

Staff Draft

# Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan

November 2006

Prepared by the  
Park Planning & Resource Analysis Unit, Department of Parks

[Cover Illustration - to come]

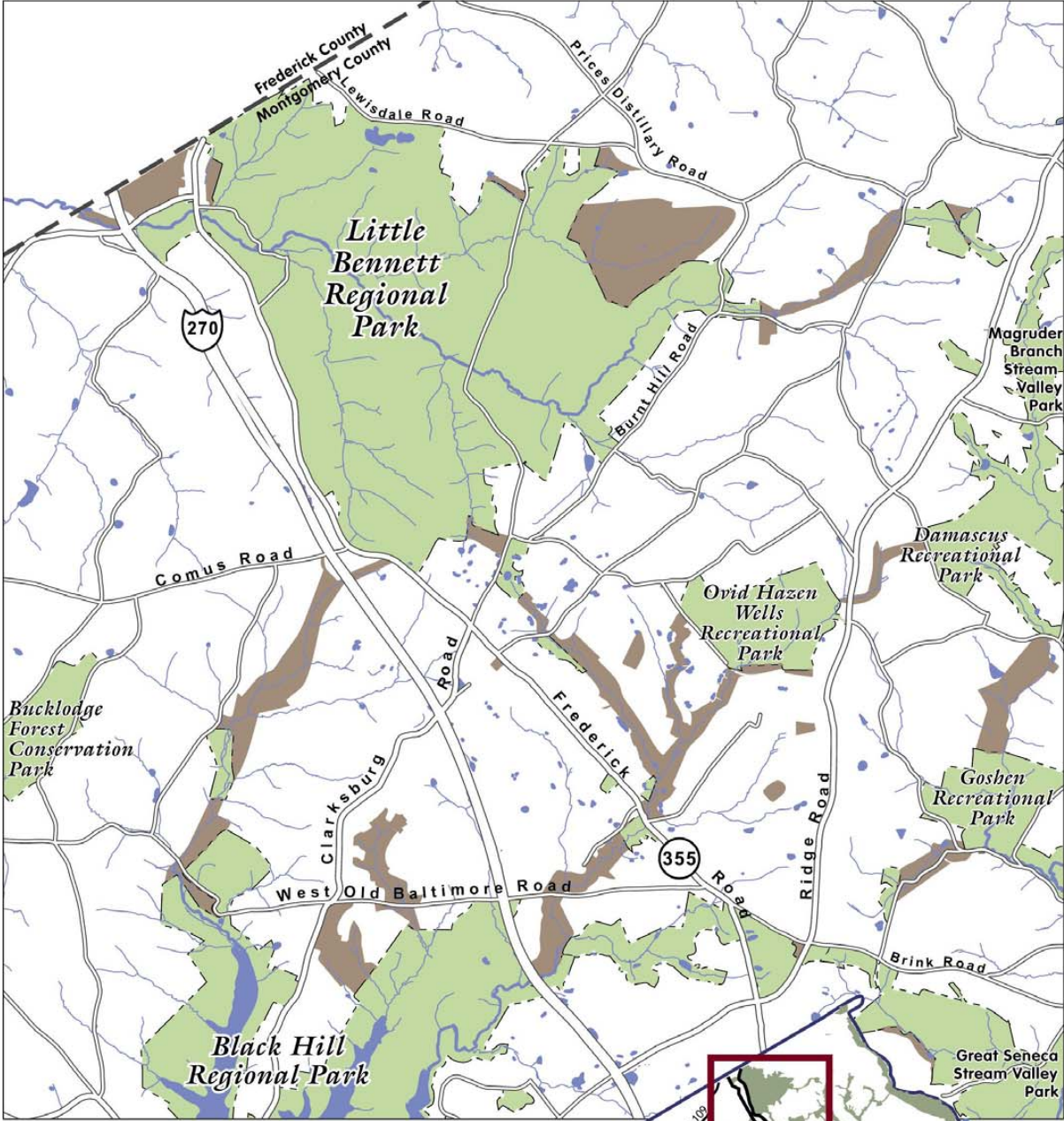


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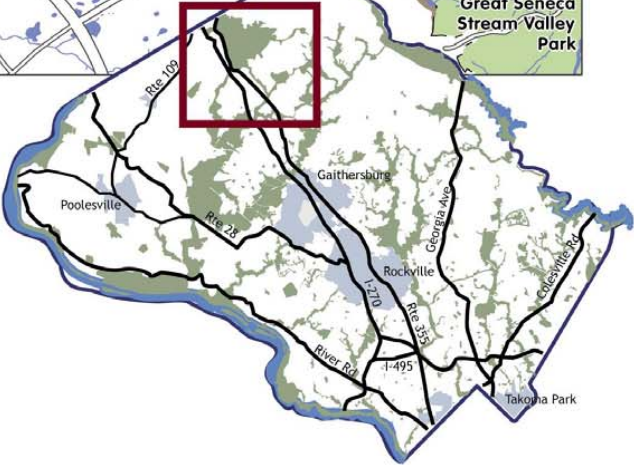
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# Little Bennett Regional Park

## Vicinity Map



- Existing M-NCPPC Parklands
- Proposed Parklands



## Introduction

With over 3,600 acres, Little Bennett Regional Park (LBRP) is the largest park in the M-NCPPC park system. The park is bisected by Little Bennett Creek, a high quality stream that supports one of the few brown trout fisheries in the County. There are 11 historic sites in the park including the Montgomery Chapel Cemetery, Zeigler Log House, Hyattstown Mill and Kingsley School House. The park is considered one of the best contiguous natural areas in Montgomery County.

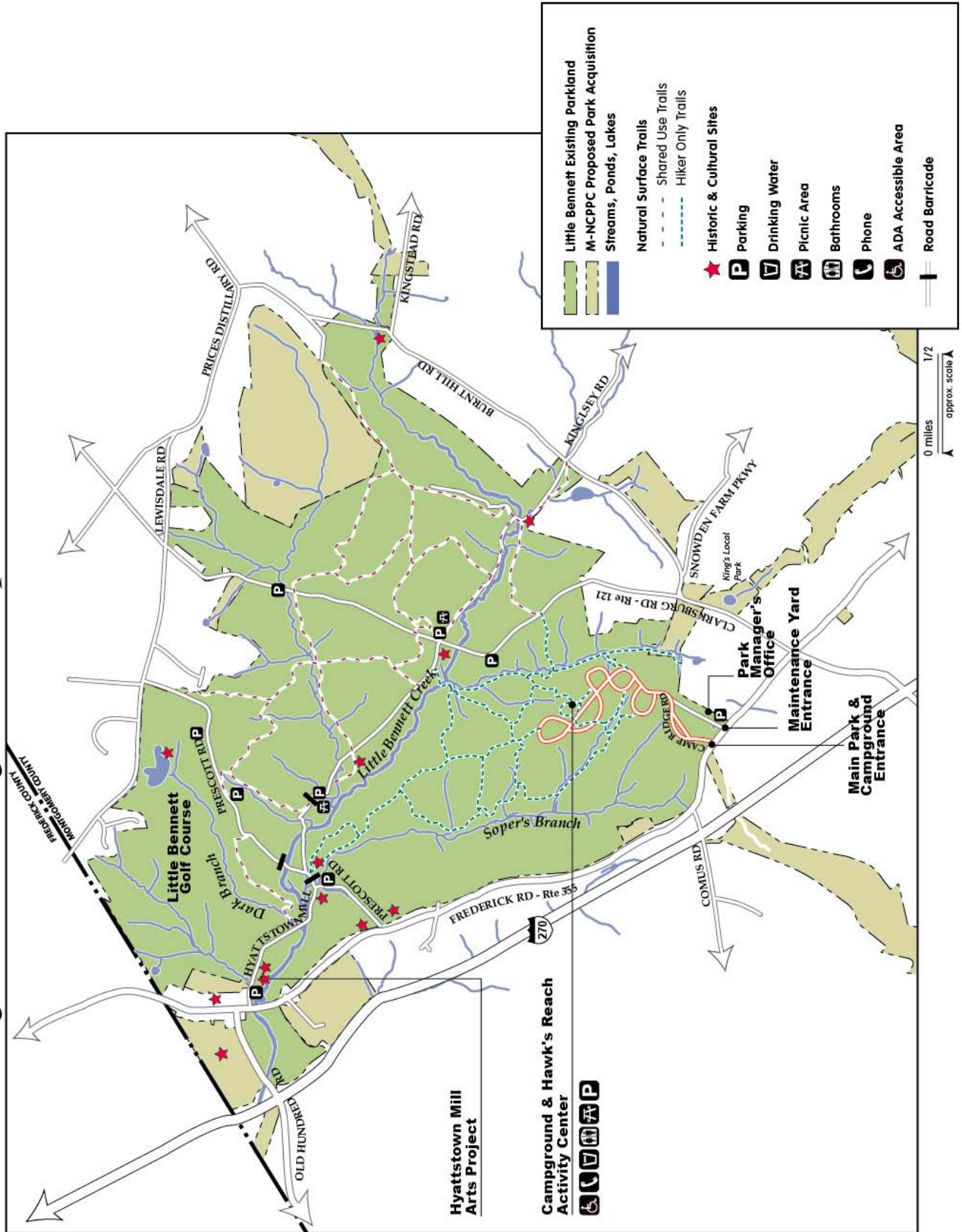
Existing park facilities (see map on the following page) include a 91-site campground, 18 hole golf course and driving range, over 23 miles of natural trails and a maintenance yard with offices for park personnel. Approximately 67,500 visitors come to the park every year to enjoy hiking, cycling, birding, camping, fishing, horseback riding, plant walks, interpretive programs and golf.

A concept plan for the park was completed in 1985 (see Background Information). The Plan included recommendations for a Future Family Campground, a Group Campground, a Swim Facility, a Day Use Facility, a Visitors Center, an Outdoor Education area, and a Golf Course Complex. The Plan proposed an ambitious implementation schedule that has not yet been realized.

This Staff Draft Master Plan revisits the recommendations of the 1985 Concept Plan and proposes more detailed guidance in the following areas: trails, the day use area, historic and cultural interpretation, park character along MD 355 and accommodating potential future need for ball fields. The resulting Draft Master Plan Map (see page 4) updates the recommendations of the 1985 Concept Plan while still honoring the Plan's guiding development principle:

*Development at Little Bennett should emphasize  
the park's natural features, beauty and  
tranquil environment while at the same time providing  
Montgomery County residents with a variety of recreation  
experiences oriented to this unique  
outdoor setting.*

# Little Bennett Regional Park Existing Facilities Map





# Plan Concepts

The proposed Master Plan for Little Bennett Regional Park is shown on the following page. The key elements of the Plan include:

**Nature Based Retreat:** Little Bennett Regional Park should offer sanctuary and retreat from the everyday pressures of life. The Plan ensures park visitors sense the presence of a very special natural area and landscape from the moment they enter the park.

**Trails:** Existing trails have been integrated into a more cohesive system that is accessible from trail head parking lots located at the edge of the park.

**Gateway Features:** The main entrance to the park, proposed along MD 355, will include a visitor center, interpretive programs and nature based recreational activities.

**Park Character along MD 355 and Clarksburg Road:** Providing pleasant vistas and views into the park from these roads is critical to attract visitors.

**Interpretive Emphasis:** The Draft Plan proposes an overarching interpretive theme of life in Montgomery County's Piedmont, and its influence on the culture and ecology of yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

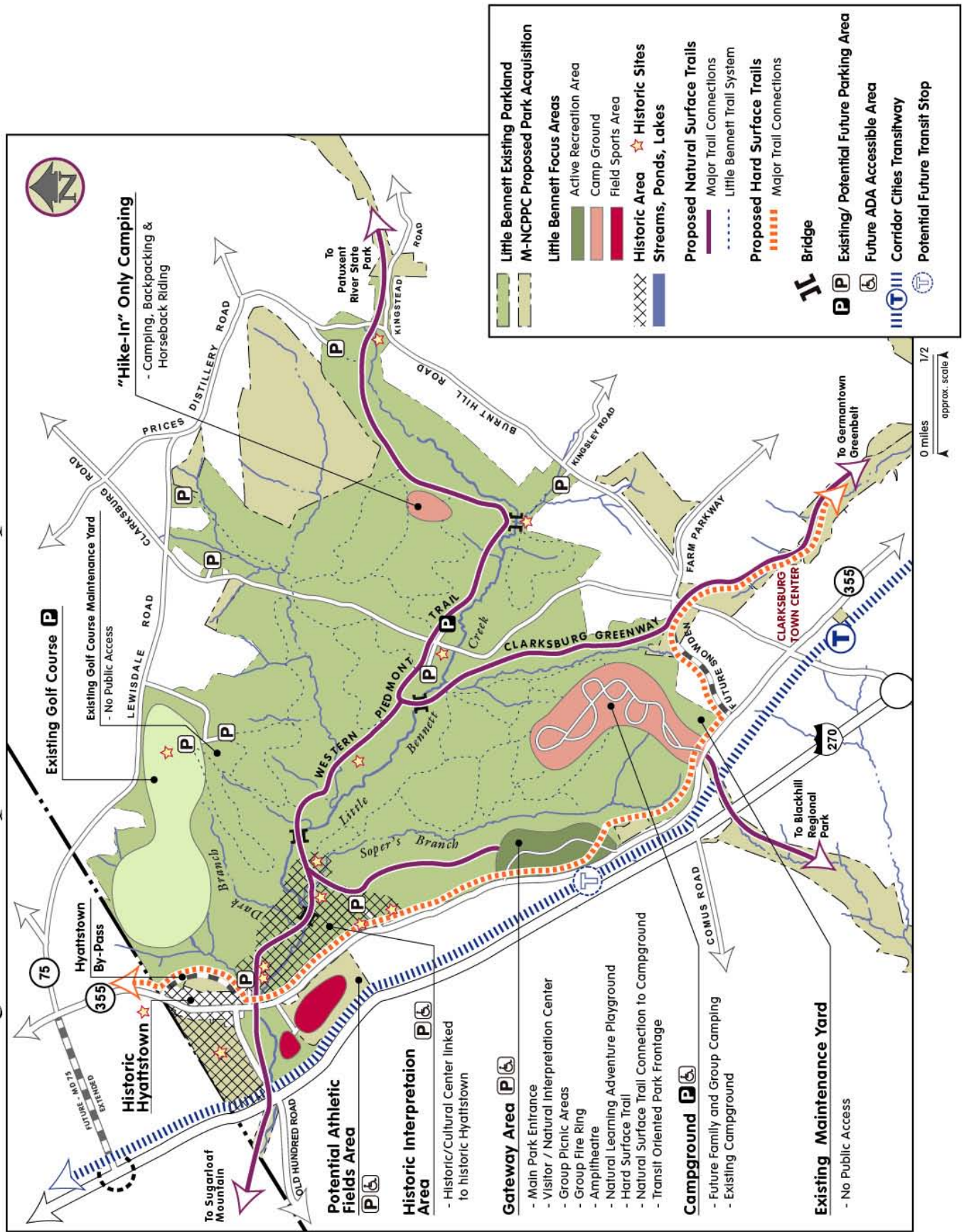
**Active Recreation:** A potential location for future athletic fields is shown west of MD 355 and will not interfere with the nature-based emphasis for the portion of the park east of MD 355.

**Accessibility:** The Proposed Master Plan (next page) assures that the park is accessible by different modes of transportation and can be enjoyed by people with limited mobility.

**Unified Design Themes:** Design guidelines in this Plan emphasize nature based themes and historic architectural patterns from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Little Bennett Golf Course:** The 18-hole Little Bennett Golf Course opened in 1994. More than 20,000 golfers enjoy the course every year. One approach to attract more golf course use may be to provide family oriented facilities and group event areas near the golf course. This and other options, such as providing a golf-learning center, will be explored during a separate Master Plan for the golf course being prepared by the Montgomery County Revenue Authority.

# Little Bennett Regional Park Proposed Master Plan Map





# Plan Recommendations

The Plan recommendations for Little Bennett Regional Park are presented by the eight plan concepts that have guided the plan process.

## *Plan Concept 1: Nature Based Retreat*

*Assure Little Bennett Regional Park continues as a nature based retreat and a major open space feature in the upper portion of Montgomery County.*

As the largest regional park in Montgomery County (over 3600 acres) Little Bennett Regional Park still allows visitors to feel “lost” in the woods and to experience a sense of solitude in nature. Visitors to the park can wander for hours on more than 20 miles of trails within this forest setting. The importance of Little Bennett Regional Park as a place of sanctuary and natural beauty will become even more important as neighboring communities continue to grow (Clarksburg and Germantown in Montgomery County, Urbana in Frederick County). The relation of the park to these communities is shown on page 6.

### **Recommendations:**

#### □ **Emphasize protection and preservation of the park’s natural features.**

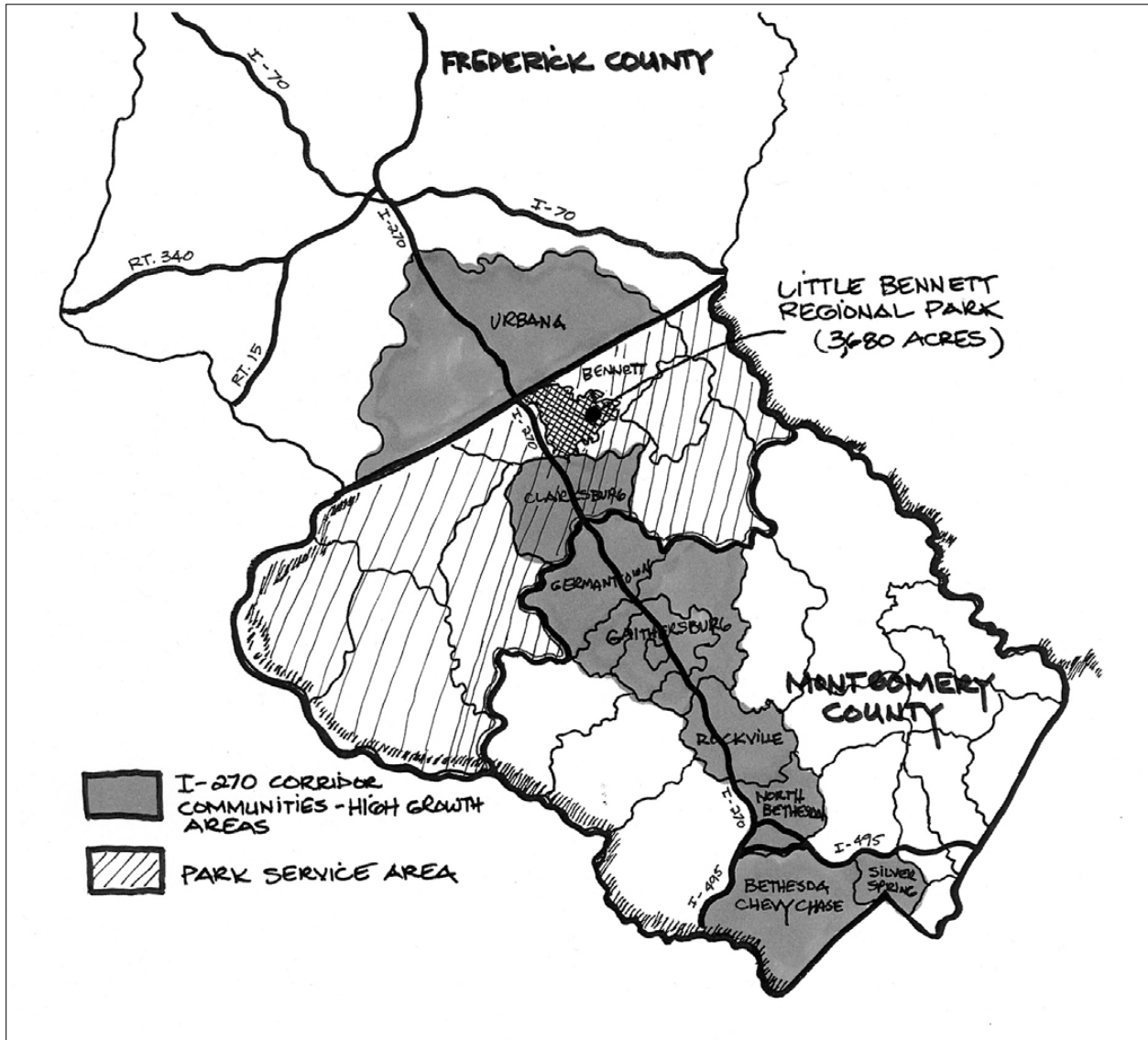
Key environmental features of the park include Little Bennett Creek and Sopers Branch, a successional forest that includes the county’s best collection of American sycamore trees and many species of rare plants. Unlike other parks in the county, Little Bennett has remained relatively free of exotic, invasive plants. The mosaic of upland and floodplain forest, old fields, wetlands and streams provide habitat for breeding birds and other wildlife species.

Surveys conducted by M-NCPPC Natural Resource Management and the Maryland Natural Heritage Program over the past 15 years have identified several rare to uncommon vegetation types and plant species in the park that are note worthy and require protection. These include:

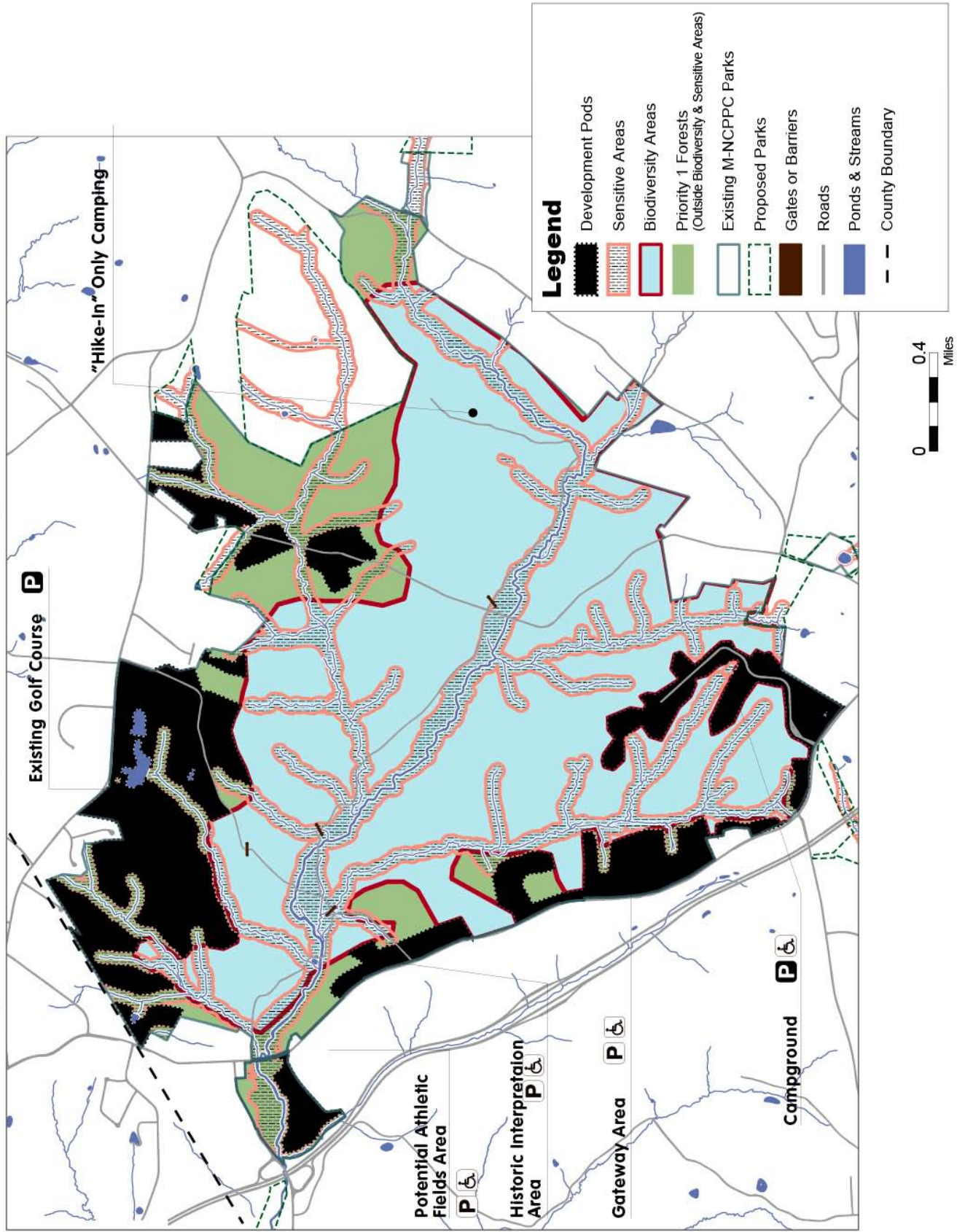
- Large populations of ground pine/running cedar (*Lycopodium* spp.), uncommon in the County, are found in the high quality forested area east of Sopers Branch northwest of the campground.
- High quality skunk cabbage see areas form a large swamp complex along Sopers Branch represent fine examples of this native community type now definitely uncommon in Montgomery County.
- State listed rare, threatened and uncommon plants include: butternut tree (*Juglans cinerea*); (flowering and fruiting) American chestnut trees; the state threatened fringe-tip closed gentian, and purple fringeless orchid (*Platanthera peramoena*). In all, 2 state-threatened, 1state-rare, and 9 watchlist plant species are found in the park.
- Within Little Bennett, wet and dry meadows, old fields from 5 to 20 years old, and agricultural fields support a tremendous amount of wildlife, bird and insect life. Open meadows are increasingly rare in the Piedmont region. In a number of the old fields and pastures, Appalachian mound-building ants have built numerous colonies. At least one threatened and three watch list plant species have been documented in these fields, and the ants may play a role in maintaining the open habitats suitable for these plants.

- To protect these features, the interior of the park must be preserved. As shown on the following page, properties at the edges of the park emerge as most suitable for development. This Plan directs development to these edge areas and limits any development of the interior to natural surface trails.

**Regional Park Map Highlighting Little Bennett Park**



# Little Bennett Regional Park Development Potential Map



**Eliminate public vehicular access on old farm roads that now crisscross the park.**

When acquired in 1960's, the park included roads for local farm operations. Although portions of these roads have been closed off, this Plan goes further and recommends all public vehicular access to the interior be eliminated. The roads will become part of the trail network and will help provide the "firm and stable" surface needed by visitors with limited mobility.

- **Provide a natural surface trail network that is sensitive to environmental features and "lays lightly on the land."**

Trails are one of the most popular features of Little Bennett Regional Park. Many trails are simply old roadbeds or have been created by informal use. This plan provides a comprehensive trail network that has been planned to avoid wetlands, erodible soils, hydric soils and steep slopes. By upgrading existing trails to meet the Departments sustainable trail guidelines, the proposed trail system will minimize disruption to the park's natural beauty and reduce maintenance demands. The Plan's trail system recommendation and trail head parking are discussed in more detail in Concept 2: Trails.

- **Identify interpretive themes for the park to enhance public awareness and appreciation of natural resources in Little Bennett Regional Park.**

The success of Little Bennett Regional Park as a nature-based retreat depends on inspiring and educating people about stewardship of the natural environment. This Plan identifies strategies to do this (see Concept 5: Interpretive themes).

***Pictures Of Rare American Chestnuts; Anthills, Etc. - to come***

## *Plan Concept 2: Trails*

*Provide a comprehensive, sustainable trail network for the entire park and link that network to regional greenways.*

Linking existing trails into a comprehensive network was the single most important issue raised at the community forums on the plan. The Proposed Trail System Plan Map achieves this goal.

The key elements of the Trail System Plan include:

- Providing interconnected trails to enhance the enjoyment and length of time people can be on trails.
- Designating one trail as the Western Piedmont Trail that will form a critical link between the community of Damascus and the Seneca Creek Greenway to the east and Sugarloaf Mountain to the west.
- Linking the natural surface Clarksburg Greenway Trail system to the Western Piedmont Trail.
- Designing the Western Piedmont Trail to be suitable for people with disabilities.
- Providing trailhead parking locations around the perimeter of the park.
- Recommending the Clarksburg Greenway hard surface trail extend north to Hyattstown.
- Expanding the trail system from 20 miles to almost 30 miles.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Assure all natural surface trails meet the department’s sustainable trail guidelines.**

In 2003, the Countywide Park Trails Plan was amended to include guidelines for the design and layout of natural surface trails. These guidelines will help create sustainable trails that support trail uses with minimal impact to adjoining natural systems and cultural resources and require minimal maintenance. Many trails and trail segments at Little Bennett need to be relocated or re-aligned to meet these guidelines.

- **Create a “stacked loop” system of trails to avoid dead-ends and to offer more trail options.**

A “stacked loop” approach to trail planning allows people to enjoy a single, short trail loop or extend their trail experience by following a series of interconnected” loops. The proposed trail system for the Little Bennett orients trails to a series of trail head parking lots located at the perimeter of the park. Each parking lot will provide access to a short trail loop for those seeking a casual stroll in the woods. These trails in turn combine with other trail loops to accommodate those seeking much longer hikes or rides.

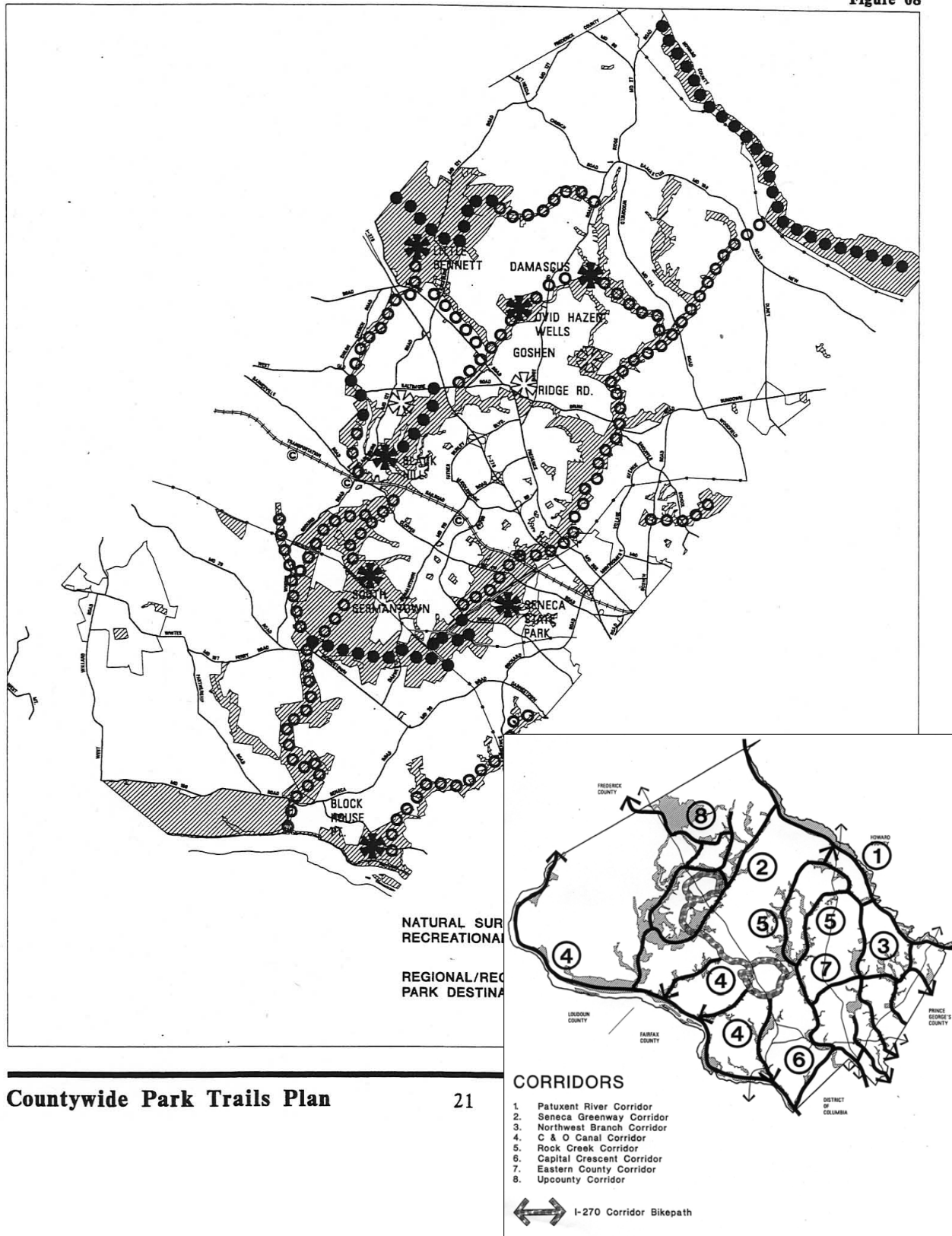


# Little Bennett Regional Park Proposed Trail Plan System Map

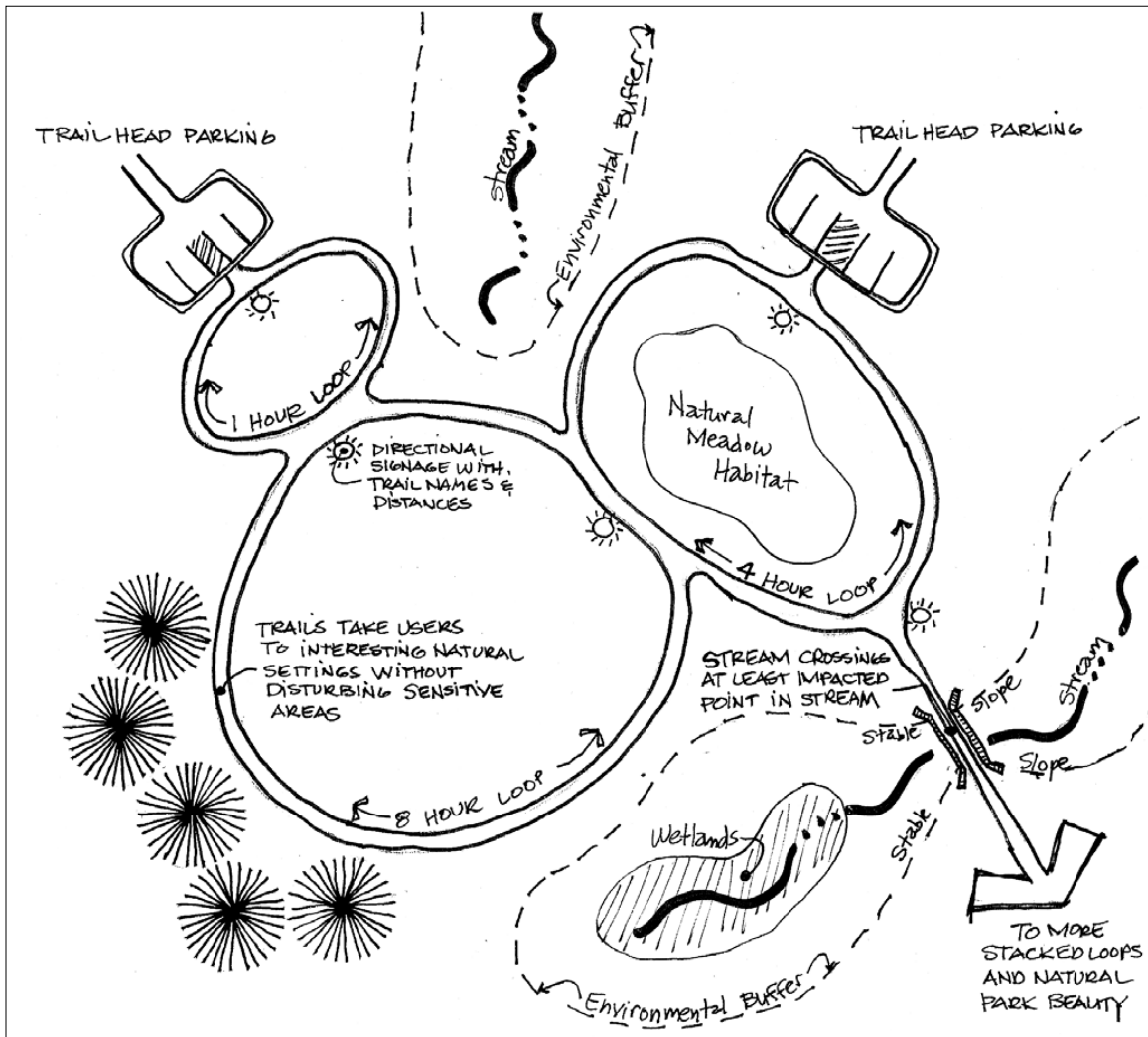


# NATURAL SURFACE TRAIL CONCEPT: SENECA GREENWAY CORRIDOR

Figure 08



## Sketch of Stacked Loop Concept



- ❑ **Designate an east-west trail in Little Bennett to be part of the regional Western Piedmont Trail.**

The Damascus Master Plan and the Countywide Park Trails Plan propose a trail connection between Seneca Creek Greenway Trail and Little Bennett Regional Park. The opportunity exists to extend this trail even further west, into Frederick County to Sugarloaf Mountain and the Monocacy Battlefield. An existing trail in LBRP will be renamed the Western Piedmont Trail as the first stop toward creating this regional trail.

- ❑ **Provide access from the campground to the shared use trails in the northern part of the park.**

During community meetings on the plan, many cyclists asked for connectivity from the campground to the shared used trail system in the northern portion of the park. This plan provides such a connection.

- ❑ **Provide trailhead parking around the edges of the park.**

This approach will allow park visitors to access the trail network without going into the main entrance.



□ **Connect the trail system to the Clarksburg Greenway network.**

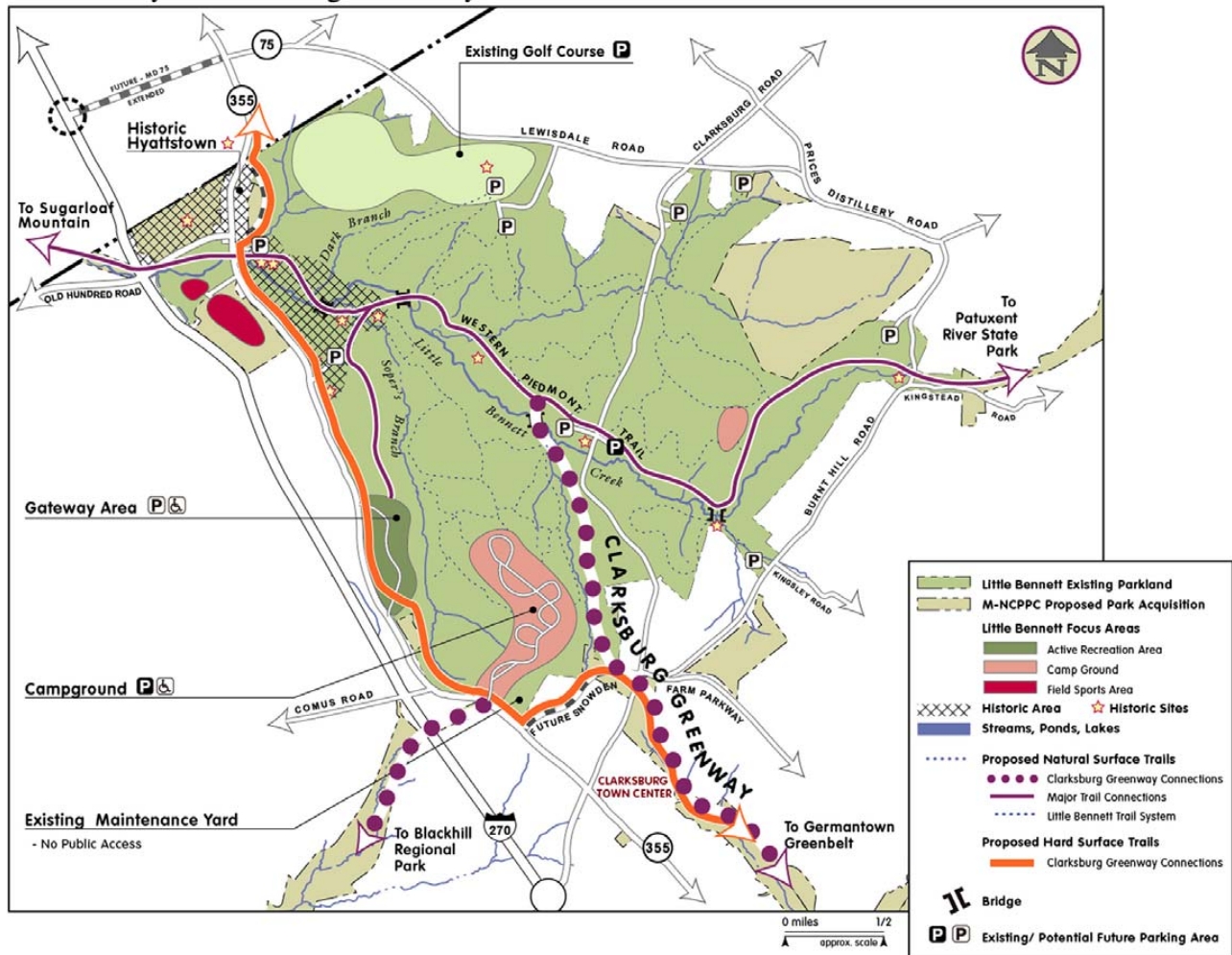
The Clarksburg Master Plan and the Clarksburg Greenway Implementation study propose an 11-mile greenway trail system that is an organizing element for the Clarksburg planning area. The greenway system is proposed to provide natural surface and hard surface trails. A key destination of the greenway system is Little Bennett Regional Park. As shown below this plan provides linkages to the Clarksburg Greenway

The natural surface trail component of the Clarksburg Greenway is proposed to terminate at the Western Piedmont Trail.

The hard surface trail component of the Clarksburg Greenway will continue to Hyattstown. The Clarksburg Master Plan envisioned the hard surface trail continuing along a greenway into Frederick County but the Frederick County plan does not envision such a greenway with other than a natural surface trail. For this reason, this Plan continues the hard surface trail as a bike path along the proposed bypass of Hyattstown shown in the Clarksburg Master Plan. Decisions regarding the hard surface trail's location, design and construction must await further engineering studies (see Implementation chapter).

**Relation to Clarksburg Greenway graphic**

*Connectivity to Clarksburg Greenway*



□ **Provide park visitors with disabilities an opportunity to enjoy park trails.**

A hard surface trail is proposed along the park frontage of MD 355. This trail will meet Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines and will provide access to the gateway area of the park as well as historic features closer to Hyattstown.

Visitors with limited mobility will be able to enjoy the beauty found in the interior of the park on the Western Piedmont Trail. This trail, formerly the Hyattstown Mill Road, features a “firm and stable” surface that can be negotiated by visitors with disabilities.

### *Plan Concept 3: Gateway Features*

*Provide a gateway into the park that welcomes visitors and focuses on natural learning and natural themes.*

Although Little Bennett Regional Park is over 3600 acres, it is in many ways a “hidden treasure.” Park owned houses from the original park acquisition obscure views into the park. The absence of any type of public entrance along MD 355 limits public access and public awareness of the park’s presence. This Gateway Area Concept Plan welcomes people to a Day Use Area and provides them an overview of the natural and cultural interpretive opportunities awaiting them.

Activities proposed for the gateway area are nature based and largely unstructured and include picnic areas, meadow habitats, native plant education areas, a group campfire, an amphitheatre, an adventure playground and trails. A Visitors Center with an interpretive focus is proposed.

Like the 1985 Plan concept, this Plan orients these activities to MD 355. Unlike the 1985 Plan concept, these activities are clustered into one area rather than spaced out along the entire MD 355 frontage (see Development Potential Map). This approach will result in less environmental disturbance. The area proposed for the gateway area lies outside environmental buffers, priority forests, biodiversity areas, slopes greater than 15%, floodplains and wetlands.

A Visitor Center will anchor the gateway to the park and help orient people to the park’s historic, cultural and natural features. (Further discussion regarding an interpretive center at the park is included in Policy 5: Interpretive Emphasis). The area will feature activities appropriate to Little Bennett’s natural setting, including:

- Group Picnic areas
- Nature based adventure playground
- Group fire ring and amphitheatre
- Interpretive landscapes
- Gardens

Although the actual layout and design of the area must await more detailed planning and engineering studies, the following plan recommendations should guide the development process.



**Little Bennett Gateway Area - Day Use Area Concept Plan**

**LITTLE BENNETT REGIONAL PARK**

**DAY USE AREA  
CONCEPT PLAN**



## Recommendations:

- ❑ **Provide a welcoming entrance into the park that respects the natural terrain and preserves vistas of the natural landscape.**

Little Bennett Regional Park offers respite and sanctuary from life's hectic pace. This feeling of sanctuary should occur immediately upon entering the park. Since most people will be arriving by car, this means parking and roads must be carefully designed to be secondary to natural vistas. As shown on the Viewshed Analysis map, the natural terrain includes several knolls. By curving the park entrance road around these knolls and by terracing smaller parking areas into moderately sloped areas, the parkway should provide views that are framed by the natural landscape.

The illustrative concept proposes placing the visitors center atop one of the knolls to provide overlooks into the adjacent forest and meadows and to create a welcoming feature as people turn into the park. The Visitor Center should be constructed in accordance with "green design principles" and provide information on "green technologies" that can be used in homes.

As shown in the Day Use Area Concept Plan, a key component of the entrance should be a "focal point" that reinforces the natural character of the park. This focal point could be some type of water feature (a pond or wetlands) or naturalized meadow. The objective is to assure that the entry into the park underscores the special experience awaiting the visitor in terms of enjoying and understanding nature.

- ❑ **Provide an enhanced landscaped buffer along MD 355 to heighten the sense of enclosure in the gateway area.**

The gateway area covers over 80 acres of mostly open land. The plan proposes adding landscaping to limit views of MD 355 from the gateway area.

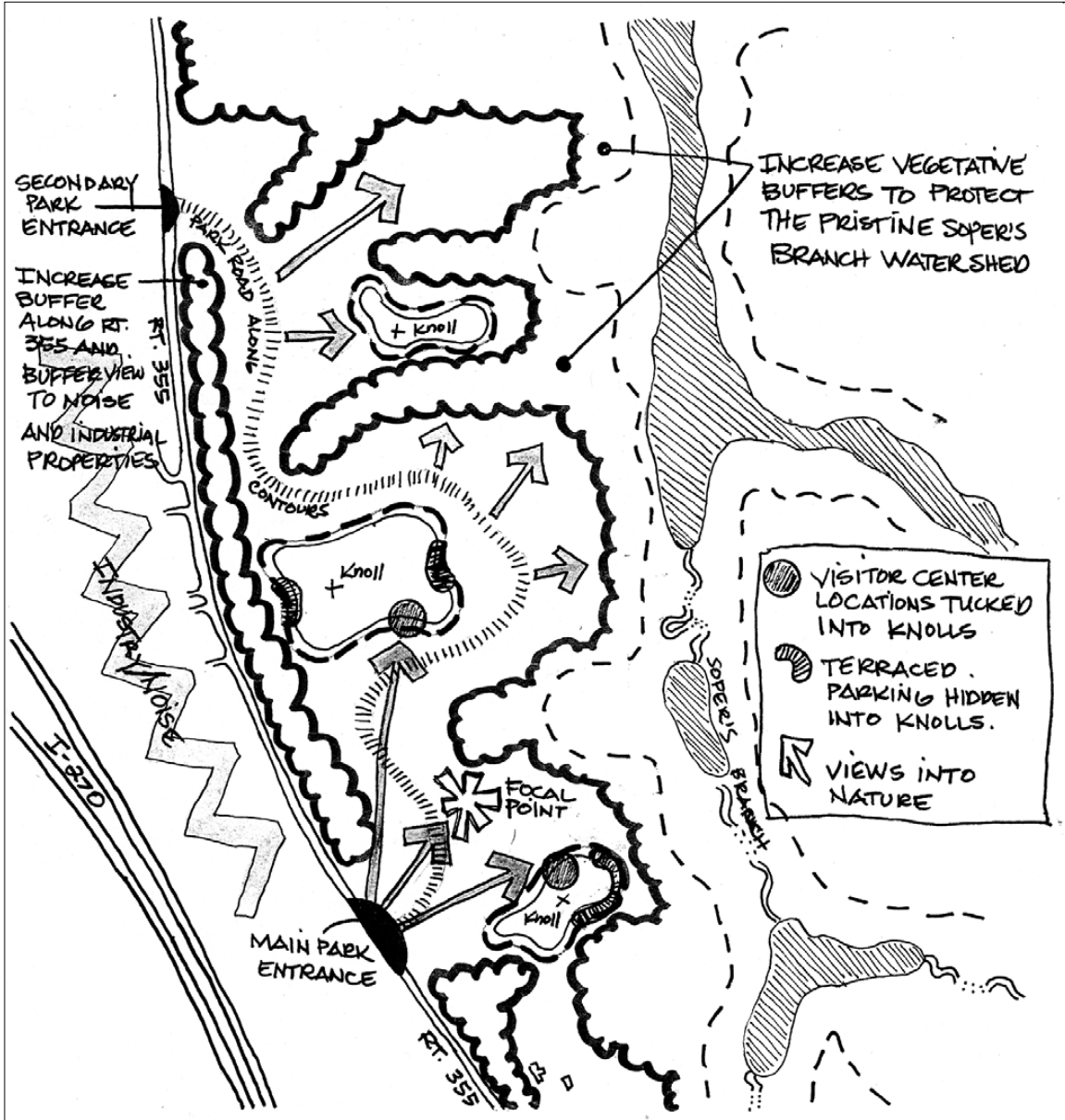
- ❑ **Provide meadows and garden areas as a "preview" of the types of plants, trees, birds and butterflies that may be found in the park interior.**

This feature will educate people about what they can see by following trails in the interior of the park. This approach will allow an interpretive emphasis in the most easily accessible portion of the park and entice people to walk along park interior trails to see even more flora and fauna.

- ❑ **Provide recreational opportunities that focus on casual enjoyment of the outdoors and are linked to the park's landscape.**

One of the many comments heard at community meetings was that Little Bennett should offer unprogrammed and unstructured enjoyment of the park. The focus on trails in the interior of the park helps address this concern. In the day use area, visitors can enjoy a proposed adventure playground, nature paths, native gardens, and picnic areas.

Viewshed Analysis Sketch



## ***Plan Concept 4: Park Character Along Road Frontage***

*Recognize the role of Little Bennett Regional Park as a “gateway” to Montgomery County and the importance of the Park’s character along MD 355 and Clarksburg Road..*

Little Bennett Regional Park has frontage along I-270 and along MD 355. For people entering the county from the north along I-270 or MD 355, this frontage defines the entry experience into Montgomery County.

At this time, the character of the park frontage along MD 355 fails to convey any sense of Little Bennett’s natural beauty. The presence of numerous houses, acquired over time in conjunction with parkland, present the image of rural residential instead of parkland.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Create a design concept for MD 355 and Clarksburg Road that clearly defines the area as parkland and points to the natural beauty that awaits those who visit the park.**

First views and impressions of Little Bennett Regional Park occur from these two roads. In the case of MD 355, the plan recommends a landscaping plan for the park frontage and endorses the removal of park structures that interfere with vistas into the park. In terms of Clarksburg Road, the Plan endorses the road’s current classification as Country Arterial, which balances the road’s significance as a transportation utility with the need to maintain its rural character.

- **Remove non-historic park houses as the opportunity presents arises.**

One of the key issues during the plan process has been the future of park-owned houses, most of which are located along MD 355. These homes existed when the park was acquired in the 1960’s and 1970’s and the intent then was to remove them. They are now anywhere between 50 and 60 years old and many are in poor repair. The homes obscure vistas of the park and any sense of the park’s natural beauty. As current tenants move out, the option to remove these homes should be considered. An historical survey of the homes is currently underway; removal of structures should await completion of the survey.



## *Plan Concept 5: Interpretive Emphasis*

*Emphasize interpretation of the park's natural, cultural, prehistoric and historic resources.*

Hidden within the forests, fields, buildings and graveyards of Little Bennett Park is a story of life on Montgomery County's Piedmont, and its influence on the culture and ecology of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Interpreting these features will inspire people to learn about and enjoy the park's natural and cultural resources and will help create a new generation of park stewards.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Create an historic landscape that tells the story of community life in past centuries.**

Little Bennett Regional Park includes many resources that relate to the occupation of the area by native peoples prior to recorded history, and to the County's development in the 19th Century. The Native Americans used the ecology of the Piedmont to their advantage for hunting and gathering, stone harvesting and fishing. In the 19th century the hills, valleys and forests of the Park were the setting for a variety of rural activities that changed over time. Some of these activities such as tobacco farming, wheat farming and water-powered mills, were the same as in other parts of the County. Other activities such as sumac harvesting and milling, logging, barrel stave making, and whiskey distilling, are unique to the Park area. Frederick Road (Rt. 355), the major route northwest from Washington, D.C. from 1740-1950, runs along the western edge of the Park and presents an entirely different aspect of the County's history, that of an economy built on transport and travelers.

By linking these historic sites by trails, park visitors will be able to enjoy a "walk through history" and learn about life in the 1850's and the earlier Native American culture. (see Historic Landscape Concept Sketch) The naming of trails, picnic areas, and playgrounds after local historical features or figures, or using local Native American names, would further enhance the visitor's experience. Signage along the trails would take advantage of "accidental learning" by recreational hikers and perhaps spark and interest to further their knowledge by visiting the Visitor's Center or attending special events or demonstrations. Historical interpretation in the Visitor's Center would tie all of the various historical features together and give a visitor an orientation for his experience in the Park.

In the future, the historical aspects of the park lend themselves to the demonstration of such unique activities as sumac milling, whiskey distilling, tobacco curing, barrel stave making, and Native American crafts.

More information on the historic resources in the park may be found in the Background Information Chapter.

- **Identify nature-based themes to guide interpretation and signage along trails.**

Little Bennett Regional Park offers the opportunity to inspire people to learn about and to enjoy the natural world. Two themes that are unique to Little Bennett include:

*Mound Builder Ants.* No other park in the county or in the region has a comparable population of mound builder ants. In a number of the park's old fields and pastures, Appalachian mound-building ants have built numerous colonies. At least one threatened and three watch list plant species have been documented in these fields, and the ants may play a



role in maintaining the open habitats suitable for these plants. Open meadows are very rare in the Piedmont region, usually only occurring under power-lines where woody plants have been cut or have had herbicide applied.

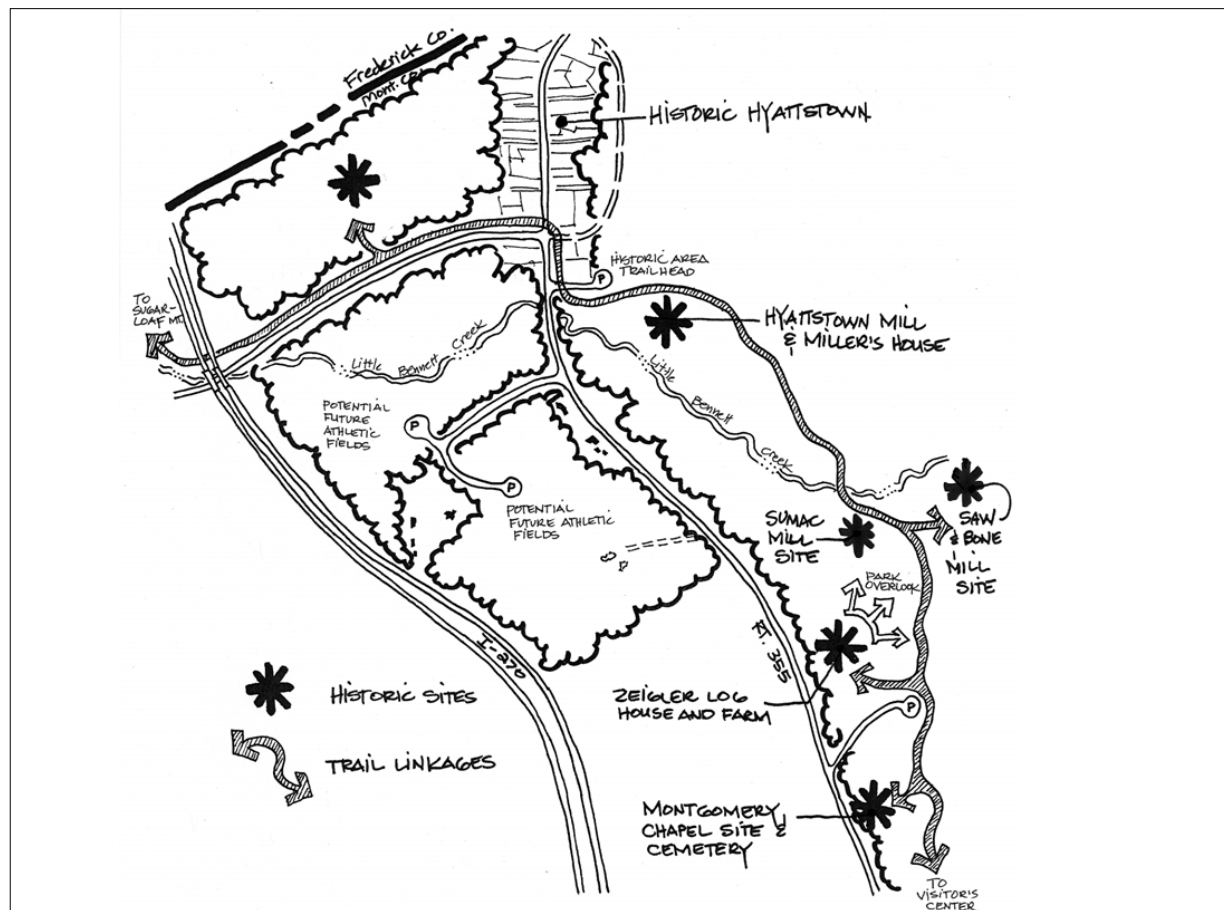
*American Chestnut Trees.* Although rare in the state of Maryland, several populations of American Chestnut Trees grow in Little Bennett. There is an American Chestnut Society, and efforts are being made in many states beyond Maryland to bring this once dominant species back from the brink of extinction.

- **Include an interpretive center at Little Bennett Regional Park to foster public understanding of the park's natural, historic and cultural features.**

An interpretive center could be a part of the proposed Visitor's center or could be a freestanding building. This decision needs to be guided by a comprehensive study of park interpretive centers. The Park Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan anticipates a need for two interpretive centers in the next 20 years. A countywide study should help guide where these centers should be located and include recommendations as to building size, parking requirements and associated scope of services that would be delivered from the facility.

As noted in the Implementation chapter, such a study should be initiated to allow the findings to guide future planning and design of the Visitors center at Little Bennett Regional Park.

### **Historic Landscape Concept**



## ***Plan Concept 6: Park Accessibility.***

*Assure the park is accessible by different modes of transportation and can be enjoyed by people with limited mobility.*

Visitors should be able to get to the park easily by different modes of transportation. Once there, they should be able to enjoy the park regardless of their physical abilities.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **□ Provide a main entrance accessible by public transit as well as by car.**

The Plan proposes the main entrance to the park be located on MD 355, a major north south transportation corridor. MD 355 is currently served by Ride-On buses and will be served in the future by the Corridor Cities Transitway into Frederick. This will create additional opportunities for people to arrive at Little Bennett by public transit.

Plans for the Corridor Cities Transitway do not include a transit stop near the public entrance proposed in this Plan for Little Bennett Regional Park. This Staff Draft Plan recommends the potential for such a stop be examined as part of the MD355/I 270 Corridor Project, now underway (see Proposed Master Plan Map).

#### **□ Provide access to the park by foot, by bike and by horseback.**

The new town of Clarksburg adjoins Little Bennett Regional Park. The Plan extends the greenway network in Clarksburg to Little Bennett Regional Park so people can get to the park without using their car. Damascus is more distant but greenways and trail corridors will offer residents in that community the same opportunity.

As noted in the policy on trails, the plan proposes small trailhead parking lots around the perimeter of the park. This will enable people to access the park trail system without having to go into the main park entrance.

#### **□ Ensure the Visitor Center, recreational facilities and key trail segments are designed for people with limited mobility.**

The natural beauty and sense of sanctuary provided by Little Bennett should be available to all people. The Visitor Center and associated recreational facilities will be accessible and as noted in the trails section, key segments of the natural surface trail system will meet accessibility guidelines.



## ***Plan Concept 7: Design Guidelines***

*Designate unified architectural themes.*

Planning recommendations for Little Bennett Regional Park will take many years to implement and will occur one project at a time. This Plan suggests an architectural theme for the park to assure that individual projects are compatible regardless of when they are built and will help establish a unique character and identity for Little Bennett.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Emphasize nature based themes and historic architectural patterns from the late 19th Century.**

Pictures of thematic elements - to come

## Plan Concept 8: Active Recreation

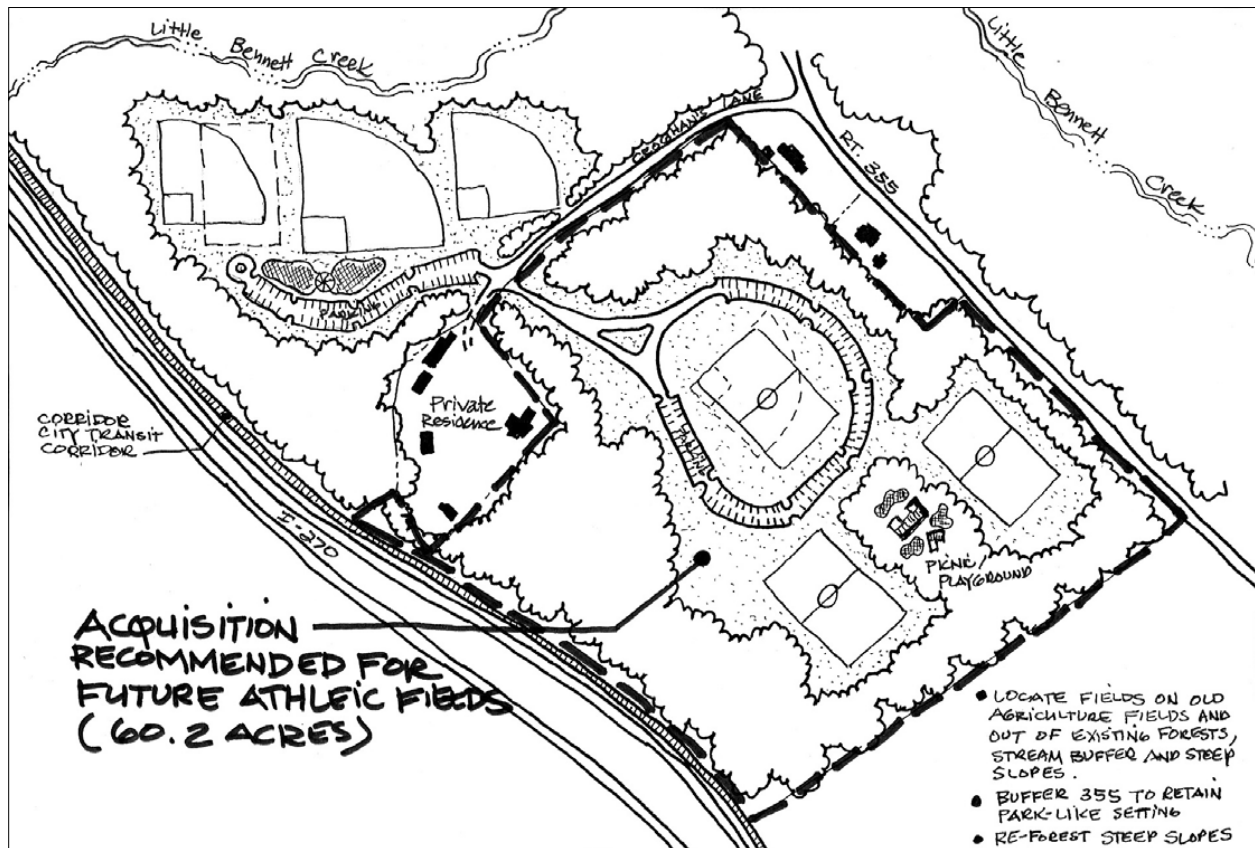
*Provide location to meet potential future need for athletic fields.*

This Plan recommends that additional parkland be acquired to meet potential future need for ballfields and other types of more active recreation needs.

### Recommendation:

- ❑ **Acquire additional parkland west of MD 355 for potential future use as athletic fields.**

This location could accommodate a variety of recreational facilities without compromising the Plan's vision for a more natural setting for the park east of MD 355 (see below).



# Implementation

*This chapter identifies implementation actions needed to make this Plan a reality.*

- **Emphasize trail renovation, trail realignment and trail parking lots (including an interim parking lot along MD 355) as the top implementation priority.**

Potential projects would include:

- Implementing natural surface trail system recommendations
- Providing trail head parking lots
- Closing off internal park roads
- 

Currently access to Little Bennett Regional Park from MD 355 is limited to the maintenance facility and to a small parking lot off Hyattstown Mill Road near the town of Hyattstown. Providing an “interim” entrance in the area of the proposed gateway area would give the park more visibility and improved public access. This concept will be discussed with the Planning Board during worksessions after the Public Hearing.

- **Consider facility planning for the Gateway Area as a candidate project in upcoming Department of Park budgets.**

The Gateway area of the Master Plan will require more detailed study in the context of a Facility Plan. A Facility Plan, undertaken by the Department of Parks, will provide a layout and design of the gateway area, analyze engineering feasibility, estimate construction costs and estimate future maintenance and police needs.

The facility plan for Little Bennett Regional Park will have to compete or be considered in the context of other park facility plan priorities.

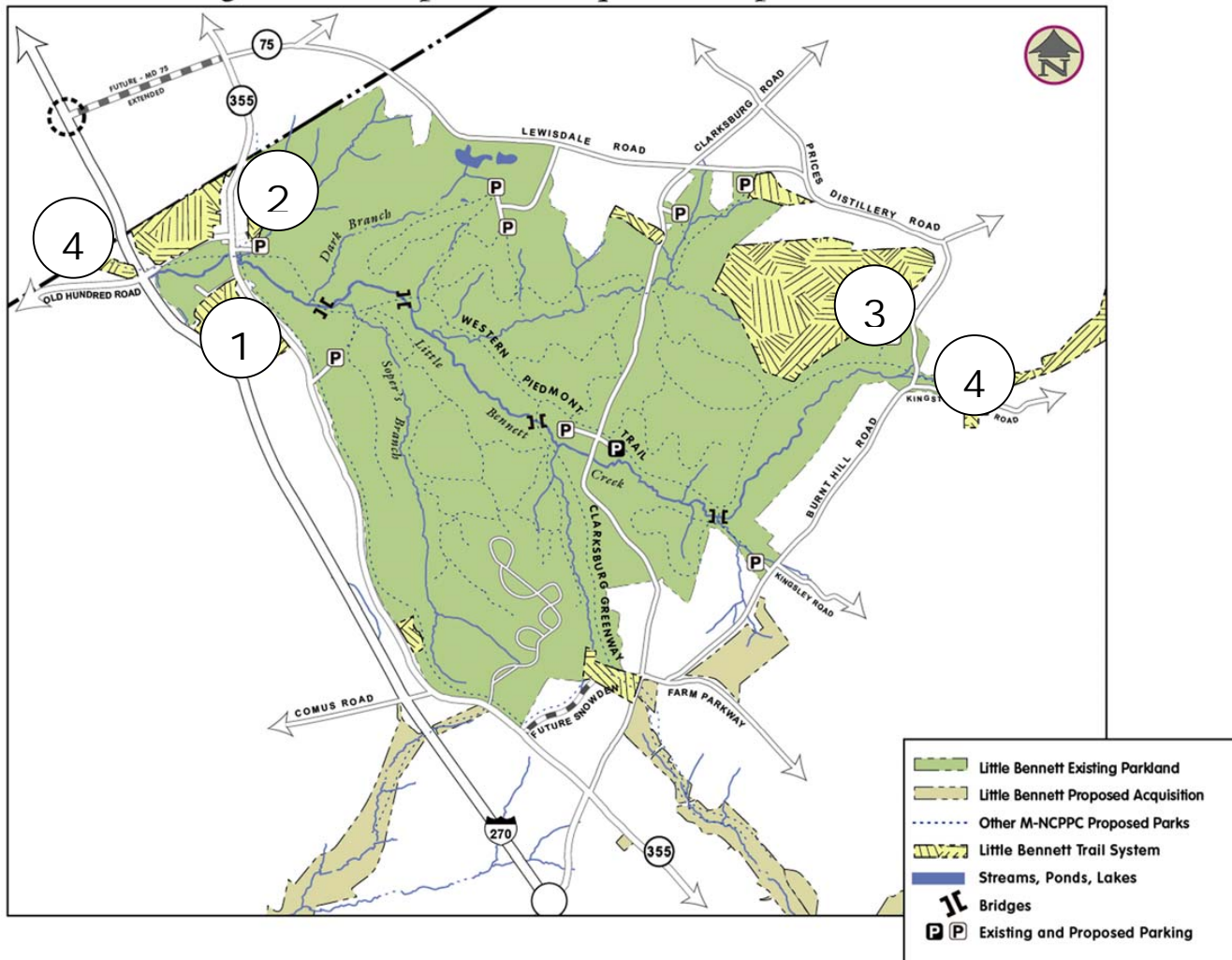
- **Amend the Proposed Future Parkland Map to reflect the recommendations of the Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan**

The future parkland map for the area around Little Bennett Regional Park is shown on the *Proposed Park Acquisition Map*. This staff Draft Plan recommends expansion of the future parkland map to include the following properties:

MAP KEY #	ACREAGE	RATIONALE FOR FUTURE ACQUISITION
<b>1</b>	<b>50+</b>	Would accommodate potential future need for athletic fields; strengthens historic focus for northwestern portion of Little Bennett park; Enhances setting for Hyattstown Historic District
<b>2</b>	.6 acre	Would provide parking area for Hyattstown Mill
<b>3</b>	To be determined by field work	Entrance to proposed trailhead parking
<b>4</b>	To be determined by field work	Acquire additional land as needed to locate natural surface trails outside environmental buffer areas.



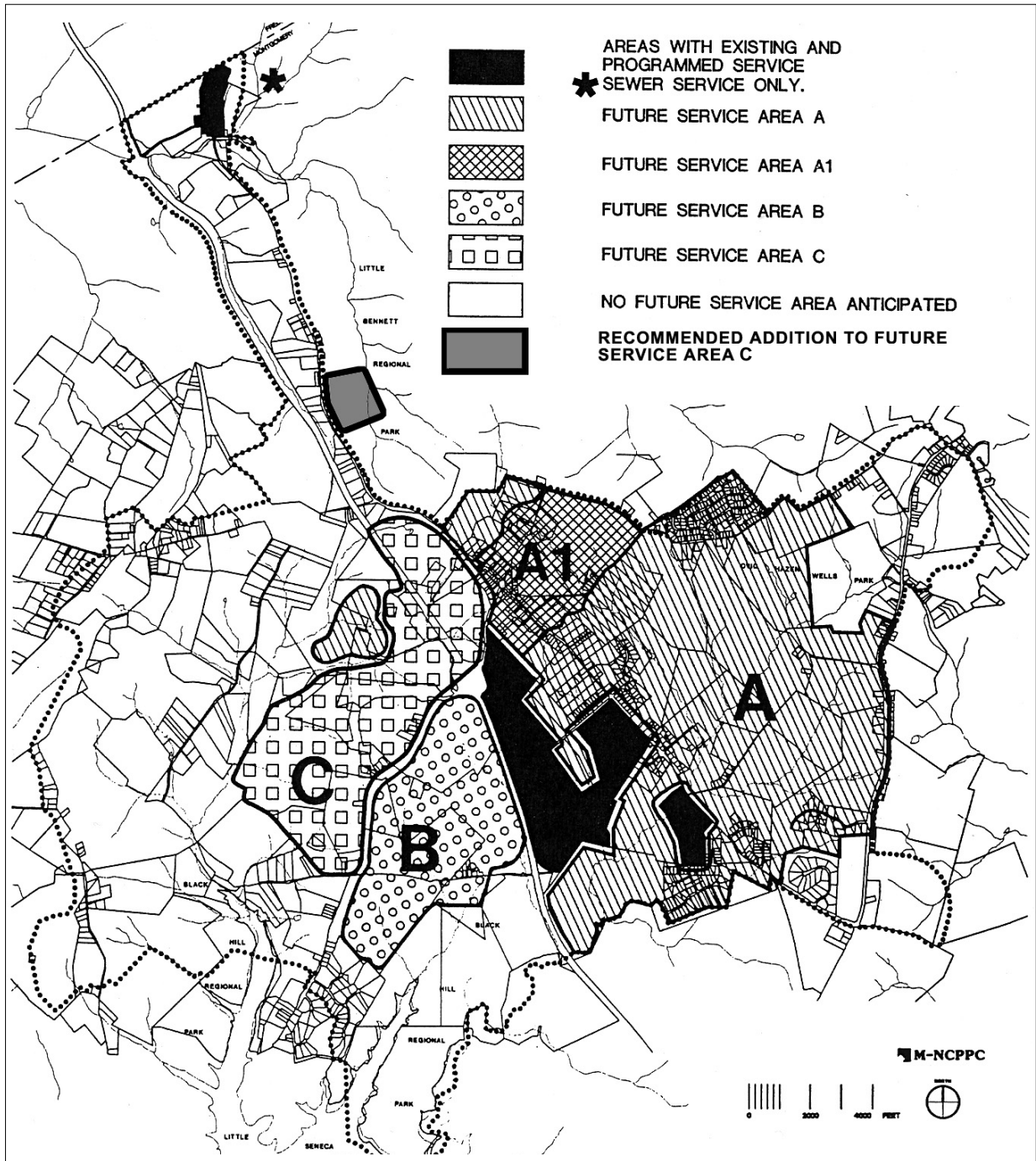
## Little Bennett Regional Park Proposed Park Acquisition Map



- ❑ **Include the proposed gateway area of Little Bennett Regional Park in the Stage 4 sewer study area for Clarksburg.**

The Clarksburg Master Plan includes a three stage approach to the extension of water and sewer service (see map). Service Areas A and B are in place and development is underway. Future Service Area C includes properties on the east side of I-270 that adjoin Little Bennett Regional Park. The extension of public sewer and water service to Service Area C will occur only after a comprehensive analysis relating to the biological health of streams and the status of community build-out in Service Areas A and B. The pros and cons of extending public sewer to the gateway area of Little Bennett Regional Park should be included when Service Area C is studied for the extension of public sewer and water service.

The extension of public sewer to Little Bennett is not essential to the vision of the park. In fact, in keeping with the natural theme for the park, using “green infrastructure” like composting toilets may be more appropriate or innovative septic systems may be more appropriate. The information from the Service Area C study will help inform this decision as to which approach should be used.



- ❑ **Initiate a Countywide Interpretive Center Functional Plan to help guide decisions about interpretive facilities at Little Bennett**

The Little Bennett Park Master Plan process has highlighted the need for a comprehensive approach to park interpretive centers. At the present time, there are no guidelines as to the size, location or function of park interpretive centers. A functional plan should be initiated to establish park policy for interpretive centers and to make recommendations as to the pattern of centers across the county.

❑ **Remove park houses as the opportunity presents itself.**

Current tenants are on a month-to-month lease. As current tenants vacate, the opportunity to remove the structure will be evaluated.

❑ **Complete a Natural Resources Management Plan.**

A Natural Resources Management Plan (NRM Plan) is being developed to serve as a companion document to this Master Plan. Its purpose is to outline site-specific stewardship goals and objectives. It will provide detailed recommendations in the form of day-to-day management strategies, best management practices (BMPs), and schedules to park operations staff for the protection, management and enhancement of the park's natural and cultural resources. For example, recommendations would prescribe how often and when should a particular meadow be mowed to provide habitat for specific species; where, when and how should staff control the growth of non-native invasive plants; or how best to protect specific cultural resource such as a stone foundation.

Deer, non-native invasive plants, and gypsy moths have affected plant life throughout the park. Deer predation impacts forest regeneration in every vegetation type and has seriously affected populations of rare, threatened, endangered, and uncommon plants. Compared to other parks, Little Bennett has a relatively low-level of infestation of non-native invasive (NNI) plants. However, NNIs have been steadily increasing their coverage over the past 10 years and represent a threat that must be carefully addressed if we are to preserve Little Bennett's rich natural diversity. Little Bennett sustained a large amount of damage during the 1988-1990 gypsy moth infestation. Many acres of high quality oak dominated forest were killed, and today, 15-20 years later, a return to the previous forest type is difficult due to both the level of deer predation on seedling and sapling regenerating trees/shrubs, and to the advantage that non-native invasive shrubs and vines have over native species once they gain a foothold in areas left open by gypsy moth destruction. These and other management issues will be addressed in the Natural Resources Management Plan.

❑ **Amend the Countywide Bikeway Plan and the Countywide Park Trails Plan to reflect the proposed trail concept for Little Bennett Regional Park.**

The Countywide Bikeway Plan proposes a shared use bike path along Frederick Road (MD355) from Germantown all the way north to Hyattstown. This Draft Plan proposes the shared use path be designed with a park-like character along the frontage of Little Bennett Regional Park. This approach should be examined in the context of facility planning for the improvement of MD 355 or in the context of facility planning for the Gateway area of the Little Bennett, depending on which study occurs first.

The Countywide Park Trails Plan should be amended to reflect the natural surface trail concept proposed in this Draft Plan.

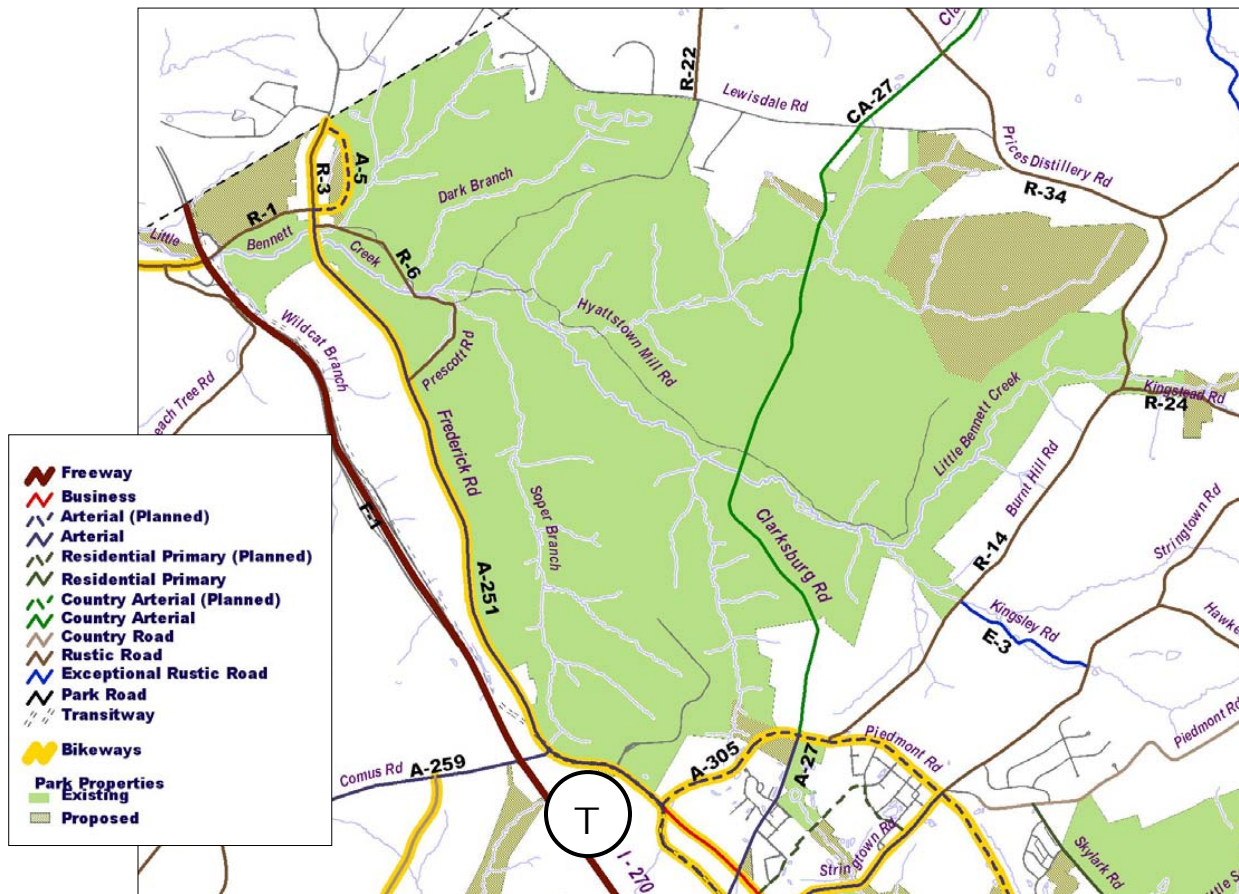
❑ **Explore feasibility of adding future transit stop along the Corridor Cities Transit Corridor to serve Little Bennett Regional Park**

The Corridor Cities Transit Corridor parallels MD 355. Studies to date have not included a transit stop near the park. This opportunity should be explored in future studies relating to the Transit Corridor.

Master Plan Roadway Designation	Road Name	Limits	Number of Travel Lanes	
			Maximum Recommended	Minimum Right-of-way Width
<b>Freeways</b>				
F-1	Washington National Pike (I-270)	MD 121 to Comus Road	6 lanes	250 ft in the Clarksburg Master Plan
		Comus Road to County Line (includes Corridor Cities Transitway)	6 lanes	Ex + 100 ft in the Clarksburg Master Plan
<b>Arterials</b>				
A-5	Hyattstown Bypass	MD 355 to County Line	2 lanes	80 ft in the Clarksburg Master Plan
A-27	Clarksburg Road (Also MD 121 between Stringtown Road and MD 355)	Stringtown Rd (A-260) to Clarksburg Master Plan Northern Study Area Boundary (A-305 - Midcounty Highway or Snowden Farm Parkway)	2 lanes	80 ft in the Clarksburg Master Plan
A-251	Frederick Road (MD 355)	Midcounty Highway or Snowden Farm Parkway (A-305) to Comus Road	2 lanes w/transitway	130 ft in the Clarksburg Master Plan
		Comus Road to Hyattstown Bypass	2 lanes	80 ft in the Clarksburg Master Plan
A-259	Comus Road	MD 355 to Clarksburg Master Plan Western Study Area Boundary (Peach Tree Road)	2 lanes	80 ft in the Clarksburg Master Plan
A-305	Midcounty Highway or Snowden Farm Parkway	Clarksburg Road to MD 355	2 lanes	80 ft in the Clarksburg Master Plan
<b>Country Arterials</b>				
CA-27	Clarksburg Road	Midcounty Highway or Snowden Farm Parkway (A-305) to County Line	N/A	80 ft in the Clarksburg Master Plan
<b>Rustic Roads</b>				
R-1	Old Hundred Road (MD 109)	MD 355 to I-270 in the Clarksburg Master Plan; No reference to this section in the Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan description for R-1; R-1 ends at I-270 in the Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan	N/A	80 ft in the Clarksburg Master Plan
R-3	Frederick Road (MD 355)	Hyattstown Bypass to County Line in the Clarksburg Master Plan; No reference to this section in the Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan; R-3 is Hughes Road in the Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan	N/A	80 ft in the Clarksburg Master Plan
R-6	Hyattstown Mill Road	MD 355 to Park Boundary (Limits are MD 355 to Hyattstown Mill Road in the Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan)	N/A	60 ft in the Clarksburg Master Plan (Park Road – No Minimum ROW in the Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan)
R-6	Prescott Road	Hyattstown Mill Road to MD 355 (No reference to this section in the Clarksburg Master Plan)	N/A	Park Road – No Minimum ROW in the Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan
R-14	Burnt Hill Road	Midcounty Highway or Snowden Farm Parkway (A-305) to Prices Distillery Road	N/A	70 ft in the Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan
R-22	Haines Road	Lewisdale Road to County Line	N/A	70 ft in the Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan
R-24	Kingstead Road	Burnt Hill Road to Kings Valley Road	N/A	70 ft in the Rustic Roads

Master Plan Roadway Designation	Road Name	Limits	Number of Travel Lanes	
			Maximum Recommended	Minimum Right-of-way Width
Functional Master Plan				
<b>Exceptional Rustic Roads</b>				
E-3	Kingsley Road	Burnt Hill Road to Stringtown Road	N/A	80 ft in the Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan
<b>Secondary Residential Streets</b>				
--	Lewisdale Road	Prices Distillery Road and County Line	N/A	60 ft

**Transportation Plan in the Vicinity of Little Bennett Regional Park**





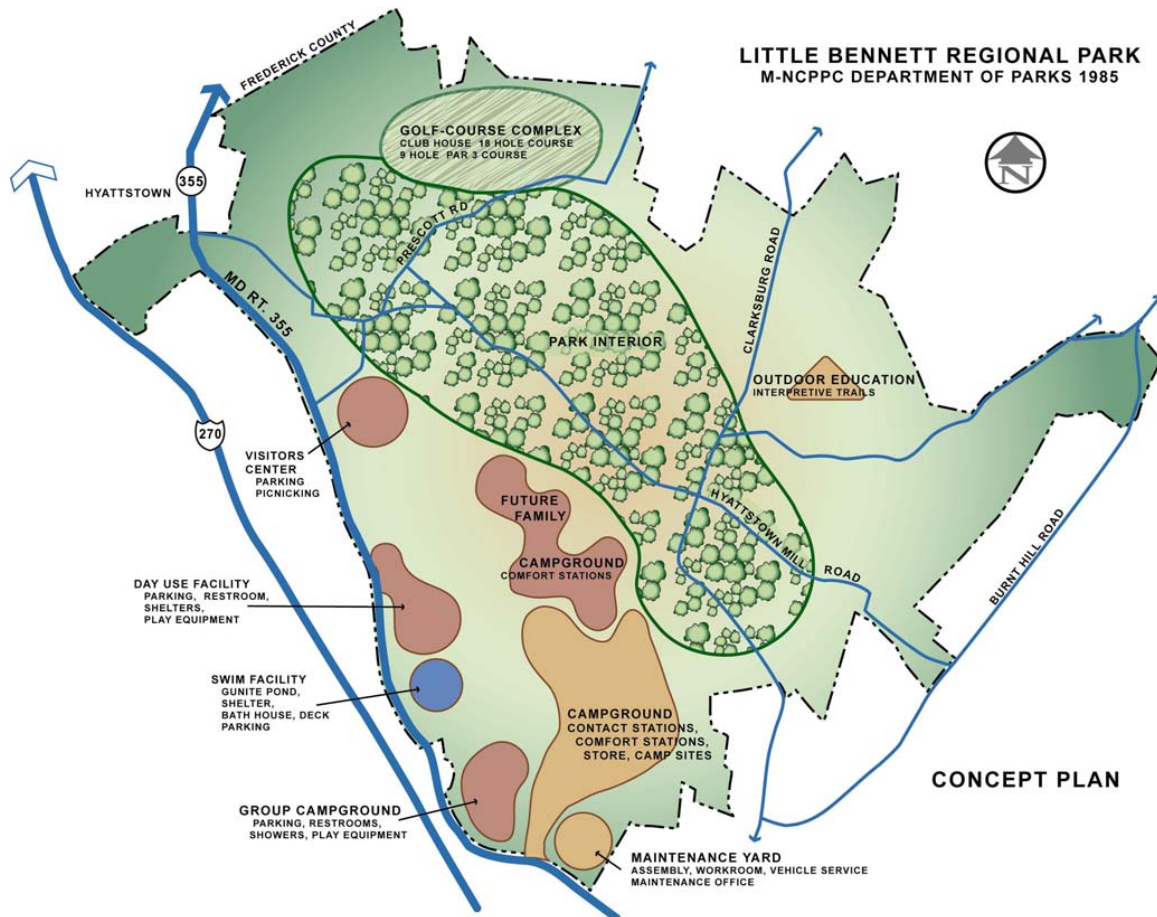


# Background Information

## 1. Public Process

Wednesday, Nov 9, 2005	COMMUNITY "KICK-OFF" MEETING
Thursday, Jan 19, 2006	Planning Board Review and Approval of Plan Schedule, Plan Issues and Community Outreach Strategy.
Tuesday, Apr 4, 2006	Community Meeting on Plan Concepts and Plan Options 7 PM to 9PM Cedar Brook Community Church meeting facility, 23700 Stringtown Rd., Clarksburg, MD.
Tuesday Oct 3, 2006	Community Meeting on Master Plan Alternatives 7.30 PM at the Cedar Brook Community Church meeting facility, 23700 Stringtown Rd., Clarksburg, MD
Thursday Nov 30, 2006	Planning Board approval of Public Hearing date on draft Plan

## 2. 1985 Plan Concept





### 3. *Natural Resource Analysis*

An assessment of the park's natural resources was the first step in the planning process. The natural resources map in the Plan Recommendations section is a composite of more detailed field and survey work, summarized below.

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION
Geology	Little Bennett lies in the Piedmont physiographic province. Bedrock consists predominately of metamorphic rocks of Paleozoic age. The entire parkland falls from east to west with an elevation range from 685 feet above sea level at its highest points to 350 feet at its lowest point.
Soils	In general soils found on ridge tops and side slopes are well drained and suited for cultivation and pasture provided erosion can be controlled and moisture maintained but are best suited for tree growth. Many are not generally good for roads, septic or dwellings because of their shallow depth to bedrock or the potential for frost heaving. Soils within the floodplains are either hydric and prone to frequent flooding, or contain hydric inclusions and are slow to drain. None of these soils are suited for dwellings, roads or septic absorption fields. They are best used for woodlands and pasture although grazing must be limited during wet seasons. The high water table is the greatest limiting factor.
Slopes	Little Bennett Regional Park is characterized by hilly terrain best described as rolling to steeply sloping with more of the park being steeply sloping. Over 1/3 of the total acreage contains slopes

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION
	<p>of over 15%. The steepest of slopes lie almost exclusively within 200 feet of stream banks. The floodplains are generally narrow along small tributaries, becoming broad along the main stem of Little Bennett and its larger tributaries.</p>
Vegetation	<p>At over 3,600 acres, Little Bennett Regional Park is the largest park in the Montgomery County Park system, and represents our largest contiguous area of preserved habitat. Little Bennett Regional Park is comprised of numerous smaller acreages, which had different land uses in the near past. Accordingly, there are now many diverse vegetative habitats in the park, including high quality, dry, oak/hickory-dominated upland forest; dry, herb dominated open-canopied uplands; good quality mixed deciduous, mesic upland forest; mixed deciduous/coniferous forest; rich wooded and scrub/shrub floodplains; high quality skunk cabbage seeps; extensive wet meadows; many old-fields in varying stages of succession; and some fields still in agricultural production. Little Bennett creek and its accompanying areas of adjacent steep hillside and floodplain plant communities cross the park from east to west. In addition, Sopers Branch with its high quality 10+ acre skunk cabbage seeps, Dark Branch with its quality forested steep hillsides, and several important tributaries, crisscross the park.</p>
Birds	<p>Birds are excellent indicator species for evaluating habitat quality and making inferences about that habitat for other species. Data on breeding birds has been collected by park staff over many years and most recently, through a statewide effort, the Maryland Breeding Bird Atlas Project, a five-year intensive effort that ended in fall 2006. 85 species of birds were detected as breeding in the park. The list includes 17 forest interior dwelling species (FIDS) including red-shouldered hawk, barred owl, hairy woodpecker, pileated woodpecker, black-and-white warbler, redstart, worm-eating warbler, ovenbird, Louisiana waterthrush, Kentucky warbler, and scarlet tanager, indicating that LBRP protects large areas of a high quality forest.</p>
Other Wildlife	<p>In addition to birds, LBRP is home to an impressive diversity of other terrestrial wildlife species including at least 30 species of mammals, 15 reptiles, 15 amphibians and over 60 butterflies.</p>
Hydrology, Stream Fisheries	<p>Little Bennett Creek and several of its tributaries drain LBRP. Bennett Creek is a tributary of the Monocacy River, which in turn is a tributary of the Potomac River.</p> <p>All of the streams within LBRP are designated by the State of Maryland as Use III-P (capable of supporting naturally reproducing trout and suitable for public water supply). According to the 2003 update to the Countywide Stream Protection Strategy (CSPS; MCDEP, 1998), all sub watersheds within the park are in good biological condition (on a poor/fair/good/excellent scale). The original (1998) CSPS designated all sub watersheds in the park as Watershed Preservation Areas.</p> <p><b>Stream Fisheries</b></p> <p>Fish have been sampled in Little Bennett Creek and several of its tributaries within the park in recent years. Between 1991 and 2004, 27 species of fish were found in the park. Three of the species found within the park – brown trout (<i>Salmo trutta</i>), northern hogsucker (<i>Hypentelium nigricans</i>), and Blue Ridge sculpin (<i>Cottus caeruleomentum</i>) - are considered intolerant of pollution and indicative of good water quality.</p> <p>The Little Bennett Creek system supports a modest population of brown trout, with some natural reproduction. The population is augmented with periodic stocking of fingerlings. While somewhat sparse, the trout population is sufficient to support a modest recreational fishery.</p>

#### ***4. Historic and Cultural Features***

Little Bennett Regional Park lies to the east of Frederick Road between Clarksburg and Hyattstown, extending east to Lewisdale Road and including part of the area known as “Kings Valley.” Soon after plans were announced for a park in 1963, M-NCPPC began acquiring land.

The road known today as Rt 355 was established in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to connect Frederick City (platted 1745) and Georgetown (platted 1751). South of Clarksburg, the road follows an earlier Indian trail. At Clarksburg it veered off to the west to go to the Mouth of the Monocacy River where there was an Indian trading camp from as early as the early 1700s.

The community of Clarksburg began in the 1740s as a trading post located at the intersection of Frederick Road and the Mouth of Monocacy Indian trail. Dowden’s Ordinary, a tavern built on the hill south of the trading post, opened its doors in 1754. In 1793, John Belt patented the land “Woodlot” and laid out the town of Clarksburgh.

Frederick County farmer Jesse Hyatt laid out Hyattstown in 1798. The two main industries of the town were a tannery and a grist mill. By 1880 it had 3 churches, a post office, 2 blacksmiths, 3 carpenter/undertakers, 1 carriage maker, 1 shoemaker, 1 doctor, 1 miller, 1 tailor, 1 harness maker, and 2 general stores. There was also the Hyatt House Hotel and the Tabler Tavern (where Andrew Jackson spent the night on the way to his inauguration in 1829).

As shown on the Historic Resources Map, many historic sites and resources from the past still exist in Little Bennett Regional Park. They are described below.

#### ***Designated Historic Sites on Master Plan for Historic Preservation***

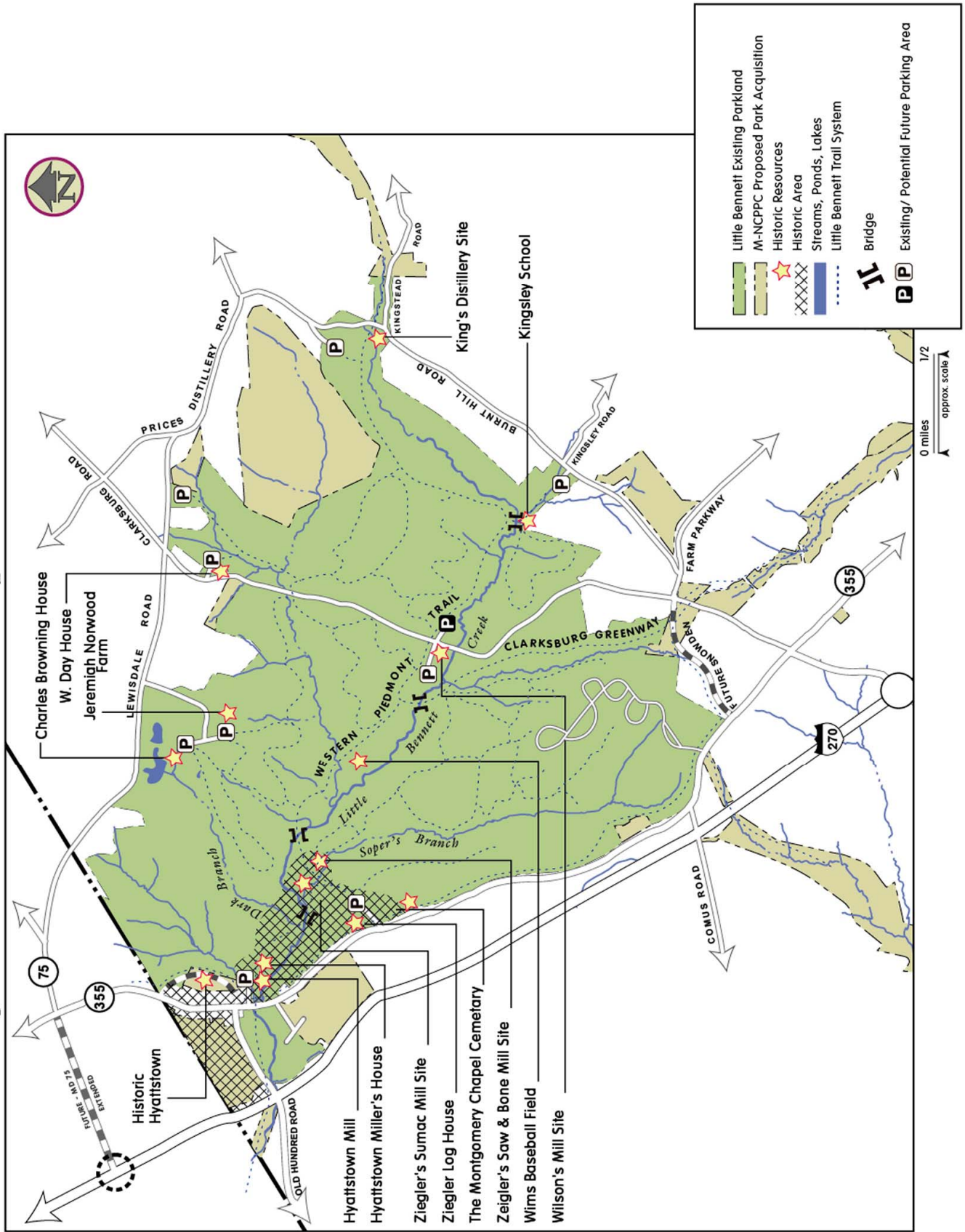
*The following four sites are included in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation:*

##### ***Hyattstown Mill and Millers House***

This mill complex was on the site before town was established (1798). William Richards built the original mill in 1783. The mill pond was located 3/4 mile upstream from the mill, the dam being where the road crossed the creek. The miller’s house dates from the early 1800s. At various times the mill served as a “custom” mill, grinding corn and feed for local farmers, and as a “merchant” mill, grinding wheat to serve a larger market. The mill was converted to steam in 1905, but retained the water wheel. The mill burned to ground in 1918. The community helped to rebuild it using material from the old Price’s Distillery. They essentially took apart the main building of the distillery and rebuilt it on this site. It ceased operation in 1933. It was purchased by M-NCPPC in 1966. The exterior of the mill has been restored and is now occupied by the Hyattstown Mill Arts Project, which has exhibits and holds classes in the building. There is also a sculpture garden outside the building. It is one of the last surviving mill structures in Montgomery County. The mill race is quite visible and runs along Hyattstown Mill Road to the dam and mill pond just upstream from the low concrete bridge that carries the road across Little Bennett Creek.



# Little Bennett Regional Park Historic Resources Map





### **Charles Browning Farm**

The original land patent obtained by William Cecil in 1752 was called “Wild Cat Spring” for its location along Wild Cat Branch, which runs into Little Bennett Creek. In the 1850s, Charles Browning developed a farmstead here to include a house, bankbarn, corncrib/wagon shed, a board and batten summer kitchen and a smokehouse. In 1887 the heirs of Charles Browning sold the farm at auction to John Harris. The farmhouse, remodeled in the Victorian era, probably originated as a log structure. More recent additions to the complex are a concrete block dairy barn and milk house built by Ernest Mullican following his purchase in 1919 from John Harris. Foreign Service Officer, Thomas Jefferson Patterson, purchased the property in 1935 and sold it in 1972 to M-NCPPC.

The Charles Browning Farm, a notable collection of intact buildings, is listed on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation in Montgomery County, Maryland. As a group, these buildings, while retaining a high degree of their original character, represent a fine example of a pre-Civil War farmstead and reflect the historic evolution of farming in Montgomery County. Its location adjacent to the golf course, limits its connection to the rest of the Park by trails, but it could be interpreted individually.

### **Zeigler Log House**

This house was most likely built by David Zeigler in the early 19th century. David Zeigler owned and operated a grist mill that later turned into a saw and bone mill as well as a sumac mill. Research is not yet complete on the house. It is a large 2 ½ story five bay house with good access from Rt. 355 and could be considered in the future for interpretation or to house a local museum. This site is designated on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.

### **Kingsley Schoolhouse**

By the turn of the 20th century a small community of farm laborers and mill workers had appeared in King’s Valley called “Kingsley.” The community boasted a store, post office, and a school. The Kingsley Schoolhouse is located in a spot known locally as “Froggy Hollow.” It was constructed in 1893 and served as a community center for the whole area as well as a school, hosting meetings, box socials and other fund raising activities. The Great Depression brought hard times to the community and families left the area to work elsewhere. The school closed in 1935 after 42 years of service. It has been restored and well kept, but is no longer near any road. A trail does run by the schoolhouse.

### ***Resources on Locational Atlas of Historic Sites***

*There are four historic sites in the Park that are on the Locational Atlas of Historic Sites.*

A survey of historic sites not included on the original “Atlas” is currently underway and several houses within the Park boundaries on Frederick Road (Rt. 355) and Clarksburg Road may be added to this list in the near future. The Historic Preservation Office should be contacted before any structure, whether designated as historic or not, is demolished.

### **W. Day House**

This complex of farm buildings represents early twentieth century dairy farming.. The farm was originally the property of the Beall family. Basil and Matilda Beall’s daughter, Sarah, married James Wilkerson Day who built the present house in 1890 on the site of an earlier

house that had burned. Nephews Barry and Leslie Beall moved to the farm in 1912 and the dairying operation began in 1920.

### ***Zeigler Grist Mill and Zeigler Sumac Mill ruins***

In 1807 Christopher Zeigler was listed as owning a grist mill on this site. The sumac mill was built by David Zeigler probably the same time as Lewis Tabler built his tannery in Hyattstown in 1825. The sumac mill employed six men and horsepower to crush sumac leaves, gathered locally, to make a liquid extract that was used by the nearby tanning yard to tan animal hides. The local sumac was far superior to the imported sumac in creating a soft leather. The grist mill was turned into a saw and bone mill in the latter half of the 19th century. Ruins of part of the mill and water wheel enclosure are very visible from the road.

### ***Montgomery Chapel site and cemetery***

A chapel building existed on this site until about 1985 when it disintegrated due to neglect. The Washington Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church for African Americans was formed soon after the Civil War. Montgomery Chapel was part of the Boyd's Charge which also included Asbury Church in Brownstown, St. Mark's Church in Boyds, and the John Wesley Church in Clarksburg. Montgomery Chapel was the oldest extant building of these four churches and the congregation was second only to John Wesley Church in formation. It was built in 1871 at a different location and was moved to this location on land sold to the church by George Butler in 1884. The building doubled as a community meeting place and school. It closed its doors in 1964 due to a diminished congregation. Now only represented by a cemetery, the site is significant in representing the growth of the African Methodist Episcopal or A.M.E. church after the Civil War when former slaves gathered together to form small communities. The church was the mainstay and haven for these communities, often serving as a school and community hall before these could occupy separate buildings erected by the community.

### ***Jeremiah Norwood Farm***

The Jeremiah Norwood Farm site is listed on the Locational Atlas but none of the farm buildings remain. Jeremiah Norwood, carpenter, millwright, and Civil War veteran, lived here in the early and mid 1800s. The Browning family grew tobacco here into the 20th century. The farmhouse was removed from the site by the late 1970s. No longer standing are bank barn, corncrib, and tobacco house.

## ***Sites with Historical Significance***

*Although not included on either the Master Plan for Historic Preservation or the Locational Atlas of Historic Resources, the following evoke the history and heritage of the area:*

### ***Wilson's Mill***

Extensive stands of pines and hardwoods in the Park gave rise in the 1900s to extensive logging and sawing of the wood at local water-powered saw mills. Wilson's was one of the operations that used the power of Little Bennett Creek. A saw mill owned by Lee Wilson was located here on the 1879 Hopkins map. William Williams is listed as occupant of the miller's house on the 1865 map. Both the mill and house are shown west of the road on the old maps, and as the road has now been straightened, the ruins of the mill are on the east side of the road. The house was destroyed.

### ***Wims Baseball field***

Both African Americans and whites lived in the area now a Park. Across from the site of the Warner Wims farm, now in the center of the Park, was a local African American baseball field where the “Wildcats” played. Some of the people who actually participated in the play are still alive and oral histories could give us much more background information on the local African American community as well as the ball field.

### ***King’s Distillery***

Both a sawmill and a distillery were located on this spot from at least 1865. Luther Green King owned and operated the distillery. Whiskey was distilled from locally grown rye. The whiskey was shipped in the barrel to Baltimore for bottling. The product carried the King label. The distillery burned down in 1907, but the last warehouse stood on the property until torn down in 1971. This was the only whiskey distilling operation in Montgomery County.

### ***Potential Interpretive Themes***

The area that is now the Park can be divided into 5 historical areas (see Figure Historical Themes) Each area has an indigenous historical theme that relates to its Piedmont ecology:

- ***Northeast***—Flatter hills and less rocky soil made good farmland. The large farms of the \*Browning and the \*Day families grew wheat that was ground at local gristmills.
- ***Southeast***—“King’s Valley”. Although less hilly, this was marginal farmland, made even more poor by the growing of tobacco in the early years. A local industry was the distilling of whiskey at King’s Distillery. The Froggy Hollow community consisted of mill and farm workers. \*Kingsley Schoolhouse is the last remnants of that community.
- ***Central***—Very poor rocky and steep land where tobacco and the local weed, Sumac, was grown commercially. There was fast water for powering mills such as Wilson’s saw mill. As the land was not very good for farming, logging became the main industry in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. There was a Barrel stave factory in the center of the Park from late 1940s. Both African Americans and whites lived side by side in what is now the Park. An indication of the African American community is the Wims baseball field
- ***Along Rt. 355***—The highway known at various times as The Great Road, The Frederick Road, and the Georgetown Turnpike created commercial enterprises all along the way for the many travelers on this main route northwest. From cattle drives and lorries laden with manufactured goods, to stagecoach lines and gypsies, the highway carried a variety of people, animals, and goods into Washington, D.C. in one direction and out west in the other direction.
- ***Northwest***—\*Hyattstown community, \*Hyattstown Mill and \*Millers House show how a prosperous town was built based on the various local economies and the commerce of the highway. The \*Ziegler Log House and Ziegler Sumac Mill and gristmill ruins demonstrate how an enterprising entrepreneur can use the local ecology to his advantage. The African American site of Montgomery Chapel & \*Cemetery shows how closely knit the African American community was to the larger community.

**Potential Historical themes map - to come**

## *5. Identifying Future Regional Recreational Needs*

The Planning Board adopted the Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) in December 2005. This document estimates the need for future recreation facilities throughout the county to the year 2020. These needs are then compared to the number of facilities that will be provided by planned and programmed Elementary and Middle schools through Montgomery county public Schools (MCPS), the Montgomery County Recreation Department (MCRD), and Montgomery County Parks (M-NCPPC) in the service area. It is through this process that the recreation needs that the Little Bennett Regional Park must provide are established.

Future recreation facilities will be delivered through parks or schools constructed at some point in future through capital expenditures or by developers of new residential subdivisions. Relying on future schools to provide recreation facilities depends on the vagaries of school age demographic demands and school budgets. There can be future school sites that are never built upon and kept in reserve. Park projects can have more certainty. Relying on a future subdivision activity to dedicate parkland in order to provide future facilities has some vagaries. With these uncertainties in mind, the most important comparison is future needs verses future projects that can be implemented in a predicable and timely manner.

The first step in the planning process is the identification of the Little Bennett service area. The identified service area is the Rural Community Based Team Area (with the exception of the northern part of Olney) and the Clarksburg Planning Area. The most critical area analysis is meeting future recreation needs in the Damascus and Clarksburg areas where future growth has been directed. Ballfields are the hardest facility to place and subsequently drive most of the critical decision-making.

### **Damascus**

The future ballfield needs for the Damascus area as estimated by the 2005 LPPRP are: 1.7 Baseball fields and 5.2 Adult Rectangles. To meet the Damascus Planning Area needs, the Damascus Recreation Center has been recently completed by MCRD providing one (1) of the Adult Rectangles. Two undeveloped park sites are currently owned by M-NCPPC, and three undeveloped school sites are owned by MCPS. The two undeveloped park sites are Seneca Springs Local Park and Woodfield School Road Local Park. Seneca Springs will provide one (1) of the Adult Rectangular Fields. Woodfield School Road Local Park will provide one (1) Baseball and two (2) Adult Rectangles.

The three undeveloped school sites are vague as to whether actual construction will commence. According to Appendix XVI of the LPPRP, the school age population is projected to decrease in the Damascus by the year 2020. This trend may decrease the possibility of future schools actually being built and subsequently providing fields. Undeveloped school sites, if not needed by schools, are to be converted to parks as per the Damascus Master Plan. This conversion is not guaranteed and therefore should not be relied on to provide future facilities.

The remaining need from the Damascus portion of the Little Bennett Service Area that the Little Bennett Regional Park should provide is (1.2) adult rectangular fields and (.7) baseball fields.

## Clarksburg

The 2020 ballfield needs estimates in the LPPRP are categorized by Community Based Team Areas with Clarksburg included with the I-270 corridor. The future ballfield needs for the Clarksburg area are as follows: 3.5 Youth Diamonds, 3.2 Softball Diamonds, 1.5 Baseball fields, 5.3 adult Rectangular fields, and 4.4 Youth Rectangles. There are numerous park and school projects planned for Clarksburg as shown in the attached list. The sites least likely to be built are the Cabin Branch Elementary School and the Linthicum West Recreational Park. The reasons are discussed below.

Linthicum West causes the most concern for future park sites as the entire park is predicated on a developer-dedicated parkland and has very challenging topography. Although there is an approved preliminary subdivision plan, the current use is a farm and the current owner is the applicant. The motivation and timeline to move forward with the subdivision is unclear as carrying costs may be minimal and there is an 11-year validity period for the preliminary plan. The site was to provide one baseball field and three adult rectangular fields that may be difficult to achieve considering the challenging topography. This field mix is the largest in size and hardest fields to place. Recreational Parks typically provide parking, lights and other infrastructure supporting intensities of uses that would overwhelm local parks or elementary schools.

Cabin Branch Elementary School is the last elementary school to be built in Clarksburg if the school population requires such. Being last on the MCPS planning list provides pause as to whether the school will be needed after Clarksburg finally builds out. The conclusion is a site that is park owned and controlled is the preferable method of providing future ballfield needs.

If these two sites are NOT built, the remaining need for the Clarksburg portion of the Little Bennett Service Area would be .5 youth diamonds, .5 baseball fields, 3.5 adult soccer fields, and .4 Youth Rectangles.

## Little Bennett Regional Park

The park classification scheme documents ballfields as legitimate use of a Regional Park subject to the 1/3 2/3's development policy. The projected ballfield needs that the Little Bennett Regional Park should attempt to provide is the remaining needs from both Damascus and Clarksburg. The final ballfield needs are .5 Youth Diamonds (rounded to 1), 1.2 Baseball Fields (rounded to 1), 3.5 Adult Rectangles (rounded to 4), and .4 Youth Rectangles (rounded to 0).

A property has been identified as an addition to the Little Bennett Regional park that potentially provides the developable area required to meet the above documented needs. The concept plan recommends 60.2 acres of additional parkland to be acquired west of MD 355 to meet the potential future need for athletic fields.

The identified additional parkland has advantages of:

- Provides easy ingress and egress to MD 355;
- Provides enough developable acreage outside environmentally sensitive areas to provide needed infrastructure for intense use;
- Provides extensive buffering of adjacent residences to allow field lighting;
- Allows the use of local and neighborhood parks, and ES and MS for weekday practices and youth games that have less impact on surrounding nearby homes;
- Provides flexibility of large spaces as needs change over time; and



- Keeps ballfields separate from nature based recreation.

### **Other Countywide Facilities**

There are other facilities with documented needs that would be appropriate for inclusion in the Little Bennett Regional Park. One large group picnic area with a capacity of at least 200 persons is need in the county by the Year 2020. There are currently none in the up-county area. Also the identified need for picnic shelters with an average capacity of 55 persons is 16 by the year 2020. This Plan provides these shelters. Beyond the year 2020, a second phase of 12 shelters can be easily added if needed.

