really appreciate your time and feedback.



you need a local that can market the county as a historical destination tourism hotspot, the people in charge of that are clueless, also the american discovery trail goes through the heart of the county including right by the tourism office and we get crickets from that board. maybe ccrp can help with outreach.

Caroline County and the towns needs to work together for a unified plan to serve the entire county. Help support county wide movement and recreation.
more activities for over 65

I wish the playground areas had coverage from canopy or some sort of shade; I'd like playground equipment and picnic area at Sharp Rd Park; outdoor workout equipment along trails would be nice features; more places to launch a kayak would be beneficial

Safe (off road) Bike Trails
None

Cleaner restroom facilities. Facilities with toilet tissue and running water or well maintained sanitizing dispensers. Trash receptacles that are emptied frequently (many are overflowing which leads to littering and poor conditions for wildlife).

A DOG park is MUCH needed

Need free exercise classes for the public or free gyms to work out in. Not everyone can afford a gym membership. Counseling classes for grief support and suicidal behaviors. Those are big in the county and are overlooked.

I love our county but I do wish there were more fun things to do as a family, or even for a grown-up night out. I think a community pool or splash pad would be a wonderful idea, even if we had to have passes. Also, I think providing more family friendly businesses in downtown Denton would be wonderful. I think a fun ice cream shop would be nice. Thank you for listening to community input.

Maybe have a few vending machines available. More recycling access. Water features for hot summers.

More handicap accessible parks and swings, like at DES with actual straps. A wheelchair swing would be even better!

Sue Simmons is a huge asset to the county. She and her team are doing an excellent job of providing things to do for children and adults alike.

Support youth sports, adult sports, support the Y's growth
Lions filed is a joke no way to get water shade watching games

Schedule permitting, I would participate in more adult programs
None
It would be nice to have more feeder programs available ie such as, volleyball, field hockey etc.

More walking/running/joking trails. More public baseball/softball fields (unable to find any public to practice with my daughter). Updated playground equipment (metal slides get extremely hot in the summertime, the 4th street park slide specifically).

I love the soccer program.

More reading programs and clubs for kids

4th Street park is falling apart. Most if not all of the county parks need to be updated to include multi age families. My teens don't want to play on the playgrounds with my 5&3 year old. Sports fields/equipment near playgrounds would be great. A splash pad would be fantastic for the super hot days.

We need a local baseball facility in Denton with a playground.

I think the teens should have a selection of different activities to do throughout the year.

Nothing

none

None

This county is in need of a outdoor unground pool facility. It should be by paid membership. We could utilize it for numerous reasons... swim lessons, parties, swim meets, adult swim, and other focused events. It would also provide safe and healthy options for children and adults

clean bathroom checks often

In a perfect world a real sports complex in the county w turf fields bathrooms concessions

And also an indoor arena to do sports during the winter.

A Heated Indoor Pool would be great to have in the County

Having a vending machine might be nice at some parks. Or having food trucks being able to come.

More trails would be nice.

We very much enjoy Martinek. We just went out to find the Rowing Ranger and my 5 yr old loved it!

We enjoy the trails and use the boat ramp often for both kayaking and taking out the boat.

Satisfied.

Facilities should include more ethnically diversified staff.

We need public kayak storage and better kayak launch options!!!

Kids lack priority, especially soft,baseball fields in our community. Denton's town park leaves much to be desired. We visit other counties and leave saying I wish Caroline would have facilities and promote kids and sports. Lax and soccer fields are cheaper so they seem to get attention but lions club park and the fields behind the school are left subject to whatever parents donors or volunteer. The money brought in by having great youth sports complexes in other communities is GREAT, and Caroline is ignorant to the true value brought in by these facilities. I am typing this as I am sitting in a hotel for a softball tournament, we've ordered dinner out one night and eating out tonight, have been to the local Walmart and Safeway here also. Parents and money follow the kids! Let's not mention the mental, emotional and overall physical health and positive impact sports have on our youth and future! Thanks

Something for kids who are neurodiverse? Autistic kids and kids with anxiety would LOVE to be included in something.

Na

Nothing

none

none

I think more activities should be available after 530

I feel we do a wonderful job with what we have.

More offerings for adults would be great

Maybe some yoga

We participate in 5k's, swim lessons, tumble bunnies. Missing some of the things offered because of COVID but prior to we were very pleased with the activities available.

Kayaking equipment rental should be more accessible.

Programs seem strong

Soccer field , access to water, spraying for ticks, cutting the grass , better playground equipment, the equipment on 4th street and the maintenance is just sad

A formal place to hold events such as summer concerts, and splash pad would be amazing! It would be great to have challenging trails around here.

The preteen/teen/young adult community needs places in the area to be able to go to do something productive. A rec center something. There is also a huge need for a good soccer turf field/facility

Please add more things to do for our children , I feel I see less kids wanting to go out and play, they'd rather stay inside. They playgrounds are so outdated

My family visits Martinak, Tuckahoe and Adkins Arboretum regularly. However, the state parks in our county seem to not be as well maintained as other state parks. There are limited number of pavilions and they are in need of repair. I think the staff at these two parks do everything they can but there is not an investment from the county or state to help improve or expand these facilities.

I know it's hard but I think we need more youth programs. Maybe field hockey, swim team. I strongly believe that Denton could use an indoor sports facility. Not only will our children benefit but so will our local businesses.

The 4th street park (playground) in Denton is pathetic. The equipment is so old that I don't even want my kids on it. It looks like there was an attempt to add something new (closer to the tennis courts), but my 4 yr old goes down the tiny slide once and is bored. The whole playground should be redone with new and safer equipment. My kids always want to go to the Easton playground (on Idelwild). We should have something here similar for our kids, this way we don't have to go all the way to Easton for a nice playground.

We definitely need more access to water activities like swimming pools, sprinkler parks, and splash pads. Also, a track for kids to run and bike on would be wonderful. And also, more indoor play facilities for wintertime, especially for the many homeschoolers in our area to be able to utilize for PE. Please build a tennis wall so that simple person can play alone and practice.

Restrooms need to be open, functioning, and clean at all public parks for the entire time that the park is open.

Denton needs a large public swimming pool like the 2 that are in Talbot County and the 1 that is in Dorchester county.

We love what we have, but know we could do so much more, and are excited to think about what recreational activities could be in store!

Caroline Recreation and Parks does a fine job considering the diverse demographic of the county and the size of the Dept. Caroline County should be proud. I hope that the county took note of how vital Recreation and Parks is to building stronger communities, especially in light of the last year or so throughout the COVID pandemic.

Would love to see a community pool

I know you guys try, but give us something really special to set the county with one of the highest tax rates apart!

Need more fir kids in the area

Limited knowledge of activities or programs being offered. I often hear about these activities the day they are happening or after they have happened.

You should mail out a schedule for any activity that are planned so we can join the fun ! usually don't found out till the day before or the day of.

I'd love to see more for the 40+ year old woman.

N/a

Additional programming for teens, young adults, musicians

Caroline Recreation and Parks does a fine job considering the diverse demographic of the county and the size of the Dept. Caroline County should be proud. I hope that the county took note of how vital Recreation and Parks is to building stronger communities, especially in light of the last year or so throughout the COVID pandemic.

Our Parks and Rec dept is great

Facilities... outdoor equipment, benches, tables, playground equipment seem to be at the bottom of list for maintenance, specifically keeping surfaces reasonably clean of algae and dirt. Water access areas and parking associated with those areas I feel should be expanded and an effort should be made to make those features priorities as the Chopank and Tuckahoe rivers offer a lot of recreational activities
Happy to take the survey, I couldn't make the call

Would love a dog park or at least an off-leash area within existing parks
Would love to see more walking/hiking trails, a dog park, pickleball courts, and indoor and outdoor pools

OK

It would be great to have open gym time in the winter where kids can run a play and a lot of summer activities are during the day when parents work, this prevents a lot of kids from participating in anything except the summer programs at the schools. This is also the first year summer prognosis being offered at Ridgely Elementary and I hope that it is offered again next year. I would love to see before and after care offered at the schools and would pay for this service. We also need more community gardens

Love the parks and programs. Keep up the good work!

We would love a swimming pool in the community. Special Olympics Maryland serves a lot of people with disabilities and we have limited use of the YMCA in Easton. A pool in Caroline County would help serve more people- especially those with disabilities who need the exercise for their health and well being.

With the lack of recreational opportunities for our children we often have to seek other counties recreational activities. A community swimming pool would do wonders to keep kids engaged in a safe area during the summer as well as bring summer job opportunities for teenagers as they could be lifeguards and/or work concessions at said pool. A movie theatre/bowling would also do this county wonders as again it would provide a safe place for kids to venture to.

Thank you

Na

More and better maintained baseball fields.

None

Access to garbage cans in the parks would be nice so people aren't as Amoy to litter. Maybe just access to them at the restrooms and boat launches?

We should get a dog park I have a Boy Scout who would like to make this is Eagle Scout project

Need more activities and recreation for younger children

Denton needs a better playground, the Fourth St. park is kind of sad.

Would love to see more programs for 0-4 kids

OK

I love movie nights outside when there is a bathroom available and wish there were more family activities such as parent and child yoga on hours that working families can participate in. I would also like swings in our local parks that parent and child can sit together facing each other if a swing for parent and infant or toddler

NA

Keep it up!

We would love to see an indoor pool in Caroline County.

I think I answered this question in question 23. Please see question 23.

Wish there was more to do for my age group that didn't occur during working hours

More program for teenagers

N/A
None

N/A
Would like adult tap dance back

good

good

Good job
Even though I personally do not use most of the County facilities, I strongly believe parks and recreation areas are essential services to our communities. These areas improve our physical and psychological health, strengthen our communities, and make Caroline County a more attractive place to live and work.
None
Thank you for this survey.

Continue to adequately fund these programs so they may continue to serve our communities.
Need more summer camps/sports camps/general activities for kids aged 13-18.

A dog park would be great!

No comments

No comments

Na

We need a community theater for dance, music and actors, and supporting rooms for productions related thereto
I am extremely interested in having a nice, spacious (off-leash) dog park in Caroline County, with areas for small and large breeds. Grass (not dirt which turns to mud), trees for shade, benches, water fountain, and agility/play features for the dogs.
Tuckahoe-need to be redone completely.
We need to have trash receptacles at all parks and we need more rentable activities, i.e., bikes, paddle boats, etc..

It is thoroughly discouraging that our county doesn't have a public pool to belong to. I'd love for my kids to have the ability to be on a swim team.
none

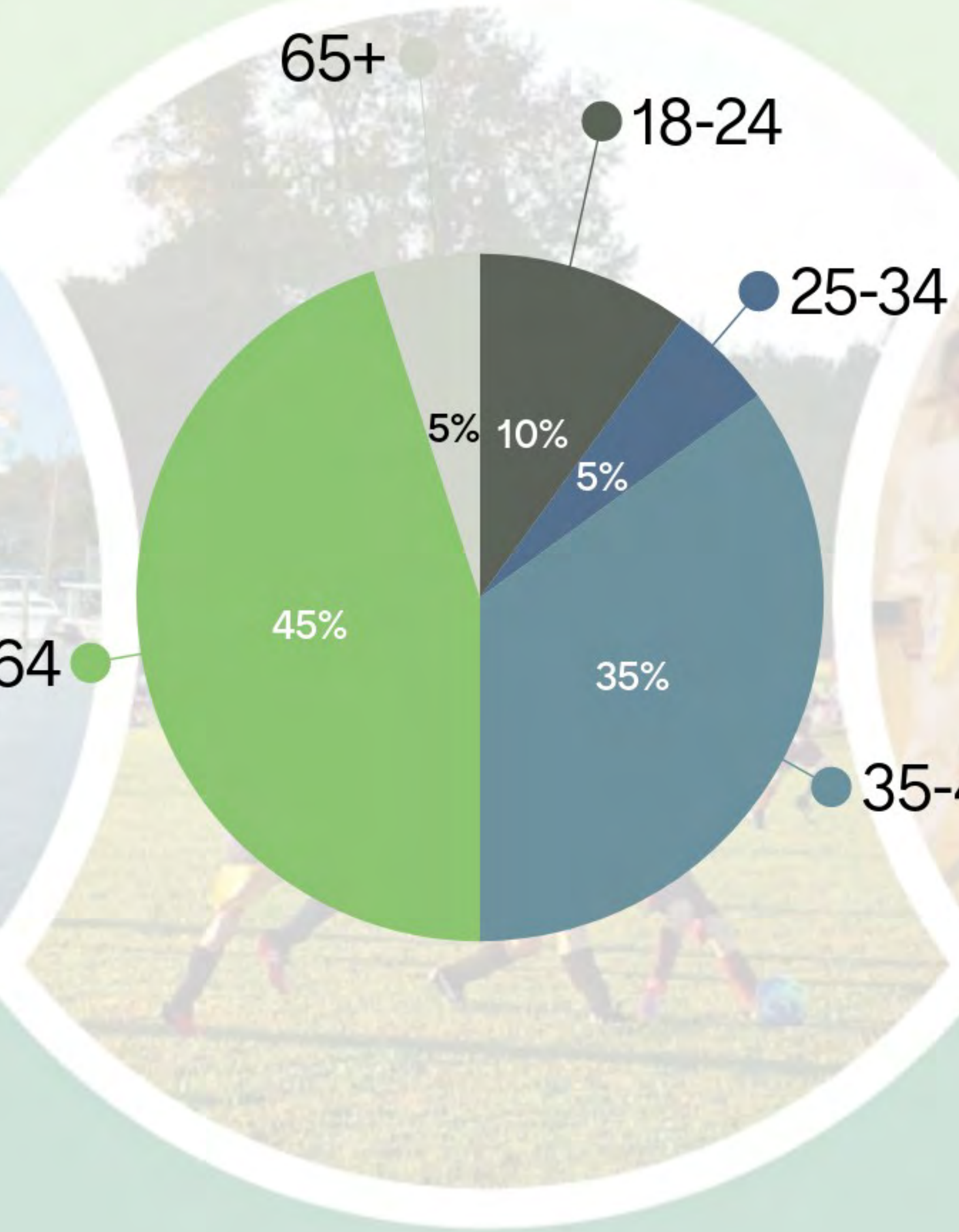
There aren't enough fields for Spring Soccer to be able to have practices. Therefore the kids get no direction on how to improve their skills.
none

There is a serious lack of baseball and softball fields in the county. Different ages require different base lengths and for the older kids Lockerman field is the only bigger size in the area. The field is constantly booked (and overbooked even by those that don't live in the county and bump those that do live in the county). The lack of fields is pushing many players to sign up to play in different counties.

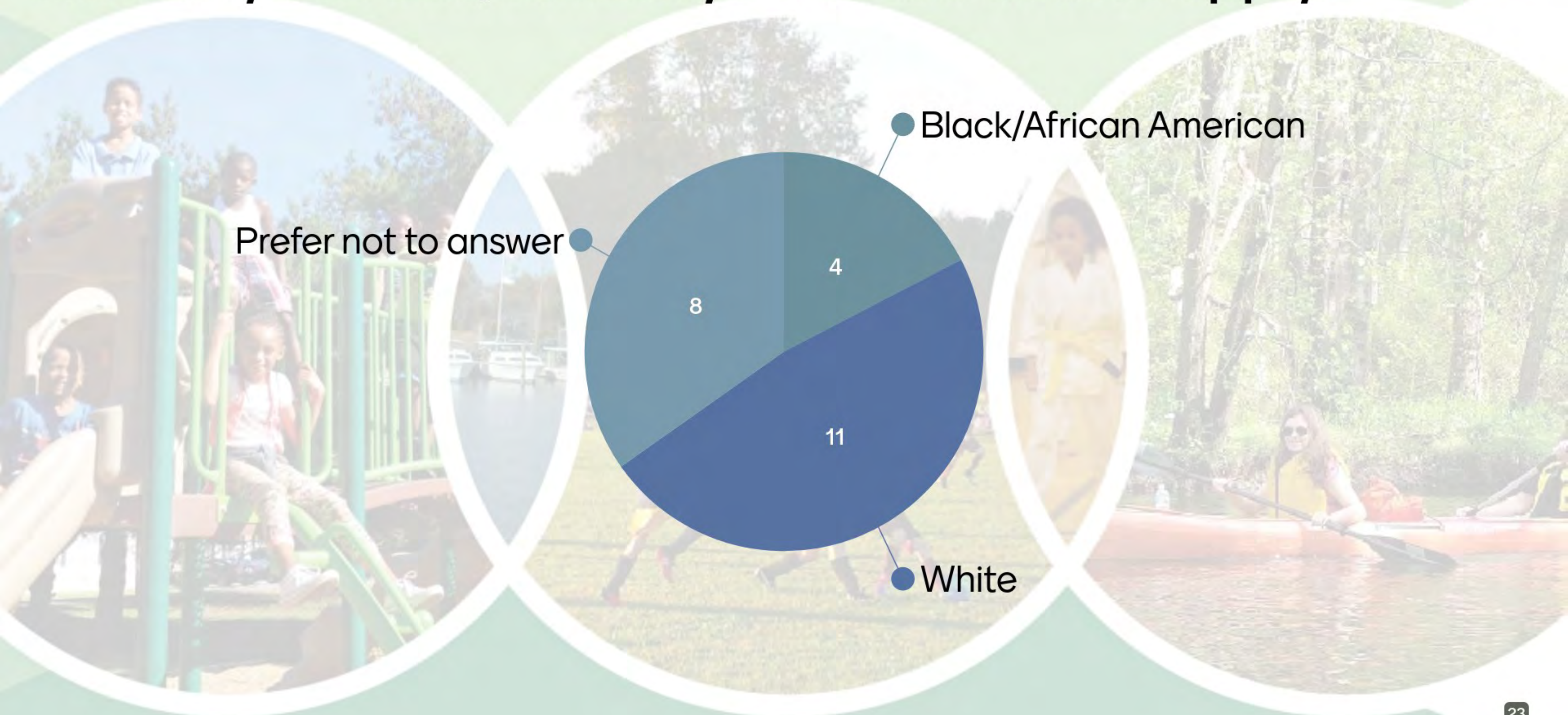
Leave the 4H park only for agricultural and 4H activities.

Parks and Rec should support the dentin YMCA's move to a larger facility
Wish in winter more indoor space

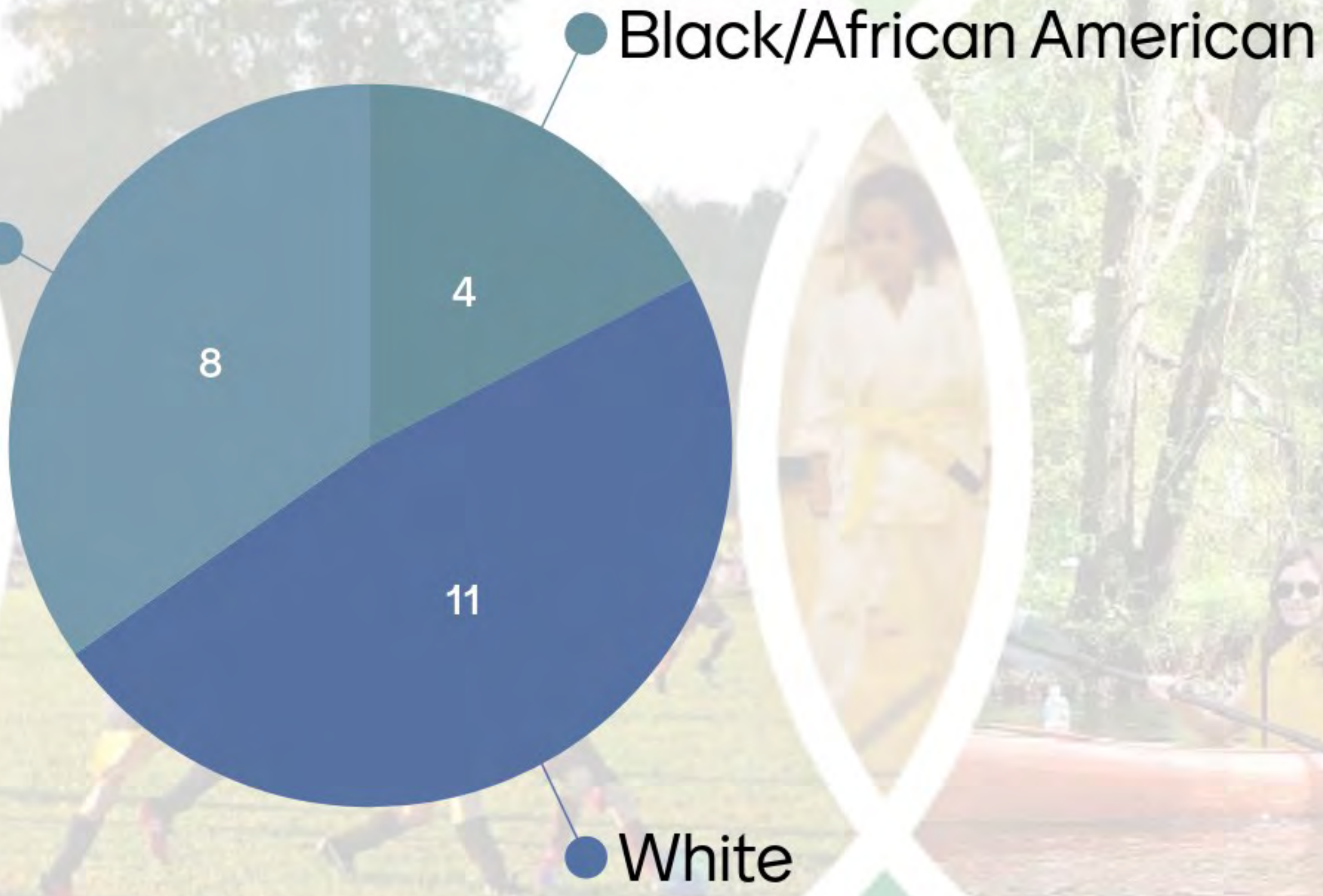
How old are you?



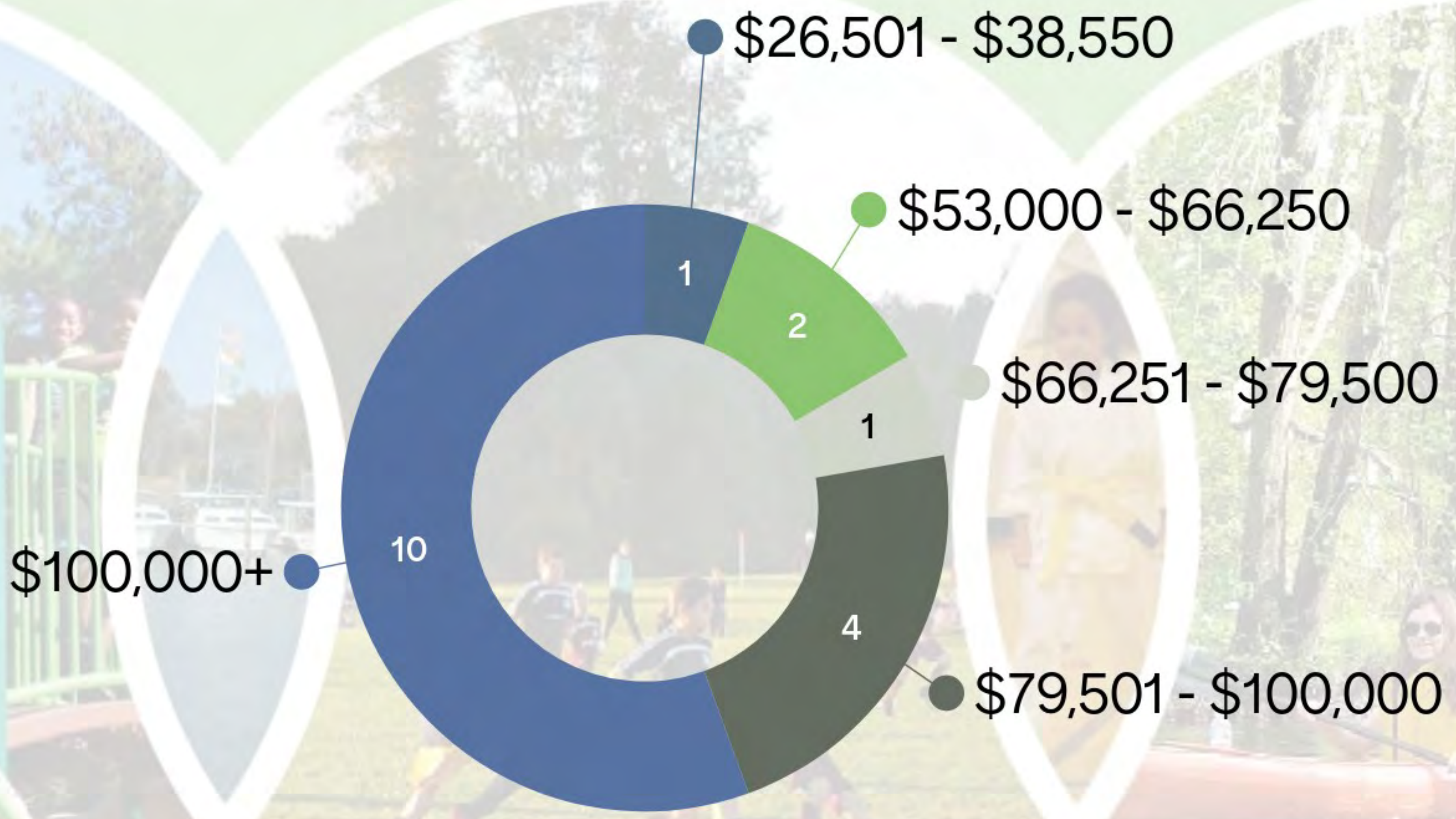
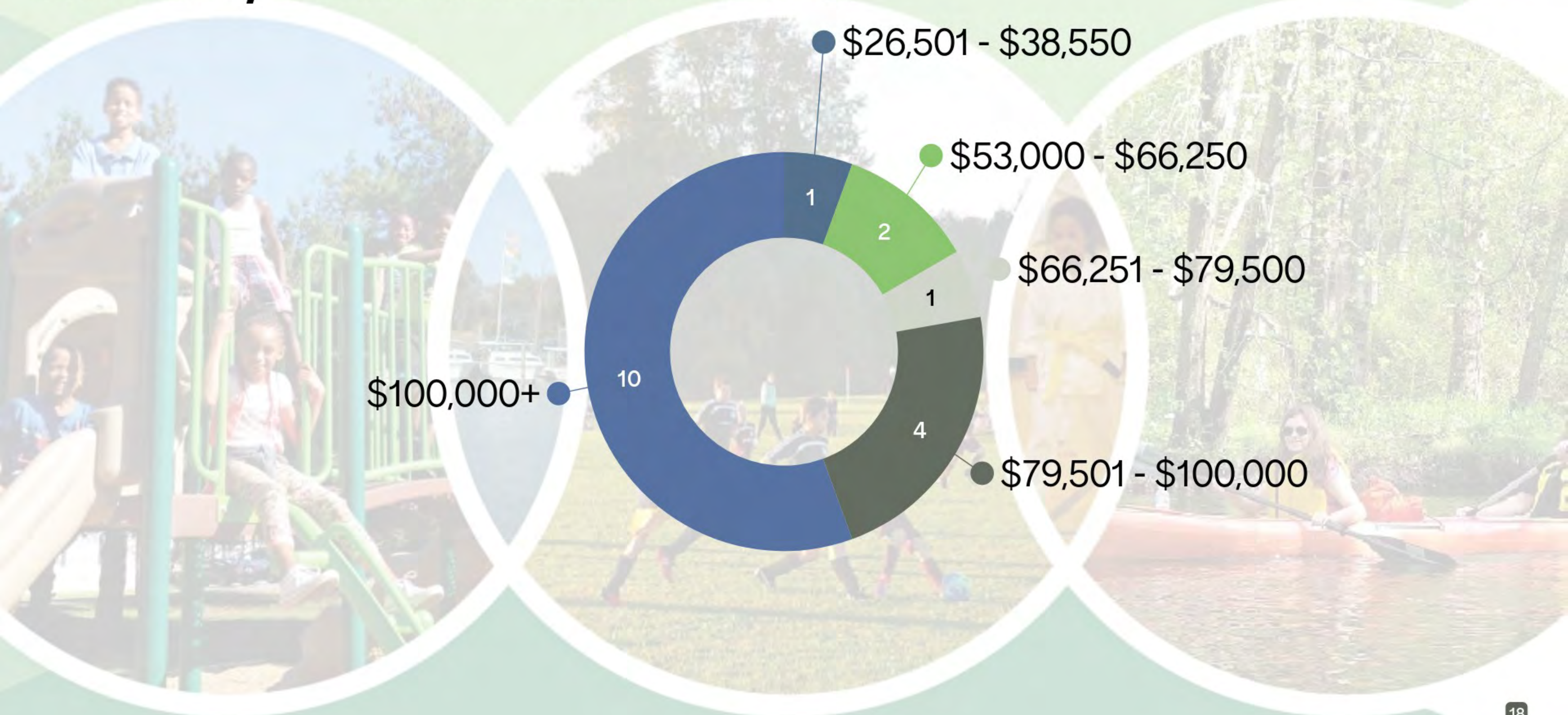
What is your race/ethnicity? Choose all that apply.



Prefer not to answer



What is your household income?



What is most important to you in your parks?



1st

[Redacted]

Amenities

2nd

[Redacted]

Accessibility

3rd

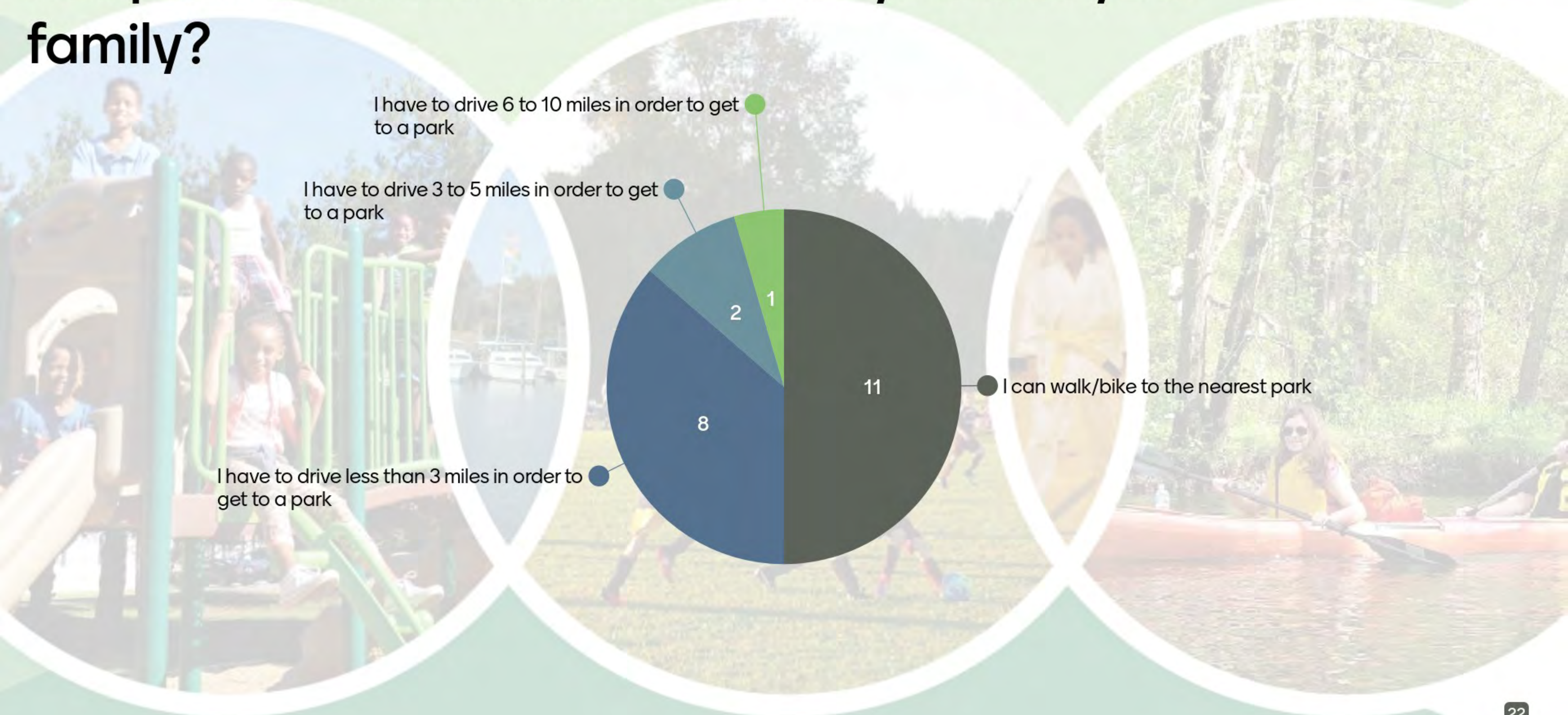
[Redacted]

Availability

On a scale of 1 to 5, how important are the following park features?



Are park facilities accessible for you and your family?



Are park facilities accessible for you and your family?



Completely Inaccessible

Fully Accessible

Excluding state parks (Martinak and Tuckahoe), is there adequate access to the following amenities?



What is most important to you in recreational offerings?

1st



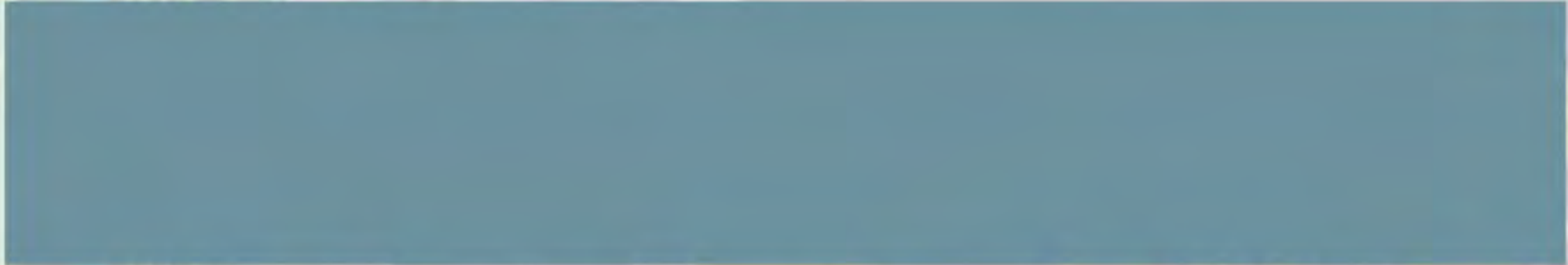
Variety

2nd



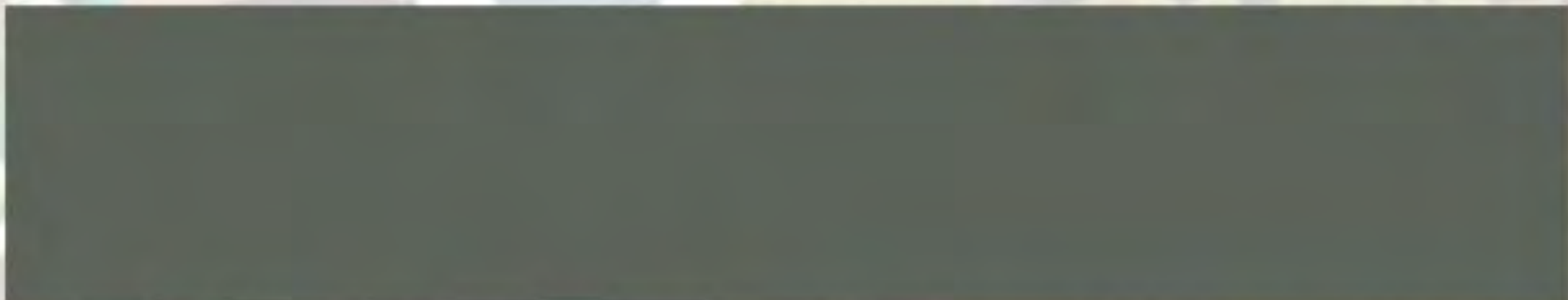
Affordability

3rd



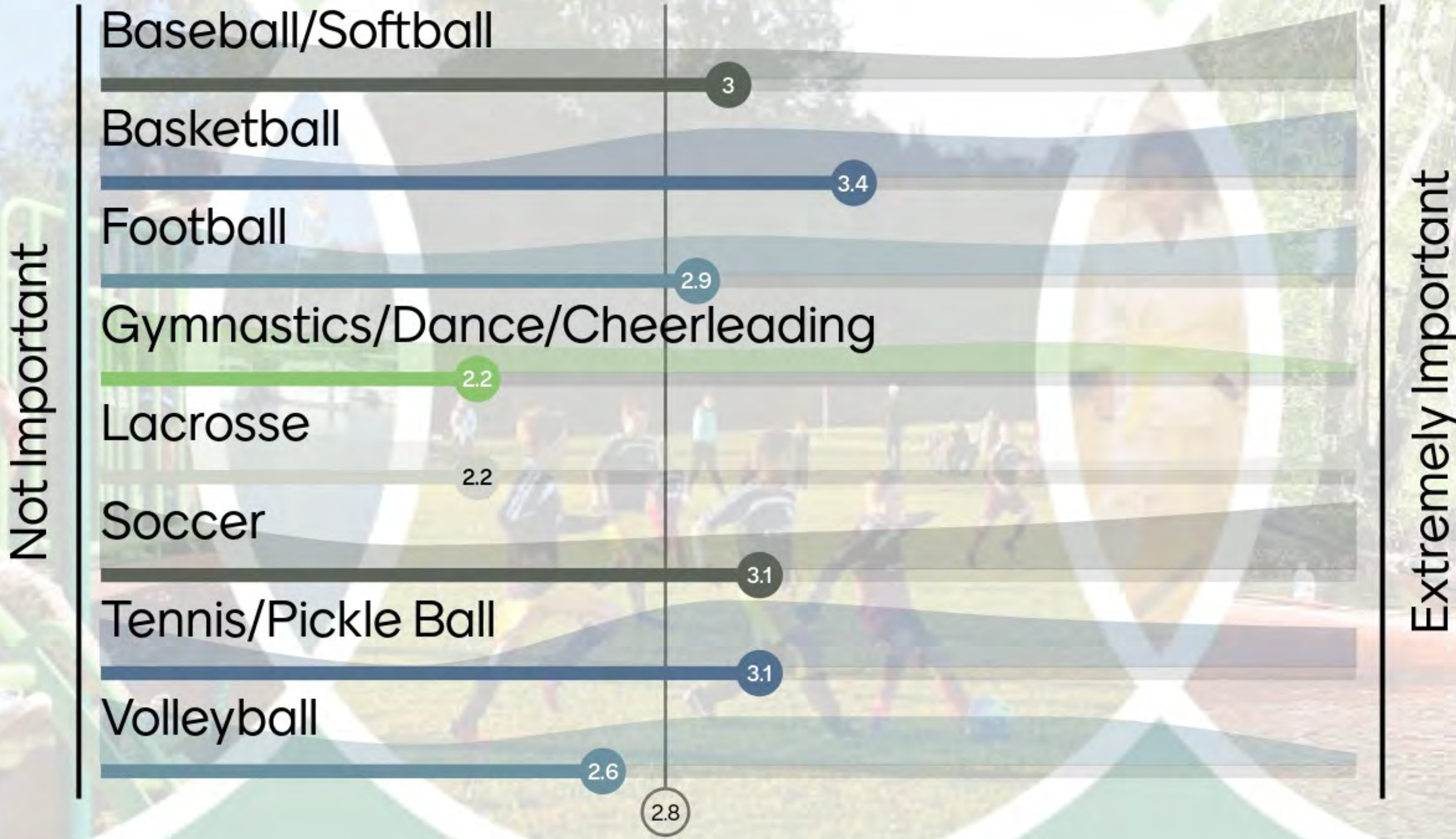
Availability

4th



Accessibility

On a scale of 1 to 5, how important are the following recreational sports activities?



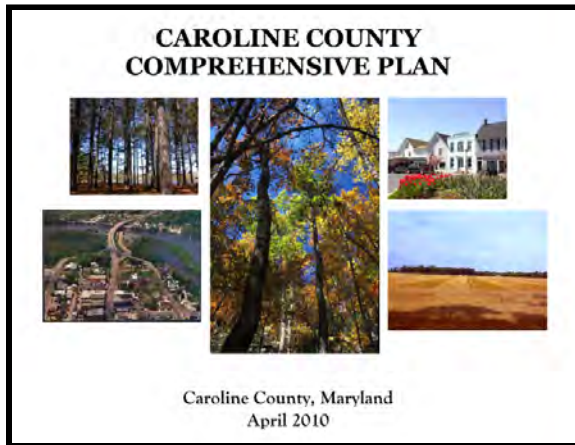
On a scale of 1 to 5, how important are the following recreational activities?



Are recreational and leisure activities accessible for you, your family, and your community?



2010 Caroline County Comprehensive Plan



2017 Caroline County Land Preservation, Parks & Recreation Plan

