

2.2 Parks and Open Space

The proposed system of parks and open spaces in the Bethesda Downtown area will result in a combination of public and private facilities. The new open space system will support a vibrant and sustainable urban center by including open spaces that will be comfortable, attractive, easily accessible, safe, and provide a range of experiences, up to and including festivals and other outdoor events.

2.2.1 Park Hierarchy

The Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan- 2.7 Parks and Open Space- includes a system of open spaces based on the roles of each type of open space.

The following hierarchy has been applied to the Bethesda Downtown Area:

Park Hierarchy

For the Sector Plan Area

Active Recreation Destinations - spaces including courts, playgrounds, and lawn areas large enough for pick up soccer, festivals or events, etc.

Central Civic Green- spaces located in close proximity to a public transit hub, next to activating uses, with a mixture of hard and soft surfaces including a central lawn area for events.

Interconnected System of Sidewalks and Trails - to connect parks and open spaces.

Wooded Areas- that will provide a sense of contact with nature.

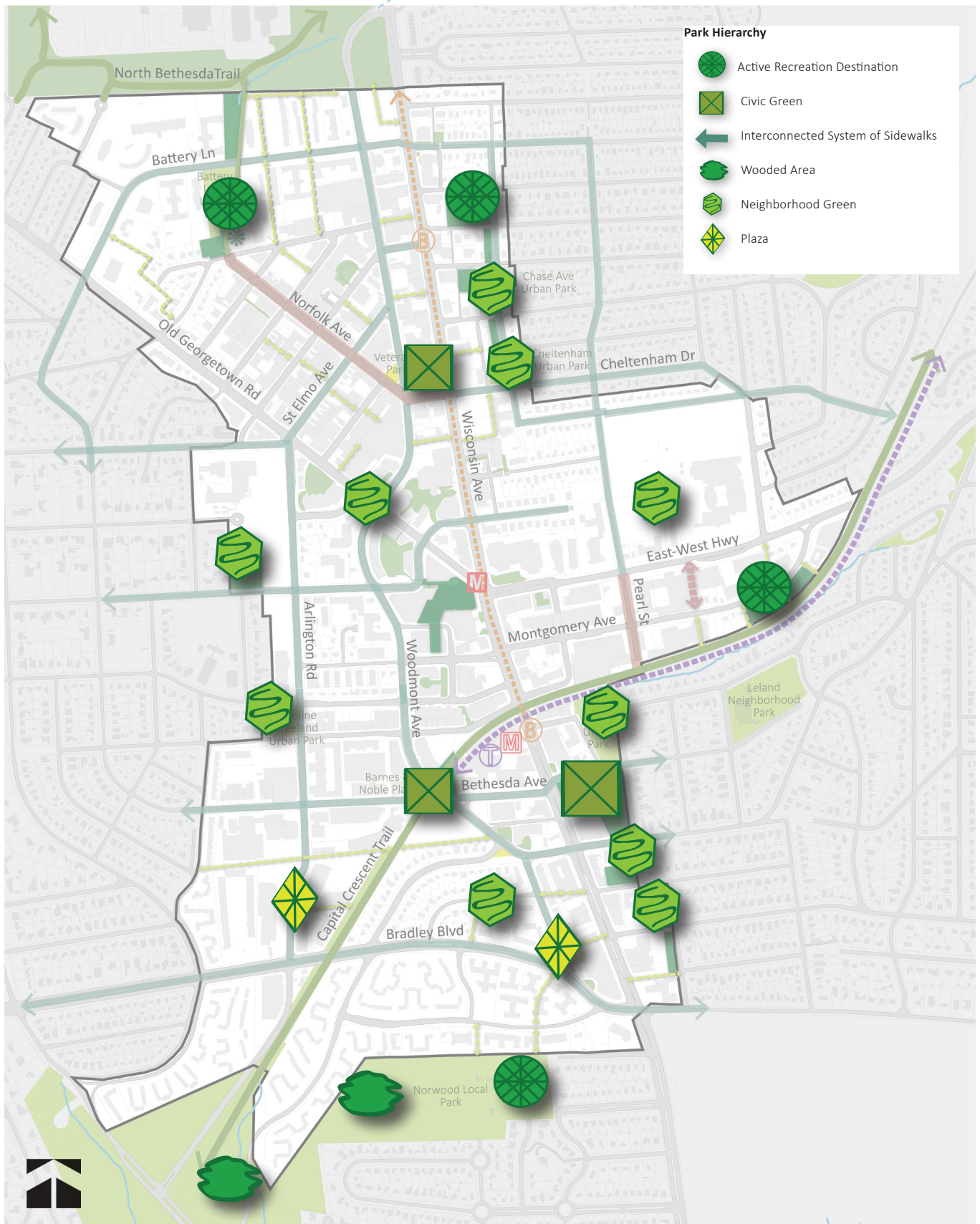
For each Urban Neighborhood - spaces for neighborhood greens, and walk-to recreational amenities.

For each Block - space for urban square, plaza, or green area.

For each Building - space for outdoor recreation space.

For each Residence - private outdoor space.

Figure 2.08: Park Hierarchy



2.2.2 Design Guideline Elements

The existing and proposed parks are shown in Figure 2.09, and include park and open space types from the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan. Below is a list of the main elements of these design guidelines. Each element will be described in more detail in the following pages.

- A. Intent, Key Features, and Size
- B. Experiences and Mix of Uses
- C. Relationship to Adjacent Uses
- D. Site Access and Connectivity/ Social Equity
- E. Special Features
- F. Frequency of Use
- G. Community Benefits



*Washington Canal Park - linear park with flexible and protected lawn area to play games and appreciate art - Washington, D.C.
Source: Land Collective*

A. Intent, Key Features and Size

Each park and open space type help to ensure a complementary park system that is safe, clean, attractive (park design excellence), inclusive, adequate in size, open and welcoming to public.

B. Experiences and Mix of Uses

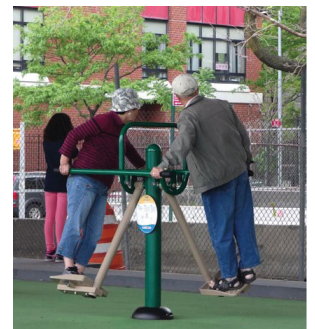
Public Spaces are about people gathering and sharing a common place. As such, each space is associated with experiences that will attract people to it. These design guidelines classify the outdoor experiences into three types:

A. Active

- exercise
- play sports/games
- run
- walk

Examples of Facilities:

- fields: open space/grass, hard courts and surfaces
- trails
- nature-inspired interactive elements
- playgrounds, etc

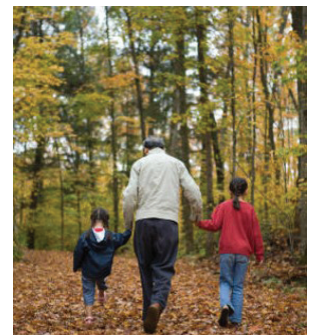


B. Contemplative

- enjoy nature
- relax
- meditate, reflect
- escape chaos

Examples of Facilities:

- natural areas, historic sites
- benches, trees for shade
- gardens, small green spaces
- community open spaces, etc

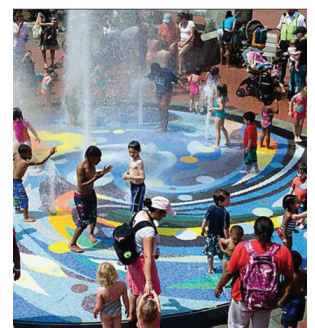


C. Social Gathering

- community festivals; farmer's market, lunch places, concerts, outdoor movies, parades, historic sites

Examples of Facilities:

- plazas with seating
- stage area/small courts
- large community open spaces
- dog parks, etc.



C. Relationship to Adjacent Uses

The land use surrounding each urban park is a critical element to its character and function. The scale of the ground floor and its open space needs to provide a welcoming pedestrian-scale relationship. Location of entrances can influence the sense of personal safety by providing: “eyes on the place”. The following design factors should be considered:

- Building frontages and entrances facing the park
- Street Frontage
- Compatibility
- Public Spaces as Central Community Focal Points
- Openness/Welcoming Spaces
- Interesting Viewsheds
- Solid & Void Relationships
- Clear delineation between the public space & adjacent private realm
- Connectivity to other public spaces and transit



*Downtown Silver Spring, MD - Spring Creek mosaic fountain - focal point and gathering spaces for the community.
Source: M-NCPPC*

D. Site Access and Connectivity/ Social Equity

Successful public spaces are connected and easily accessible to all in an integrated network of streets and sidewalks, mid-block connections, and proximity to transportation. The following design factors should be considered:

- Locations that accommodate and welcome diversity
- Meet ADA requirements
- Clear Entries/Gateways
- Safe Pedestrian Access/Crossings for all ages, especially children
- Trail System Connections
- Street Grid Continuity
- Public Transit & Bike System Connections
- Servicing, Access, and Shared Parking
- Directly connected to a Street Network
- Grade Transitions
- Access to Sunlight
- Wayfinding and Signage
- Accessibility
- Multi-modal Access



*Heart smart trail, Abington Art Center Sculpture Garden, Abington, PA.
Source: M-NCPPC*

E. Special Features

In addition to the location and hierarchy of open spaces within the public spaces system, there are special features that provide a unique setting and identity for each public space helping the community to engage and learn in inviting, safe and beautiful open spaces. The following design factors should be considered:

- Night Lighting
- Signature Main Open Space
- Signature Element: Interactive Water, Nature or Art Feature as Focal Point
- Defined Major Pedestrian Path
- Signage/Wayfinding, Interpretative Features
- Large species shade trees
- Park Furniture: Fixed Elements & Degree of Flexibility
- Accessible Amenities
- Cultural Features that create a Sense of Place



*ARTivity on the Green - urban park in Winston-Salem, NC, highlights the area reputation as “The City of Arts and Innovation”.
Source: ForsythWoman.com*

F. Frequency of Uses

These guidelines describe the frequency of use according to each park type. While all parks are available for every day use, Neighborhood Greens are more likely to be used daily or weekly by the immediate neighborhood, and Civic Greens -- as regional destinations -- provide additional use for special and seasonal events. Frequency of uses include:

- Special Events
- Seasonal Events
- Monthly Functions
- Weekly Functions
- Daily Functions

G. Community Benefits

Parks and open spaces are critical elements to be considered in the planning of a sustainable and resilient community. The presence of parks near neighborhoods promotes key community benefits. The following community benefits should be considered for every park type:

- Health and Wellness
- Happiness
- Connectivity
- Economic Development & Increased Neighborhood Value
- Green Infrastructure
- Air Quality
- Access to Natural Areas and Historic Sites
- Education
- Social Benefit
- Sense of Place

2.2.3 Design Guidelines for each Urban Park and Open Space Type

The design elements are described generally for each urban park type, see below:

A. Civic Green

1. Veteran's Park
2. Capital Crescent
3. Farm Women's Market
4. Eastern Greenway South (PLD lot #24)

B. Plaza

5. Arlington South Gateway Plaza
6. South Bethesda Public Plaza

C. Urban Greenway

7. North Bethesda Trail
8. Eastern Greenway North & South
9. Gateway into Norwood Local Park

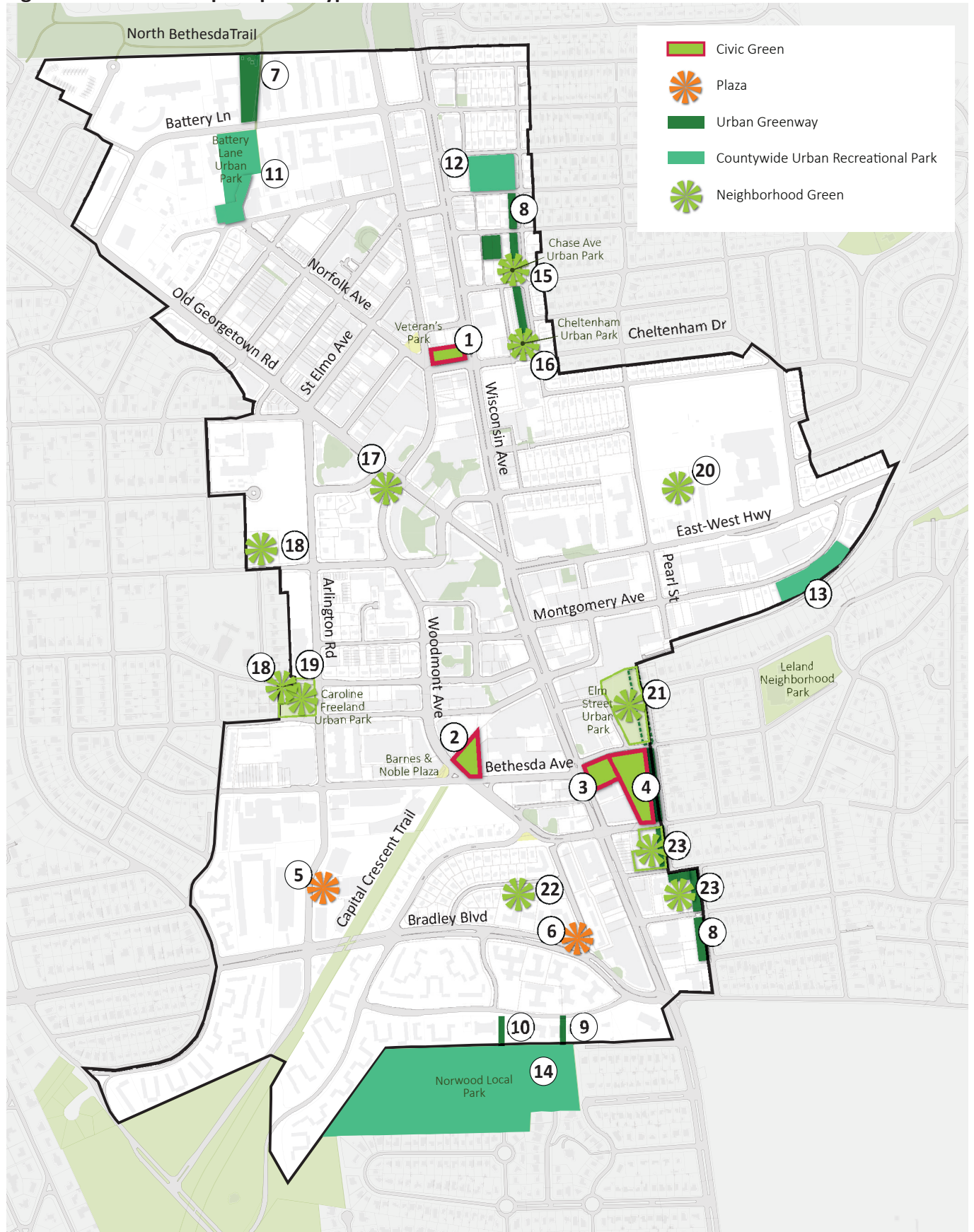
D. Countywide Urban Recreational Park

10. Battery Lane
11. Eastern Greenway North (PLD lot #25)
12. Eastern Capital Crescent Urban Greenway
13. Norwood Local Park

E. Neighborhood Green

14. Chase Avenue
15. Cheltenham
16. Old Georgetown Road
17. Western Edge Expansions (2)
18. Caroline Freeland
19. Bethesda-Chevy Chase East
20. Elm Street
21. Wellington Drive
22. Eastern Greenways (2)- (PLD lots #44 & #10)

Figure 2.09: Park and Open Spaces Types



Civic Green - Elements

Parks: Veterans Park, Farm Women's Market, Capital Crescent, Eastern Greenway South (PLD lot #24)

For more information on each park description, see the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan – 2.7 Parks and Open Space.

Intent

Formally planned, flexible, programmable for:

- Informal gathering
- Large gatherings, markets, concerts, festivals
- Regional destinations

Key Features

- Large central lawn
- Surrounded by activating uses
- Optional: gardens, water features and shade structures.

Size - ½ acre minimum, 1 ½ acre ideal

Experiences - ensure a mix of uses with a focus on Social Gathering

- Active
- Contemplative
- Social gathering/community building

Relationship to Adjacent Uses (context)

- Located at the center of activating uses
- Building entrances should front on civic green

Site Access and Connectivity/ Social Equity

- Ensure physical and visual connections from street
- Ensure a connection to transit systems
- Ensure safe pedestrian crossings
- Ensure access to all
- Promote diversity

Special Features

- Capitalize on unique views
- Incorporate identity creating features or artwork
- Incorporate streetscape enhancements along open space edge
- Wayfinding, signage, interpretative features

Frequency of Use

- Special Events
- Seasonal Events
- Monthly Functions
- Weekly Functions
- Daily Functions



Summer concert in Schenley Plaza's lawn, Pittsburgh, PA.
Source: pittsburghgreenstory.com



Wooded area across from Schenley Plaza, Pittsburgh, PA.
Source: M-NCPPC



Madison Square Park - restaurant as anchor use, destination and meeting point - New York City, NY.
Source: Revista Sophia

Plaza - Elements

Arlington South Gateway, South Bethesda

For more information on each park description, see the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan – 2.7 Parks and Open Space.

Intent

Formally planned, predominantly hardscaped spaces for:

- Areas of high pedestrian traffic
- Open air markets, concerts, festivals, and special events

Key Features

- Central hardscaped gathering area
- Public art/water feature as focal point
- Inclusion of the temporary closure of local streets to enlarge the size of the plaza for special events should be an important element in the design of its boundaries and edges
- Optional: special lighting, shaded areas, and benches and tables

Size - ½ acre minimum, 1.0 acre ideal (2017 PROS). However, the South Bethesda Plaza has a minimum recommended size of 0.15 acres.

Experiences - ensure a mix of uses

- Active
- Contemplative
- Social gathering/community building

Relationship to Adjacent Uses

- Located at the center of activating uses
- Building entrances should front on plaza
- Located in high pedestrian traffic areas

Site Access and Connectivity/ Social Equity

- Ensure physical and visual connections from street
- Ensure a connection to transit systems
- Ensure safe pedestrian crossings
- Ensure safe play areas
- Ensure access to all
- Promote diversity

Special Features

- Unique play areas
- Destination amenities- Skate parks on the hardscape
- Wayfinding, signage, interpretative features

Frequency of Use

- Special Events
- Seasonal Events
- Monthly Functions
- Weekly Functions
- Daily Functions



Activation of public spaces - Westlake Center Plaza in Seattle, WA.
Source: M-NCPPC



Veterans Park - gathering place for the community with fountain as focal point - Bethesda, MD.
Source: M-NCPPC

Urban Greenway - Elements

North Bethesda Trail, Eastern Gateway North & South, Gateway into Norwood Local Park

For more information on each park description, see the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan – 2.7 Parks and Open Space.

Intent

Linear parks that provide:

- Trails
- Wide landscaped walkways and bikeways
- Other recreational and natural amenities
- A more intimate, slower experience for recreating than a bikeway
- Small areas for gathering

Key Features

- Trails, walkways and bikeways
- Vegetative ground cover and trees
- Links to other green spaces and trails
- Gathering pods
- Artwork and interpretive displays
- Natural features - trees landscaped beds

Size - the width should accommodate a ten foot trail plus the buffer vegetation (AASHTO). For the Gateway into Norwood Local Park a fifteen foot width is recommended.

Experiences - ensure a mix of uses with a focus on active and contemplative

- Active
- Contemplative
- Social gathering/community building

Relationship to Adjacent Uses (context)

- Location is defined by filling the gaps of access to the open space system
- May occur along road right of ways or paper streets

Site Access and Connectivity/ Social Equity

- Ensure physical and visual connections to the bike and trail network
- Ensure safe pedestrian crossings
- Ensure access to all
- Promote diversity

Special Features

- Enhanced natural systems such as streams
- Unique lighting
- Wayfinding, signage, interpretative features

Frequency of Use

- Special Events
- Daily Functions



Indianapolis Cultural Trail - bike-pedestrian route that connects five downtown cultural districts.
 Source: nacto.org



Hudson River Park - bike and pedestrian path, New York City, NY.
 Source: brokensidewalk.com

Countywide Urban Recreational Park - Elements

Battery Lane, Eastern Capital Crescent, Norwood Local Park

For more information on each park description, see the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan – 2.7 Parks and Open Space.

Intent

Oriented to the recreational needs of a densely populated neighborhood and business district, They provide space for:

- Active recreation
- Recreational programming
- Community gatherings

Key Features

- Athletic fields, playing courts, picnicking, dog parks, sitting areas and flexible grassy open space
- Programming can include farmer’s markets, outdoor exercise classes, and community yard sales.

Size - varies (see Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan)

Experiences - ensure a mix of uses with a focus on active uses

- Active
- Contemplative
- Social gathering/community building

Relationship to Adjacent Uses (context)

- Located within walking distance of high density residential and commercial developments
- Compatible with other community serving uses such as recreation centers, libraries, etc.
- Located near transit system

Site Access and Connectivity/ Social Equity

- Ensure physical and visual connections from street
- Ensure a connection to transit systems
- Ensure safe pedestrian crossings
- Ensure access to all
- Promote diversity

Special Features

- Unique recreational amenity
- Artwork as recreational feature
- Unique lighting
- Wayfinding, signage, interpretative features

Frequency of Use

- Special Events
- Weekly Functions
- Daily Functions



Stead Park - multi-use field, basketball courts, recreation center and playgrounds - Washington, D.C.
 Source: borderstan.com



Nortpoint Park - Spray-ground, Tacoma, WA.
 Source: Metro Parks Tacoma

Neighborhood Green - Elements

Old Georgetown Road, Wellington Drive,
Bethesda-Chevy Chase East, Chase Avenue,
Eastern Greenway, Cheltenham, Western Edge,
Elm Street, Caroline Freeland

For more information on each park description, see
the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan – 2.7 Parks and
Open Space.

Intent

Formally planned, flexible open spaces for:

- **Informal gathering**
- **Lunchtime relaxation**
- **Small special event gatherings**
- **Walk-to recreation**

Key Features

- Lawn area
- Shaded seating
- Play area
- Optional: a skate spot, a community garden, or similar neighborhood serving amenities

Size - ¼ acre minimum, ½ acre ideal

Experiences - ensure a mix of uses

- Active
- Contemplative
- Social gathering/community building

Relationship to Adjacent Uses (context)

- Located in the center of residential developments
- Within walking distance of residents

Site Access and Connectivity/ Social Equity

- Ensure physical and visual connections from street
- Ensure safe pedestrian crossings
- Ensure access to all
- Promote diversity

Special Features

- Picnic areas
- Play features and small game spaces
- Open lawns
- Neighborhood serving amenities, neighborhood identity features
- Wayfinding, signage, interpretative features

Frequency of Use

- Seasonal Events
- Weekly Functions
- Daily Functions



*Lakelands Clubhouse Park - lawn area with flexible uses central to the community and highly used all year round, Lakelands, MD.
Source: M-NCPPC*



*Greater Kennedy Plaza - Kidolnfo Play in the park with games, activities, and a free-play mobile playground. Providence, RI.
Source: Downtown Providence Park Conservancy*