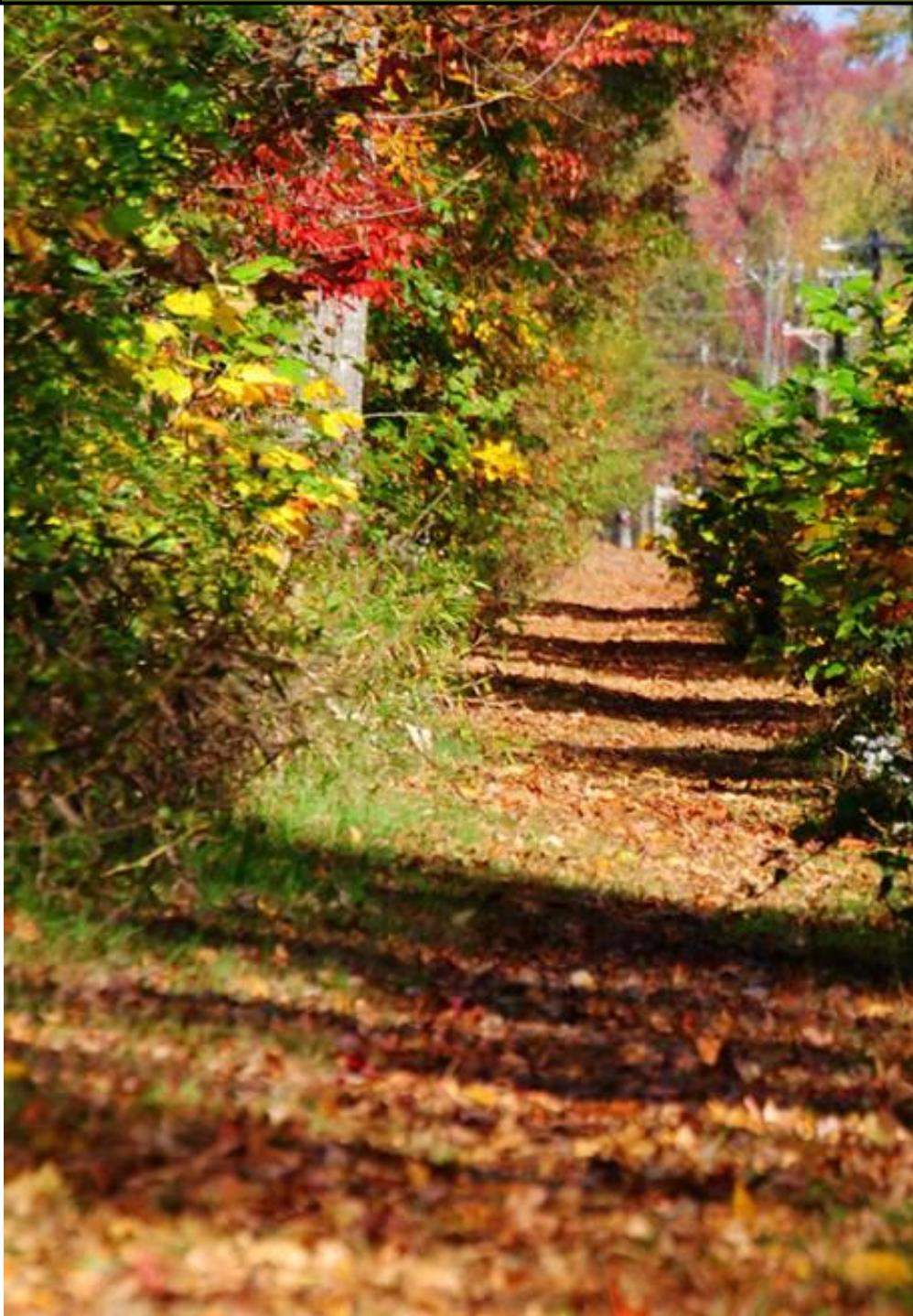




Parks and Recreation Master Plan



Town of Ashland

Town of Ashland **Parks and Recreation Master Plan**

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Abstract

The Town sees the value of open space and recreational facilities to enhance the quality of life for Town residents. This master plan provides the framework for a comprehensive system of parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities that meet the needs of a diverse and changing population and takes advantage of the natural beauty of Ashland.

In the Parks & Recreation Master Plan, the Town works to effectively provide recreational opportunities for the present and future residents by doing the following:

- *Provide a balanced and varied system of parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities that keep pace with community growth and changing community needs.*
- *Plan for a diversity of active and passive recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.*
- *Ensure that a level of service is maintained within the park system to meet the needs of the ever-changing population.*
- *Provide recreational facilities that are accessible to all members of the public regardless of age or ability.*
- *Provide accessibility to Town parks to all geographic sections of the Town.*



Chapter 1: Introduction

The Town of Ashland seeks to be an attractive community for people of diverse backgrounds to live, work, shop, and play, with play being an important factor in the health and happiness of Ashland's residents. Ashland's parks, open spaces, and natural areas lend life and beauty to our Town. The shared and collective stewardship of these essential assets connect people to the community and to each other. Residents treasure Ashland's small town quality of life, tree-lined streets, walkable neighborhoods, and scenic beauty, and residents recognize the responsibility to care for this legacy by preserving a natural setting for future generations.

The 2017 Parks and Recreation Master Plan is an update of the 1997 Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The 1997 Master Plan achieved a great deal by establishing the needs of the parks system and helped Town Council prioritize parks related expenditures. However, citizen demands and needs for parks and recreation have changed a great deal since 1997: The population has increased, the demographics of the Ashland citizenry has evolved, and the inventory of the parks system and amenities offered has grown since 1997. In short, the Ashland parks system does not resemble the Ashland parks system of 1997. By completing this Master Plan, Town Council will better be able to prioritize funding to best provide what the citizens of Ashland want their parks system to offer now and in the future.

The Ashland parks system has enhanced a great deal since the 1997 Master Plan was completed, but there is still room to advance. Although the park system has an eclectic park system with greenways, neighborhood playgrounds, community parks, and a regional park, there is still room to diversify the park system further to serve a broader population.

Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to update the 1997 Master Plan as recommended by the 2011 Town of Ashland Comprehensive Plan. It is imperative that the Town Council has an accurate understanding of the parks and recreation amenities desired and needed by the residents of Ashland. This Master Plan should help not only determine what parks and recreation amenities should be developed or improved, but where parks and recreation amenities should be developed or improved.

The Comprehensive Plan established six guiding principles for a set of seventeen Policy Statements that were used to set the direction of the Master Plan update, as paraphrased below:

- Creation, maintenance, and management of natural resources for the benefit of the citizenry's use for recreation is both a public and private sector responsibility;
- A metric should be established to assist in determining the appropriate amount of park space needed as the population grows;

- An interconnected system of parks meeting different levels of service is essential to a good park system with an ideal greenway system having trailhead access within a 15-minute walk (3/4 mile) distance from 75 percent of the Town’s population;
- Parks and recreation facilities should be located to serve the population effectively, serve as destinations for local population and tourists; access should be universal; and facilities/equipment well maintained for safety.

Guiding Objectives

Over the course of 2016, Town Staff and the Parks and Recreation Committee worked together to compile a list of Guiding Objectives to include in the Master Plan update of 2017. Meetings with representatives from the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission (Planning District Commission) and a community engagement session helped the Committee narrow its list of Guiding Objectives to six.

Within the context of this Master Plan, a Guiding Objective is an encompassing goal that, if completed, will help Town staff complete the vision of the Parks and Recreation Committee, as follows: *The Town of Ashland seeks to be an attractive community for people of diverse backgrounds to live, work, shop, and play, with play being an important factor in the health and happiness of Ashland’s residents.* The Guiding Objectives are broad goals that may be achieved by completing a wide variety of projects.

The six Guiding Objectives have been divided into two groups: A and B. The Parks and Recreation Committee used the A and B figures to prioritize the six Guiding Objectives. Guiding Objectives with an A figure are a higher priority than Guiding Objectives with a B figure. Although completion of the three B Guiding Objectives is still very important to the Parks and Recreation Committee, the A Guiding Objectives are higher on their list of items they would like completed. The number that follows the A and B figure is used to organize the Guiding Objectives. That is, the numbers that follow A and B in no way symbolize their importance to the Parks and Recreation Committee.

The Parks and Recreation Committee has also developed corresponding projects or tasks, that if completed will help complete its corresponding Guiding Objective. Within the context of this Master Plan, an Initiative will be the term used to describe a project or task that if completed, will help accomplish a corresponding Guiding Objective. The Parks and Recreation’s Guiding Objectives and Initiatives will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. The following table, Table 1, provides an overview of the six Guiding Objectives:

Guiding Objectives

A.1: Diversify

- Diversify the park system to serve a broader population
 - Provide opportunities for all ages, incomes, and ability levels to engage in recreation, play, relaxation, and solitude in a natural setting through a comprehensive parks system.

A.2: Connectivity

- Encourage Connectivity
 - Use trails, pathways, and sidewalks to connect the community and promote enhanced accessibility to parks facilities and community amenities.

A.3: Unique

- Construct a park that is unique to Virginia and attracts individuals from around the state and country.
 - Promote Ashland as a recreation destination.
 - Capitalize on Ashland’s location at the crossroads of two interstate bike routes: United States Bicycle Routes 76 and Route 1.

B.1: Programming

- Facilitate recreation programming.
 - Recreation and entertainment opportunities should be provided for people from all walks of life.

B.2: Walkability

- Expand park system to ensure every resident is within a 10-minute walk of a Town or County park.
 - Enhance the livability of Ashland by ensuring the provision of natural areas, open spaces, parks, and other recreation amenities for the enjoyment of residents.
 - Preserve natural areas and open spaces as they are finite resources. Once developed, such resources are costly and difficult to reclaim.

B.3: Service

- Provide a high level of government services.
 - Plan for ongoing maintenance, replacement, and upgrading of park facilities and equipment.

Table 1 - This table lists the six Guiding Objectives developed by the Parks and Recreation Committee.

Benefits of Parks, Trends, Recommendations, and Park Criteria

It is no surprise that parks can play a vital role in the physical health of its patrons, but parks are capable of much more. Per the National Recreation and Park Association, parks can improve physical health, mental health, house social functions, positively impact youth development, and improve the environment.¹

Physical Health

- A study of elderly seniors in Tokyo found that those living in neighborhoods with walkable green spaces lived longer and reported better functional status than those in less green neighborhoods.
- A study of diabetic individuals found that those taking 30-minute walks in a forest experienced lowered blood glucose levels far more than those spending the same amount of time doing physical activity in other settings.

Mental Health

- A study found that a 20-minute walk in an urban park benefited concentration performance children with ADHD. The performance boost was at least as large as the peak performance boost shown for two widely prescribed ADHD medications.

Social Function

- Researchers studying a Chicago housing project found that residents whose buildings had views of trees and grass had lower levels of aggression and violence than their neighbors who only had views of asphalt and concrete.
- A study conducted in a Chicago low-rise apartment development found that buildings with high levels of vegetation had 52 percent fewer total crimes than buildings with low levels of vegetation.
- Both Chicago studies found that people living next to green spaces knew more of their neighbors, reported a stronger feeling of belonging, and were more supportive of each other.

Youth Development

- Students who participate in at least one hour of extracurricular activities per week are 49 percent less likely to use drugs and 37 percent less likely to become teen parents.

Environmental

- Poor air quality affects 127 million people in the United States: aggravated respiratory and cardiovascular disease, decreased lung function, increased severity of respiratory

¹ "Synopsis of 2010 Research Papers: The Key Benefits," *The National Recreation and Parks Association*, (2011), http://www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/nrpa.org/Publications_and_Research/Research/Papers/Synopsis-of-Research-Papers.pdf

symptoms, and increases in cancer rates. City parks and urban trees combat these problems. In the lower 48 states, it is estimated that urban trees remove 783,000 tons of pollution per year with an estimated annual value to society of \$5.6 billion.

Economic Impact

- A study in Philadelphia revealed that properties 2,500 feet from the park were worth \$1,000 per acre while those 40 feet from the park were worth \$11,500 per acre.
- A study in Colorado found that residential property values decreased \$4.20 for every foot farther away from a greenbelt.²

The 2013 Virginia Outdoors Plan (VOP) offers interesting insight into recent national and state recreation trends. The VOP references the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment conducted by the Outdoors Foundation; national data show that demand for outdoor recreation is growing, up 4.4 percent between 1999 and 2008. However, people’s interests in the activities they partake in outdoors appear to be evolving. Walking, family gatherings, viewing and photographing nature, visiting farms, kayaking, and snowboarding are becoming more popular. Meanwhile, traditional activities such as picnicking, visiting historic sites, and hunting are becoming less popular. The most popular outdoor activities are running, fishing, and bicycling.³

The State’s findings from the Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey, last conducted in 2011, confirmed the national findings that interest in outdoor recreation is increasing. The activities with the highest growth rates are walking, jogging, and hiking. In contrast to the national findings, the state data indicates that participation in visiting historic areas has increased. Interest in visiting natural areas and parks has also increased. A table below lists the top outdoor recreation activities as determined by the 2011 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey.⁴

Table 4.1 Top outdoor recreation activities for Virginia households

2011 top outdoor recreation activities
1) Walking for pleasure
2) Visiting historic sites or areas
3) Visiting parks (local, state or national)
4) Visiting natural areas, preserves or refuges
5) Swimming in a pool

The 2013 VOP describes the latest trends in parks and recreation provision in the United States and in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The VOP also makes recommendations for outdoor recreation and land conservation

² “Synopsis of 2010 Research Papers: The Key Benefits,” *The National Recreation and Parks Association*, (2011), http://www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/nrpa.org/Publications_and_Research/Research/Papers/Synopsis-of-Research-Papers.pdf

³ “The 2013 Virginia Outdoors Plan,” *The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation*, (2013) <http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/document/vopall.pdf>.

⁴ “The 2013 Virginia Outdoors Plan,” *The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation*, (2013) <http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/document/vopall.pdf>.

by planning district, including the Richmond Region. Items relevant to Ashland in the Richmond Region chapter include the following:

- Develop the East Coast Greenway which runs north – south through Ashland.
- Implement the remaining recommendations in the Master Plan for the 221 acre Washington Lacy Park.
- Provide public water access along the South Anna River at US Route 1.⁵

National Park and Recreation Association Park, Open Space, and Pathways Classification

The following park area standards were developed by the National Park and Recreation Association (NRPA) in 1995. It represents NRPA’s most recent thinking on classification for parklands and facilities. Due to the local variations and the diversity of collection methods NRPA has not attempted to update the classifications since 1995. Future planning should consider accommodating as many types of activities and opportunities as possible to meet the range of needs of Ashland residents. Thus, the data included in this document are considered guidelines that jurisdictions can use to establish their own desired service levels. According to the 2013 VOP, an ideal parks and recreation system should consist of a mix of the following types of facilities: neighborhood playgrounds, community parks, and regional parks. Each of these parks are described in Table 3.

NRPA Parks, Open Space, and Pathways Classification Table			
Parks and Open Space Classifications			
Classification	General Description	Location	Size Criteria
Mini-Park	Used to address limited, isolated, or unique recreation needs.	Less ¼ mile distance in residential setting	Between 2500 sq. ft. and one acre in size
Neighborhood Park	Neighborhood park remains the basic unit of the park system and serves as the recreation and social focus of the neighborhood. Focus is on informal activity and passive recreation.	1/4 mile to 1/2-mile distance and uninterrupted by non-residential roads and other physical barriers	5 acres is considered minimum size. 5 to 10 acres is optimal
School-Park	Depending on circumstances, combining parks with school sites can fulfill the space requirements for other	Determined by location of school district property	Variable depends on function

⁵The 2013 Virginia Outdoors Plan, The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, 2013 <http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/document/vopall.pdf>.

	classes of parks, such as neighborhood, community, sports complex, and special use.		
Community Park	Serves broader purpose than neighborhood park. Focus is on meeting community-based recreation needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.	Determined by the quality and suitability of the site. Usually serves two or more neighborhoods within a 1/2 to 3-mile distance	As needed to accommodate desired uses. Usually between 30 and 50 acres
Large Urban Park	Large Urban parks serve a broader purpose than community parks and are used when community and neighborhood parks are not adequate to serve the needs of the community. Focus is on meeting community-based recreation needs as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.	Determined by the quality and suitability of the site. Usually serves the entire community.	As needed to accommodate desired uses. Usually a minimum of 50 acres with 75 or more acres being optimal
Natural Resource Areas	Lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space and visual aesthetics, or buffering.	Resource availability and Opportunity	Variable
Greenways	Effectively tie the park system components together to form a continuous park environment.	Resource availability and Opportunity	Variable
Sports Complex	Consolidates heavily programmed athletic fields and associated facilities to larger and fewer sites strategically located throughout the community	Strategically located Community-wide facilities	Determined by projected demand usually a minimum of 25 acres with 40 to 80 acres being optimal

Special Use Park	Covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities oriented toward single-purpose use	Variable – dependent on specific use	Variable
Private Park/Recreation Facility	Parks and recreation facilities that are privately owned yet contribute to the public park and recreation system	Variable – dependent on specific use	Variable

Parks, Open Space, and Pathways Classification Table (cont.)		
Pathway Classifications		
Classification	General Description	Description of Each Type
Park Trail	Multi-purpose trails located within greenways, parks, and natural resource areas. Focus is on recreational value and harmony with the natural environment.	Type I: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/in-line skates. Type II: Multipurpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians and bicyclists/in-line skaters. Type III: Nature trails for pedestrians, which may use either hard or soft surfaces.
Connector Trails	Multipurpose trails that emphasize safe travel for pedestrians to and from parks and around the community. Focus is as much on transportation as it is on recreation.	Type I: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/in-line skates located in independent rights-of-ways (ROWS) e.g., old railroad ROW. Type II: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/in-line skates. Typically, located within road ROW.
On-Street Bikeways	Paved segments of roadways that serve as a means to safely separate bicyclists from vehicular traffic	Bike route: Designated portions of the roadway for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists. Bike Lane: Shared portions of the roadway that provide separation between motor vehicles and bicyclists, such as paved shoulders.
All-Terrain Bike Trail	Off-road trail for all terrain (mountain) bikes	Single-purpose loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas.
Cross-Country Ski Trail	Trails developed for traditional and skate-style cross-country skiing	Loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas.

<p>Equestrian Trails</p>	<p>Trails developed for horseback riding</p>	<p>Loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas. Sometimes developed as multipurpose with hiking and all-terrain biking where conflicts can be controlled.</p>
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Table 3 - the National Park and Recreation Association classification table

Summary

This Master Plan provides the framework for a comprehensive system of parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities that meet the needs of a diverse and changing population. In Chapter 2, an inventory of the neighboring Hanover County parks, private-public recreation related amenities, and Town owned facilities will be discussed in detail. The inventory will include the size of the parks, each park’s amenities, and current projects.

In Chapter 3, analysis completed by the Planning District Commission will be examined. The Planning District Commission completed a great deal of analysis that includes a walkshed, which will assist in determining where park facilities, sidewalks, or trails need to be developed to achieve the principle objective of ensuring every resident lives within a ten-minute walk of an Ashland park. The Planning District Commission also collected data about the demographics of Ashland residents, and where older and younger residents tend to live. This information will be instrumental when the Parks and Recreation Committee begin examining where new parks will be located, what type of amenities will be included in those parks, and what type of playground equipment will be used to replace the parks system’s current playground equipment.

In Chapter 4, the Guiding Objectives and corresponding Initiatives developed by the Parks and Recreation Committee will be reviewed in detail.

Chapter 2: Existing Facilities Inventory and Funding Sources

Existing Facilities Inventory

Town Parks & Open Space

The Town of Ashland maintains recreation facilities for the enjoyment of residents and visitors. The chart below lists the features available in each facility located within the Town.

<i>Existing Facilities Publicly Owned or Maintained in the Town of Ashland</i>								
	Ashland Trolley Line	Carter Park	DeJarnette Park	Pufferbelly Park	Railside Park & Trail	South Taylor Street Park	Stony Run Trail	Washington Lacy Park*
<i>Acreage</i>	N/A	10	9	2	1	0.5	N/A	165
<i>Basketball Court</i>		H				H		
<i>Natural/Passive Use</i>			X		X			
<i>Picnic/Pavilion Facilities</i>		X			X	X		X
<i>Playground</i>		X		X		X		
<i>Pond</i>			X					
<i>Restrooms</i>		X						
<i>Skate Park</i>				X				
<i>Swimming Pool</i>		X						
<i>Trails</i>	X	X	X		X		X	X
<i>Community Garden</i>				X				
<i>Horseshoe Pit(s)</i>		X						
Key:								
* - Washington Lacy Park is in the Town of Ashland and extends into Hanover County. Hanover County maintains the park.								
X - facility currently exists								
H - half basketball court								

Table 4 – Existing facilities publicly owned in Ashland and each facility’s amenities.

CARTER PARK is located between South Center Street and Maple Street. Based on the NRPA Parks, Open Space, and Pathways Classification system, Carter Park is a community park. Carter Park is the centerpiece of the Ashland park system. It contains a junior Olympic size swimming pool, one-half basketball court, a picnic shelter and picnic area, a playground, and gravel trails

through the woods. At this time, the bathhouse of the Carter Park Pool is being renovated, and a family bathroom is being added to the facility. At the start of the 2017 pool season, the Carter Park Pool will also include a new and improved kiddie pool.

DEJARNETTE PARK located on Stony Run. Based on the NRPA Parks, Open Space, and Pathways Classification system, DeJarnette Park is a neighborhood park. It is bordered by residential uses on both sides. Access to the park is at the end of Race Course Street and the end of Beverly Road. A one-acre, fully stocked pond underwent rehabilitation in 2006, and the park contains trails through the wooded area of the park. The site remains in a natural state.

PUFFERBELLY PARK is located behind the Ashland Police Station on Randolph Street between England and Myrtle Streets. Based on the NRPA Parks, Open Space, and Pathways Classification system, Pufferbelly Park is a community park. There is playground equipment, a community garden, a village green, and a skate park.

RAILSIDE PARK & TRAIL is located at the northern end of North Center Street. Based on the NRPA Parks, Open Space, and Pathways Classification system, Railside Park & Trail is a neighborhood park with a connector trail. The park connects to Vaughan Road by a one-third of a mile-long path along the rail-road tracks. The site remains open space with one picnic table and three benches that allow for watching trains pass by.

SOUTH TAYLOR STREET PARK is located at the extreme end of South Taylor Street (725 South Taylor Street). Based on the NRPA Parks, Open Space, and Pathways Classification system, South Taylor Street Park is a neighborhood park. Existing facilities include a picnic shelter, tot lot, and one-half basketball court.

ASHLAND TROLLEY LINE is approximately a one-mile section of the historic Ashland-Richmond Trolley Line located at the intersection of the Trolley Line and Gwathmey Church Road. Based on the NRPA Parks, Open Space, and Pathways Classification system, the Ashland Trolley Line is a park trail. Hanover County has designated this trail as a greenway. The corridor has been cleared and maintained as a natural surface trail and a greenway to be used by the public at large. The trail is accessible by trailhead at Gwathmey Church Road. This section of trail is a logical location for the future off-road portion of the East Coast Greenway. There is potential in the future that this trail could connect through Henrico County and into the northern part of Richmond.

STONY RUN TRAIL runs toward DeJarnette Park along Stony Run Creek with access an access point at the intersection of Ashcake Road and South Center Street. Based on the NRPA Parks, Open Space, and Pathways Classification system, Stony Run Trail is a park trail. The trail remains largely in its natural state and does not currently connect to DeJarnette Park.

COMMUNITY SPACES can also be considered elements of the Town's existing recreational public infrastructure. These public spaces provide opportunities for relaxation and gathering without being formally programmed or maintained as recreational or park facilities. Two examples of these spaces are the common green by Town Hall and the plaza space by the Library.

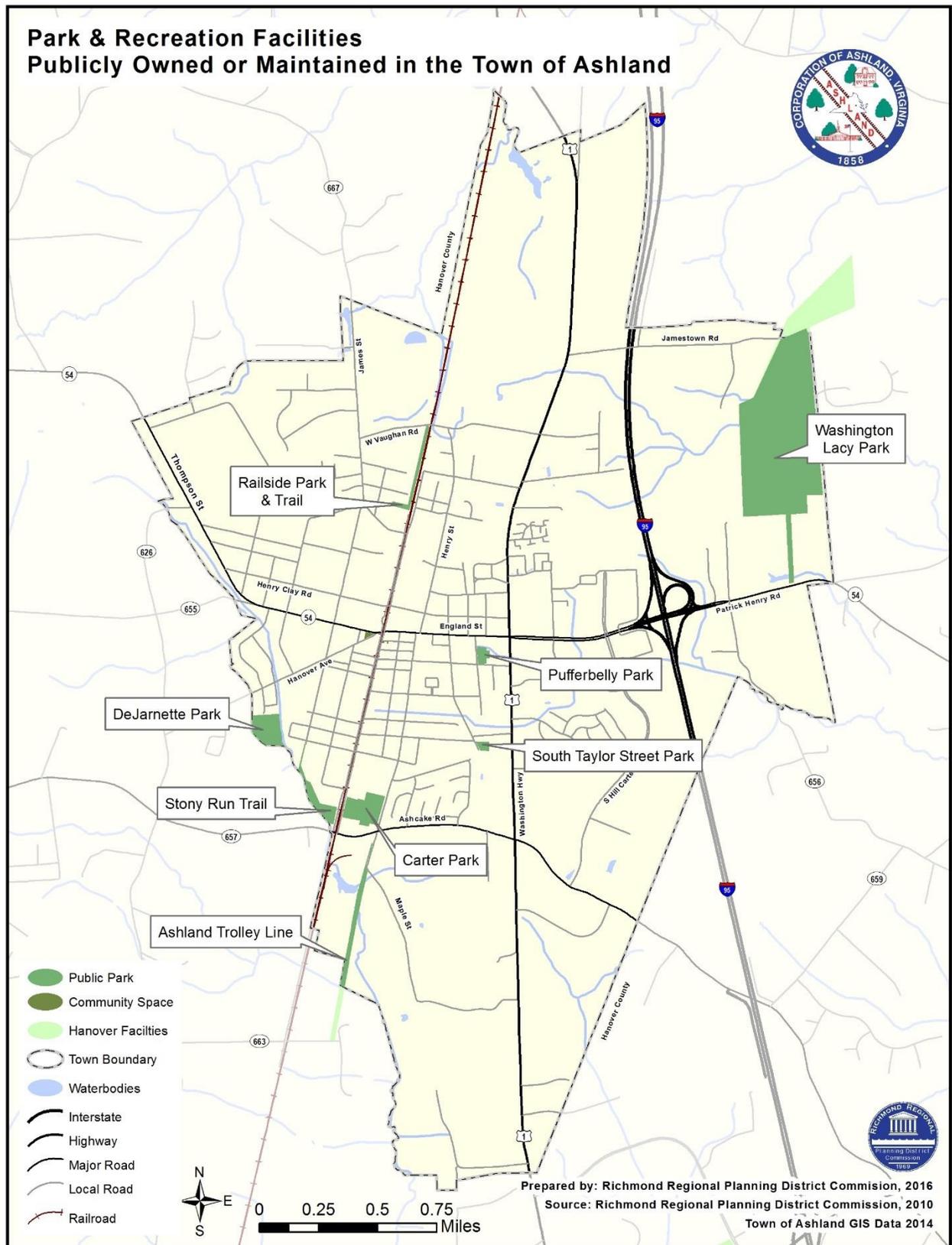


Figure 1 – public parks in Ashland

Private and Semi-Public Facilities in Ashland

Several private and semi-public recreational facilities are available within the Town. Facilities range from non-profits, churches, schools, and facilities associated with private housing complexes. Hanover County Department of Parks and Recreation and the Hanover County School Board have a cooperative agreement allowing the use of school facilities for public recreation purposes during non-school hours. Many of the facilities included here are available to the public with some restriction such as timing or the cost of a fee or organizational membership.

In addition to the facilities listed, many churches in the Town offer programming to church members and the public. As of this writing, St Anne Catholic Church hosts Cub Scout and Girl Scout programs while St James the Less Episcopal Church offers Zumba classes.



Private and Semi-Public Facilities		
A	Gandy Elementary School	Facilities include a track, ball field, and playground equipment.
B	Skateland	Indoor roller skating rink located on Washington Highway/US Route 1. Skateland offers skating skill classes for all ages. A roller hockey league is also available.
C	TrainTown CrossFit	Fitness programs for adults, teens, and pre-teens. Membership required
D	Ashland Towne Square Apartment Facilities	Pool, tennis, and playground facilities for residents.
E	Ashland Woods Apartment Facilities	Pool, tennis, and playground facilities for residents.
F	Sedgefield Facilities	Tennis, playground, and picnic facilities for residents.
G	All Smiles American Gymnastics	Gymnastics and fitness classes for children through adults; class fees and registration required

H	YMCA	Ashcake Road wellness facility with approximately 40,000 sq. ft. including a 6-lane indoor pool that is heated, two school age childcare youth rooms, spacious locker rooms, outdoor playground, irrigated sports fields, outdoor chapel, outdoor archery range and wooded walking trails on 32 acres. Programs: Fitness Programs, Youth Activities, Land and Water Exercise Classes, Swim Lessons, Swim Team, Active Older Adult Functions Sponsored programs elsewhere.
I	Misty Pines Townhomes Play Structures	Youth climbing structures for use by residents.
J	Arlington Square Facilities	Pool and playground for use by residents.
K	Hanover Arts & Activities Center	Located at 500 South Center Street, the Center has meeting space for the public, studio space for artists, and classes and seminars for the public. The Center sponsors popular events, such as theater programs and parades, and houses the Ashland Community Preschool.
L	Ashland Christian Church Playground	Playground facilities for use by membership youth.
M	Henry Clay Elementary School	Playground, basketball court, and gymnasium with stage available.
N	Ashland Little League	Located along Snead Street and Hanover Avenue, Ashland Little League offers fall and spring opportunities for children to play organized T-ball, baseball, and softball. Players must be residents of the Town of Ashland or the surrounding area of Hanover County. Players must register and pay a fee for each season of play.
O	St James the Less Episcopal Church Playground	Playground facilities for use by membership youth.
P	St Ann’s Catholic Church Playground	Playground facilities for use by membership youth.
Q	Randolph-Macon College Tennis Courts	Located off Henry Clay Road, 10 tennis courts are available for public use when not in use by college users. College-related users get priority.
R	First Baptist Church Playground	Playground facilities for use by membership youth and a preschool program housed at the church.
S	Duncan Memorial Methodist Church Playground	Playground facilities for use by membership youth.

Table 5 – Private and Semi-Public facilities

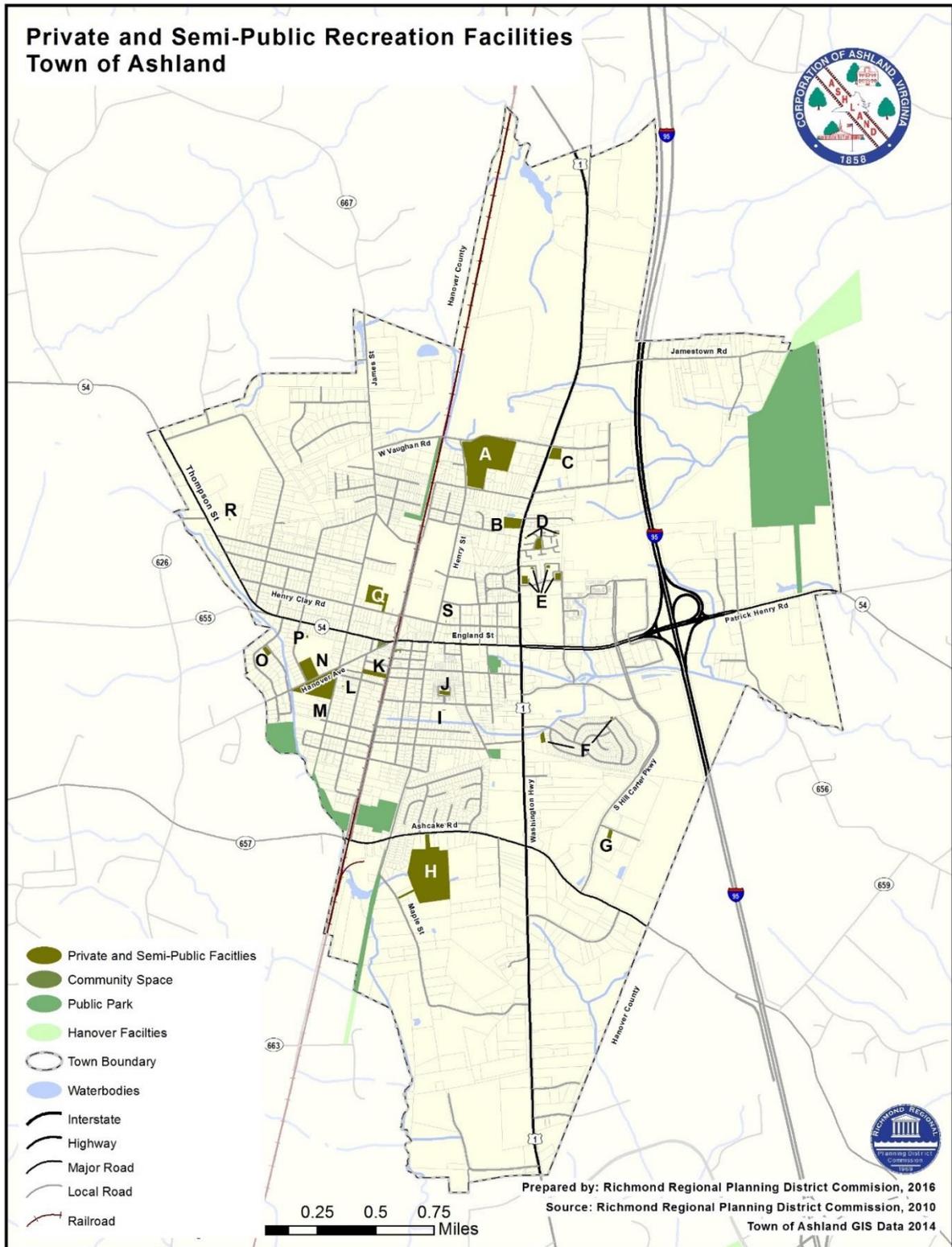


Figure 2 – This figure shows, by using the corresponding letters in Table 5, where each private and semi-private facility recreational facility is located.

Hanover County Facilities

Existing Facilities within 3 miles of Town of Ashland				
<i>Owned or Maintained by Hanover County</i>				
	Trolley Line Greenway	Poor Farm Park	Taylor Park	Washington Lacy Park
<i>Acreage</i>	N/A	213	22	165
<i>Amphitheater</i>		X		
<i>Baseball/Softball Fields</i>		X		
<i>Community Center</i>			X	
<i>Dog Park</i>			X	
<i>Horse Trailer Parking</i>				X
<i>Horseshoe Pit(s)</i>		X		
<i>Multipurpose Fields</i>		X	X	
<i>Natural/Passive Use</i>		X		
<i>Picnic Facilities</i>		X	X	X
<i>Soccer Field</i>		X		
<i>Trails</i>	X	X	X	X
<i>Volleyball Courts</i>		X		
Key: X - facility currently exists				

Table 6 – Existing Hanover County facilities within 3 miles of Ashland and each facility’s amenities.

POOR FARM PARK is located approximately two and one-half miles west of Town at 13400 Liberty School Road. Based on the NRPA Parks, Open Space, and Pathways Classification system, Poor Farm Park is a large urban park. This 254-acre park has three picnic shelters, trails shared by bicyclists and hikers, a tot-lot, horseshoe pits, beach volleyball courts, lighted soccer fields, an amphitheater, open play areas, a seasonal concession stand with restrooms, two lighted softball fields, two lighted baseball fields, and a football field.

TAYLOR PARK is located approximately one mile east of Town at 13017 Taylor Complex Lane. Based on the NRPA Parks, Open Space, and Pathways Classification system, Taylor Park is a natural resource area and a special use park. It is a special use park because it is also a dog park. Taylor Park is a 53-acre passive park that contains open space and picnic tables. It is also the location of the Hanover Animal Control Dog Park offering opportunities for exercise and agility training.

WASHINGTON LACY PARK is a 222 acre Hanover County park located both in and outside the Town boundaries. Based on the NRPA Parks, Open Space, and Pathways Classification system, Washington Lacy Park is a natural resource area with park trails. The Planning District Commission uses a slightly different park classification system. According to the Planning District Commission, Washington Lacy Park is also a regional park. The Planning District Commission’s classification system will be discussed in Chapter 3. Phase 1 of the park (77 acres) is in the county, adjacent to the Town on the eastern boundary. The park entrance is located at the intersection of Jamestown Road and Woodside Lane (13400 Woodside Lane). Phase 1 has picnic tables and approximately one and one-half miles of wide, multiuse trails through a forested area. The trails are intended for shared use by horses, hikers, and bicycles. The balance of the park (145 acres), located within the corporate limits of the Town, has been approved for future park development.

Trolley Line Greenway is an extension of the Ashland portion of the Trolley Line Trail. Based on the NRPA Parks, Open Space, and Pathways Classification system, is a park trail. Hanover County has designated it a greenway.

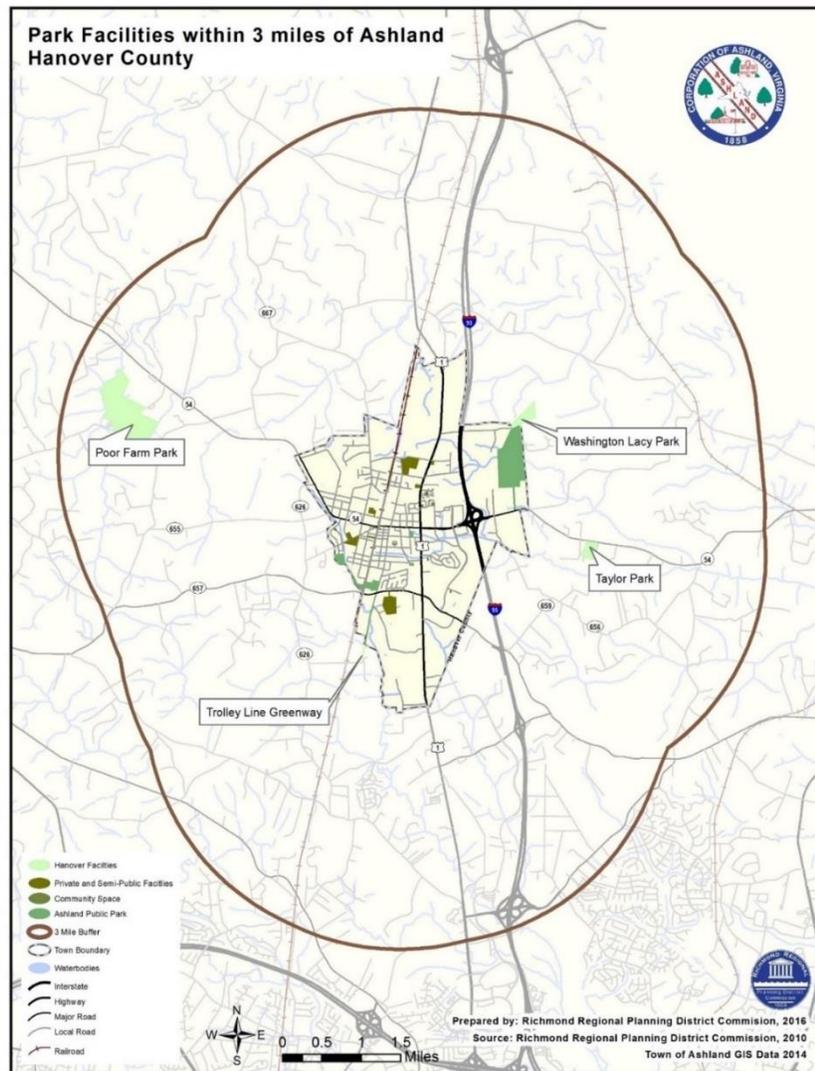


Figure 4 - Existing Hanover County facilities within 3 miles of Ashland

Funding Sources

Municipal park facilities are often built and maintained using tax revenue, but there are numerous grant opportunities available to municipalities that want to improve their parks or trail systems. The following is list of potential funding sources:

Virginia Recreational Trails Program (RTP): Matching reimbursement grant program for the building and rehabilitation of trails and trail-related facilities. Partnership between Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) & the Federal Highway Administration (FHA). There is a competitive call for applicants, then the Recreational Trails Program & the Virginia Recreational Trails Program Advisory Committee steer project selections.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF): Federal reimbursement program for the acquisition and/or development of public outdoor recreation areas. Administered in Virginia by DCR on behalf of the National Park Service. All LWCF assisted areas must be maintained and opened, in perpetuity, as public outdoor recreation areas to ensure their use for future generations. It is a 50-50 percent matching reimbursement program. The grant recipient must be able to fund 100 percent of the project while seeking periodic reimbursements.

Virginia Land Conservation Foundation: Grants are awarded to help fund the purchase of permanent conservation easements, open spaces and parklands, lands of historic or cultural significance, farmlands and forests, and natural areas. A portion of the fund may be used for developing properties for public use.

Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Program Funding for Transportation Alternatives (TA): Created under the FAST Act (Fixing America's Surface Transportation). Encompasses a variety of smaller-scale transportation projects such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities, recreational trails, and safe routes to and school projects.

Recreational Access Program: Administered by the VDOT in concurrence with DCR. Provides access to public recreational or historic areas owned by the Commonwealth or a local government. Funding is provided through VDOT's Recreational Access Fund. Can assist with Bikeway construction.

Fund Your Park: A crowdfunding platform hosted by the National Recreation and Park Association.

It is recommended that Town staff regularly review the preceding list of potential funding sources for grant opportunities.

Chapter 3: Current and Future Land Use, Community Profile, Existing Demographics and Future Demographics, Level of Service Analysis, and Walkshed Analysis

Existing and Future Land Use

The pattern of existing land uses within the Town of Ashland boundaries depicted on Figure 5 provides an important foundation for understanding how the population lives, works, and plays.

The Ashland central business district (CBD) exhibits the greatest mix of uses, largely influenced by the College and crossroads created by the rail and England Street/Route 54, which serves as the major thoroughfare connecting the Town’s center to Route 1 and Interstate 95. Much of the land continuing west of the CBD is dedicated to residential use, with several of the Town’s existing parks interspersed throughout the area. East of the CBD, Route 1 and Route 54 organize a concentration of highway commercial, office, and industrial uses. All existing parks and open space owned by the Town are located west of Route 1, despite the presence of several high density residential developments east of the highway.



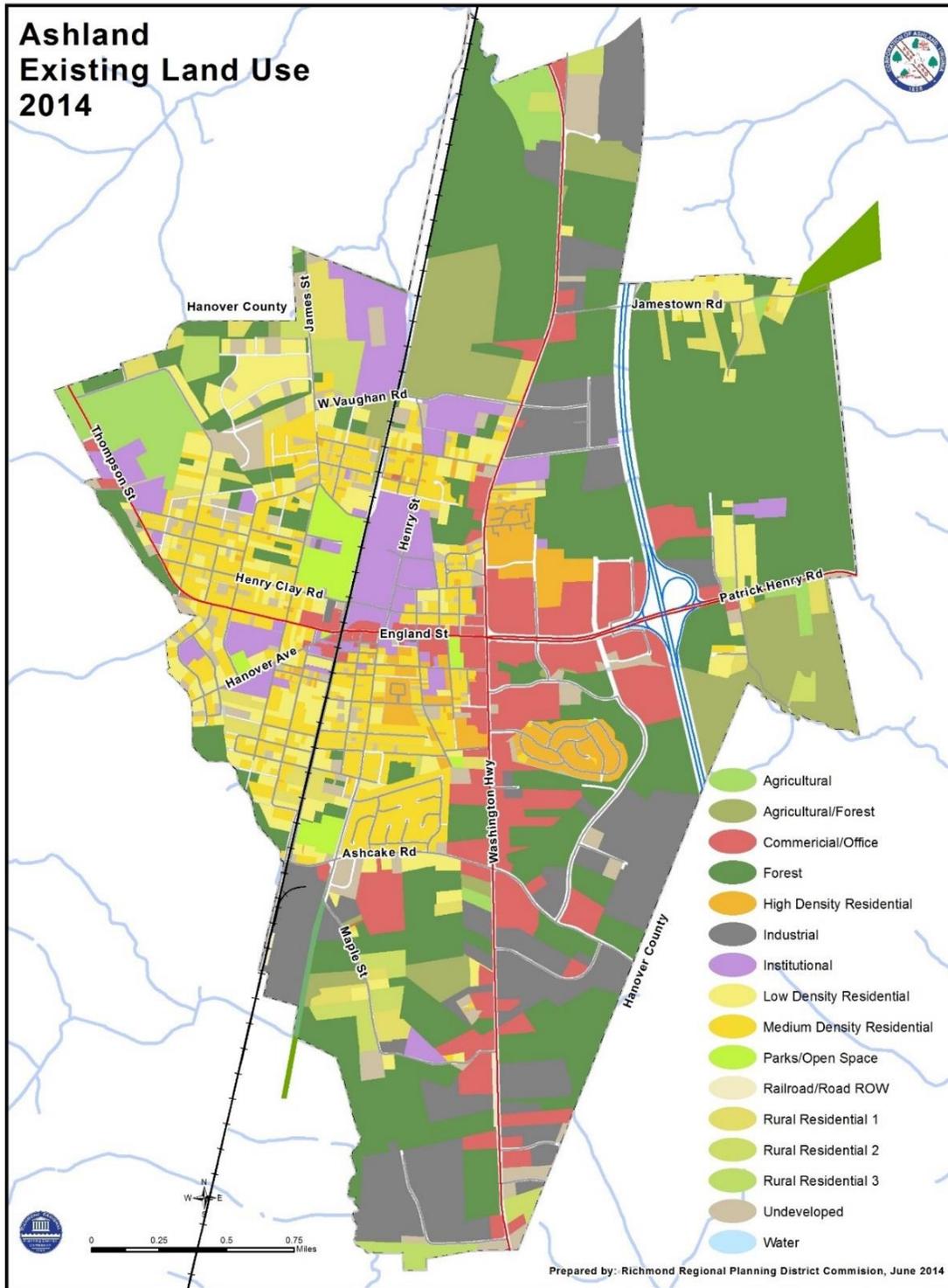


Figure 5 – Town of Ashland 2014 Existing Land Use.

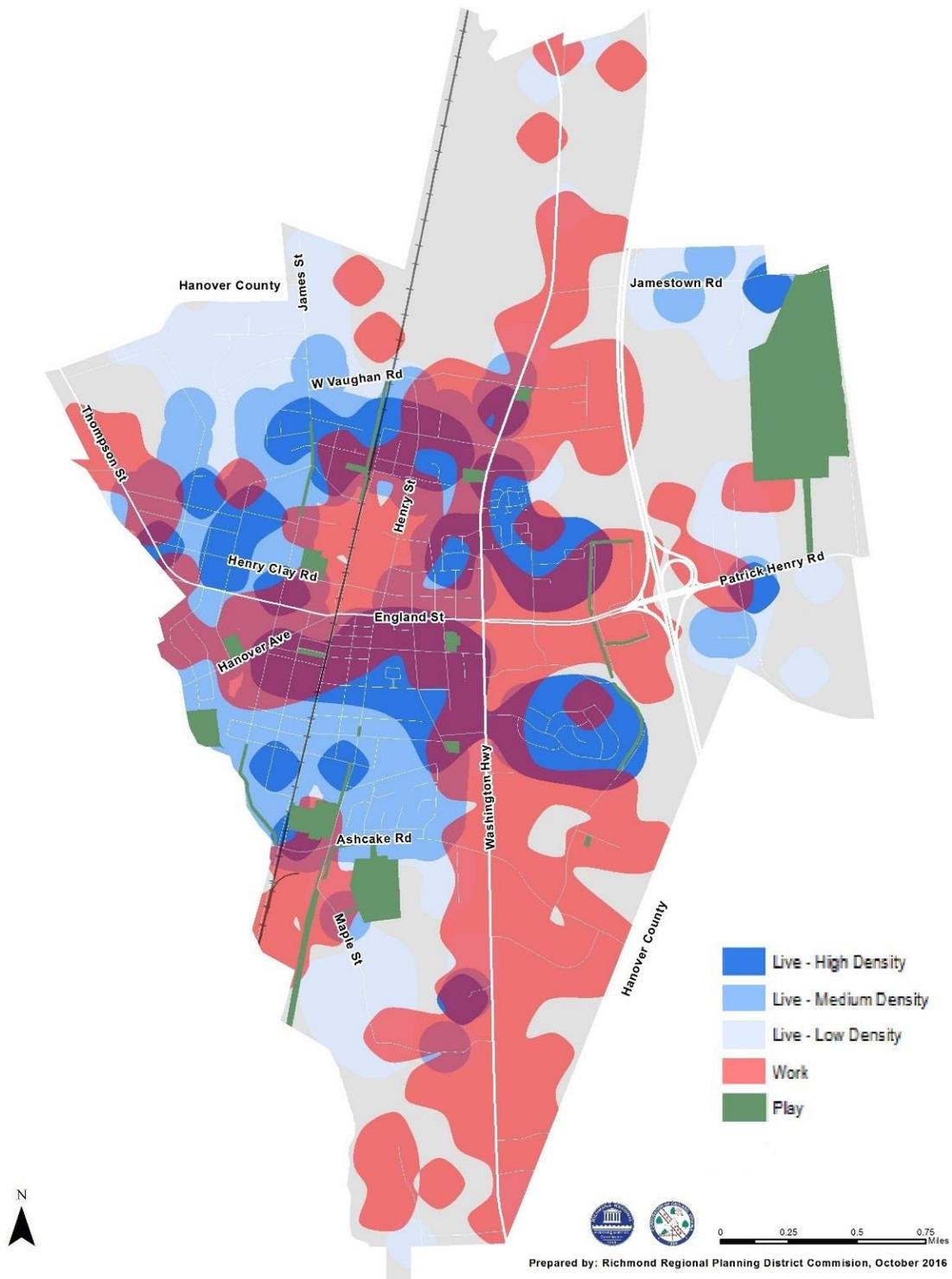


Figure 6 – Map of Ashland depicting which area is used for work, play, and living.

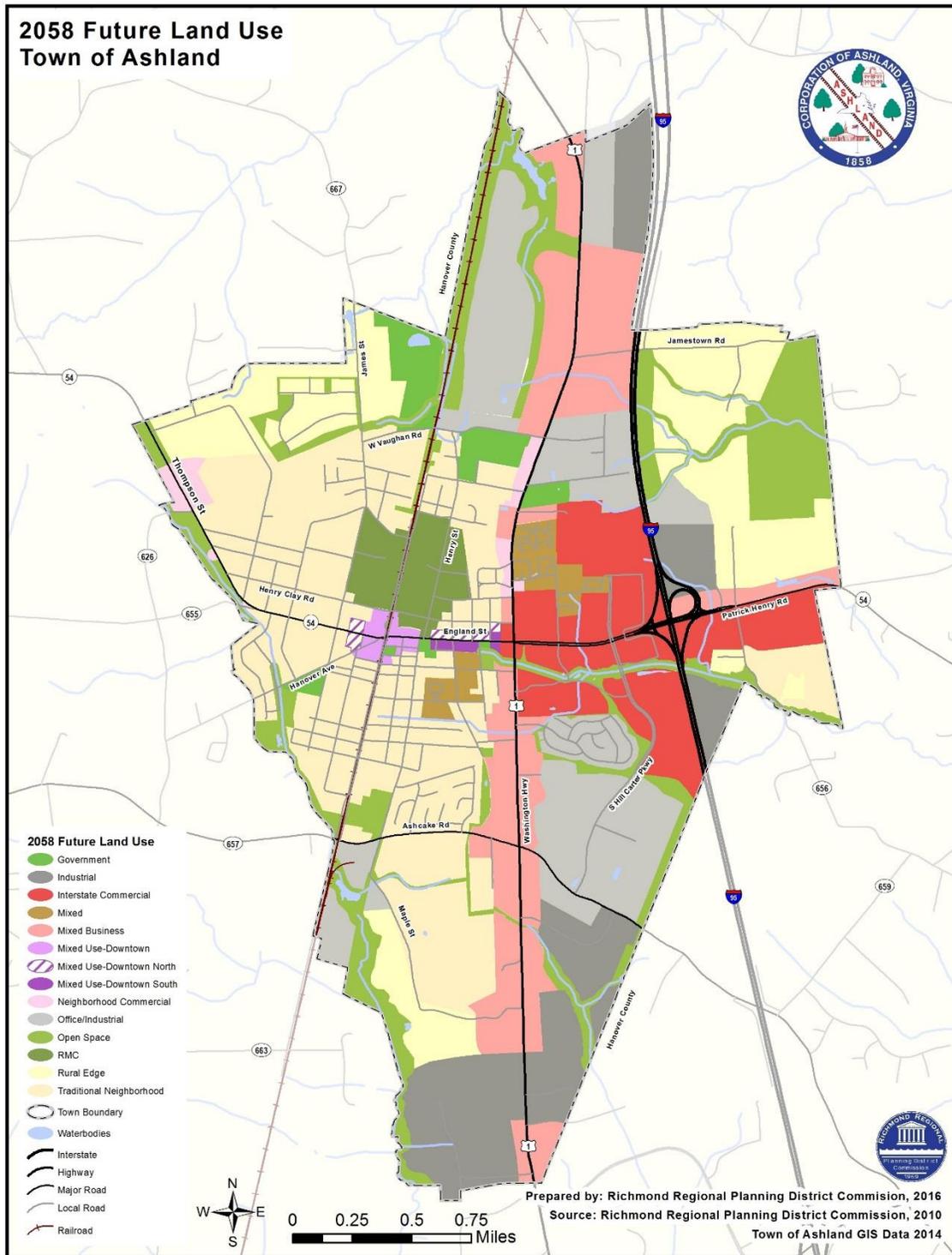


Figure 7 – This figure is the future land use map of the Town of Ashland. Town Staff believes land use in the Town of Ashland will closely resemble Figure 7 in the year 2058. The 2058 Future Land Use map should be used when considering park and trail development.

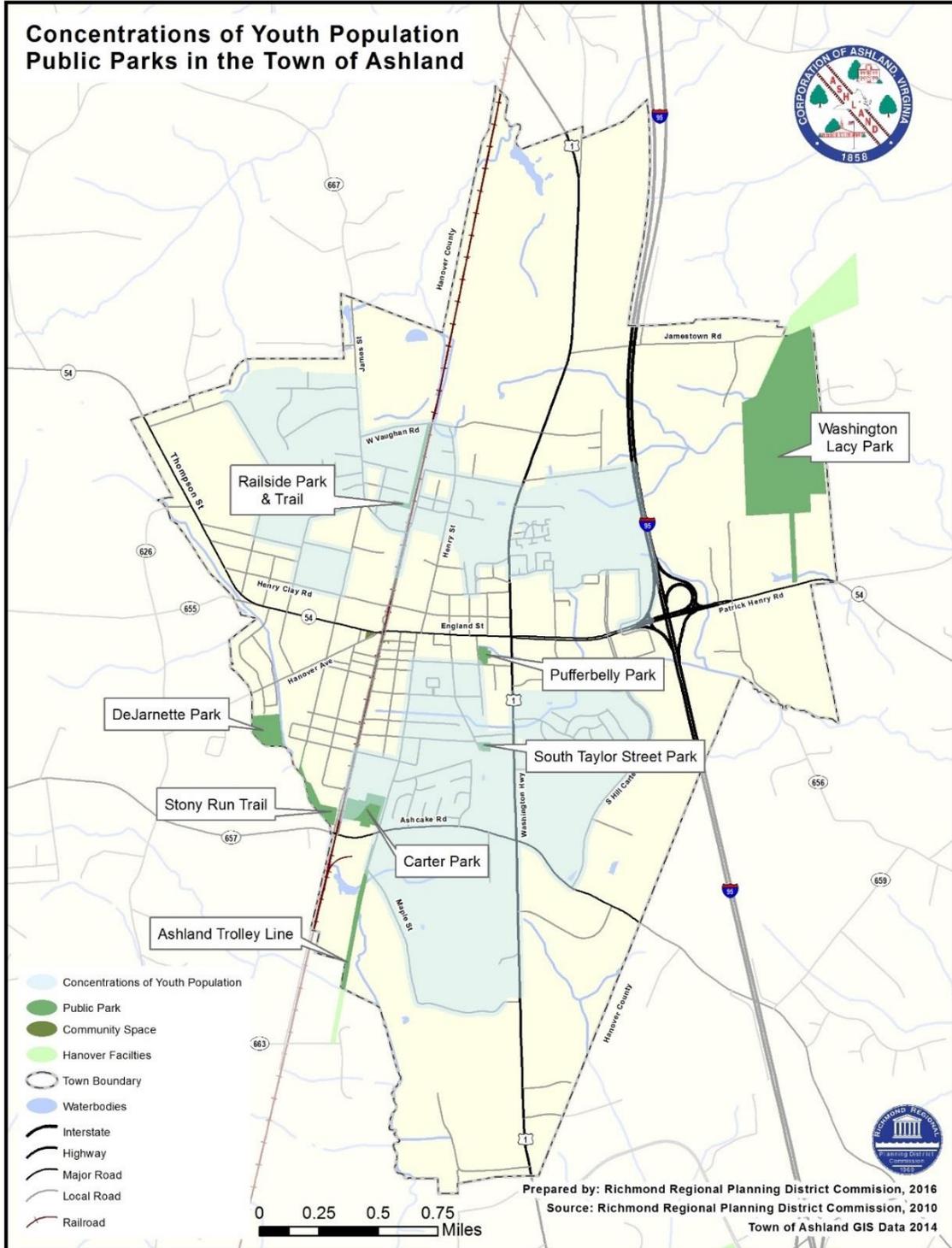


Figure 8 – Concentrations of young residents.

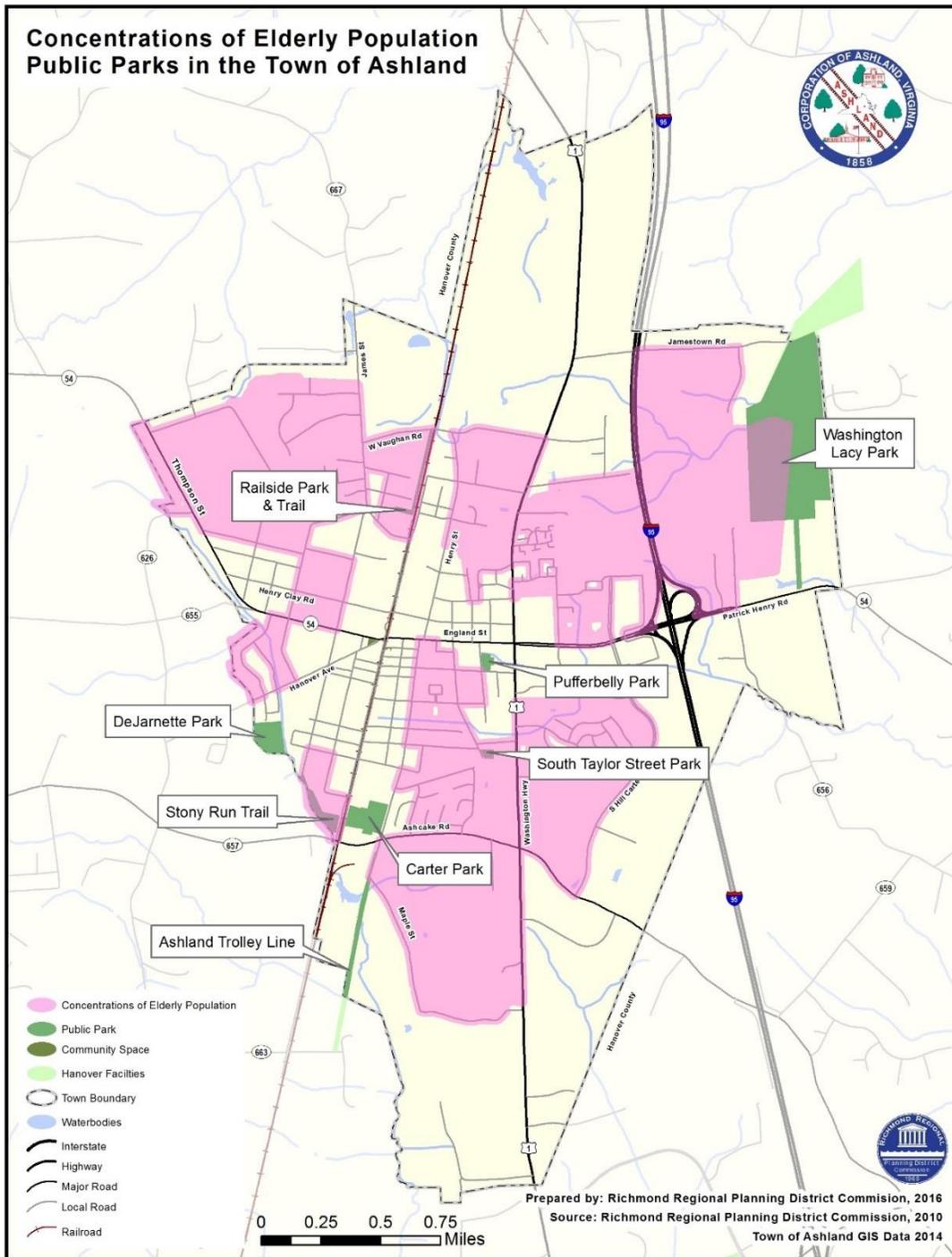


Figure 9 - Concentrations of elderly residents

Figures 8 and 9 display where in Ashland concentrations of elderly and young residents live. Youth population, in terms of this Master Plan, refers to residents who are between the ages of infant and 17. The elderly population, in terms of this Master Plan, refers to residents who are

65 years or older and are capable of physical activity. Figures 8 and 9 were created by determining the average number of youth residents and elderly residents per Census block in Ashland. The areas shaded in blue or pink represent Census blocks where the number of youth or elderly residents, respectively, are greater than the census block average for the Town for those age groups. Figures 8 and 9 should be used to determine what types of parks related amenities are developed and where these amenities should be developed. Young residents want and need different types of park amenities than elderly residents.

Community Profile

The Town of Ashland is located 15 miles north of Richmond in Hanover County. Interstate 95 and US Route 1 provide the primary highway access. Per a 2014 population estimate, Ashland is home to a population of 7,264 and is comprised of 7.2 square miles. The center of Town is bisected by the CSX rail, which also serves AMTRAK passenger service. The Town is home to Randolph-Macon College, the Town’s largest employer.

Existing Demographics and Future Population Trends

The Town of Ashland has seen steady population growth over the past two decades increasing by 23.8 percent for an average annual growth just under 10 percent. Part of this population growth was also due an annexation in 1996. As a result of the 1996 annexation, the Town of Ashland grew from 4.2 square miles to 7.12 square miles. The boundary lines of Ashland moved south to Johnson Road, east to Woodside Lane, and North to Ellet’s Crossing.

This growth is estimated to have continued since the 2010 Census. A review of other Census data reveals other ongoing trends in the Ashland. The Town of Ashland’s residents are getting older; the median age has increased as the portion of the population 65 years or older has increased. While there is, and will remain a substantial portion of the population considered to be youth, considerations in facilities and program planning should be made to accommodate the tastes and needs of an older population.

Ashland Population								
	1990		2000		2010		2014	
	Value	%	Value	%	Value	%	Value	%
Total Population	5,864		6,619		7,225		7,264	
Median Age	27.9		32.5		33.5		34.8	
0 - 17 years	1,160	19.8%	1,320	19.9%	1,334	18.5%	1,278	17.6%
65+ years	775	13.2%	923	13.9%	1,074	14.9%	1,119	15.4%
Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, Census 1990, Census 2000, Census 2010								

Table 7 – Ashland Population

The socioeconomic data displayed in the table below are created every four years for all localities in the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission. These projections are used for traffic demand modeling and other planning purposes. The projections are developed in cooperation with local planners. Projections for population growth to the year 2040 anticipate Ashland’s population increasing by 63 percent while employment will grow by an estimated 48 percent. Both growth rates compare favorably to the Richmond Region; the region’s population is anticipated to grow by 28 percent, and employment is anticipated to grow by 46 percent during the same time.

2012-2014 Socioeconomic Data						
Geography	2012 Population	2040 Population	2012-2040 % Change	2012 Total Employment	2040 Total Employment	2012-2040 % Change
Town of Ashland	7,439	10,526	41%	8,214	12,140	48%
Richmond Region*	1,028,464	1,457,724	42%	510,242	730,683	43%

*Richmond Region: Town of Ashland, City of Richmond, Counties of Charles City, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, New Kent, Powhatan

Table 8 – Current and future socioeconomic data about Ashland

Level of Service Analysis

An inventory of facilities lays the groundwork for a Level of Service Analysis. Such an analysis reveals not only what recreational assets exist in Ashland, but also how completely the different facilities may serve the population. An understanding of the different types of parks and open spaces and the populations or functions they serve is important as a starting point. The analysis examines the types of facilities relative to the population served as a base-line for the current level of service. The analysis next compares Ashland’s composition of park acreage as one measure of the level of service to that of peer communities. Peer communities were chosen from localities across the Commonwealth of Virginia. While no two communities are exactly alike, the goal was to choose peer communities that shared similar characteristics with the Town of Ashland, such as the following: presence of a college or university, similar population size, similar land area, presence of or proximity to a major interstate, and park standards and guidance for planning.

According to the Planning District Commission an optimum park and recreation system should consist of a variety of parks interconnected as much as possible to serve a broad constituency of all ages and capabilities, including the following types of facilities:

- Neighborhood Playgrounds, or pocket parks which are intended to serve the needs of a small number of residents in a neighborhood setting. Adding character to a neighborhood, they may include play equipment, playing fields, formal open spaces, or natural areas. Neighborhood parks are generally ¼ of an acre or larger, but are ideally located within a ten-minute walk (1/2 mile) of the target neighborhood. South Taylor Street Park is an example of a neighborhood park.

- Community Parks, which are intended to serve multiple neighborhoods, providing recreation options that are suitable for the whole family. Community parks typically include playing fields, courts, picnic areas, and active recreation. Community parks range in size from five to twenty acres. Carter Park is an example of a community park.
- District Parks are intended to serve the entire community with a range of active recreational opportunities in a centrally located space, of five or more acres at a ratio of one acre per 2,000 residents. Buffered from surrounding neighborhoods, district parks often include playfields and courts for Town-wide events. District parks should also allow for adequate parking, bike, and pedestrian access. Hanover County's Montpelier Park is an example of a district park.
- Regional Parks are intended to draw users from multiple communities and offer unique recreational opportunities that draw from a larger population base. Hanover's Washington Lacy Park is an example of a regional park.
- Greenways are linear in nature and are made up of trails, sidewalks along landscaped streetscapes, and natural areas which may follow streams and drainage ways ideally connecting as many of the other park spaces throughout the community. An effective greenway system should provide trailhead access within a 15-minute walk or three-fourths of a mile distance from the Town population. Railside Trail is an example of a greenway.

Peer Analysis

Three localities in Virginia were selected for peer analysis because they are comparable in population, serve as college towns for smaller universities and are similarly situated relative to highway access. In addition to the metrics or comparable quantifiable measures for park or recreation uses for attributable levels of service to a given population, comparison to peer communities will be one additional way to determine how Ashland's own parks and recreation system measures up now and in the future.

Town of Ashland, Virginia

To summarize, the Town of Ashland is 7.2 square miles with a 2014 population estimate of 7,264. Ashland is home to Randolph-Macon College, which has a total undergraduate enrollment of 1,418 for the 2016 – 2017 academic year. The Town has 176 acres of public park land, including the portion of Washington-Lacy Park, a Hanover County park that within the Town boundaries, resulting in 0.0242 park acres per capita.

City of Buena Vista, Virginia

The City of Buena Vista is located in the Blue Ridge Mountains along the Maury River. Interstate 81 lies just west of the city; US Route 60 runs through the north portion of the city. Buena Vista is approximately 6.7 square miles with a 2014 population estimate of 6,683. Buena Vista is home

to Southern Virginia University which had an enrollment of 804 students in 2011. The city has approximately 315 acres of public park land, resulting in 0.0471 park acres per capita.

Town of Bridgewater, Virginia

The Town of Bridgewater lies just west of Interstate 81 in Rockingham County along the North River. The Town is approximately 2.5 square miles and was home to 5,812 people according to a 2014 population estimate. Bridgewater College is located in the Town and had an enrollment of 1,834 students in 2016. The Town has approximately 89.1 acres of public park land, resulting in 0.0153 park acres per capita.

Town of Farmville, Virginia

The Town of Farmville is located on US Route 460 in Prince Edward County, Virginia. The Appomattox River runs through the town. Farmville is approximately 7.2 square miles and had an estimated population of 8,350 in 2014. Longwood University is located in Farmville, and had an enrollment of 4,613 students in 2016. The Town has approximately 178.5 acres of public park land, resulting in 0.0214 park acres per capita. The city also has approximately 6 miles of trails and blue ways.

Parks & Recreation Facilities among Peer Communities

Locality	Population	Park Acreage	Park Acres per Capita
Ashland	7,264	176	0.0242
Bridgewater	5,812	89.1	0.0153
Buena Vista	6,683	315	0.0471
Farmville	8,350	178.5	0.0214

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates

Table 9 - Population vs. park acreage

As shown in the chart above, Ashland has a similar per capita park acreage to Farmville. Due to the amount of projected population growth Ashland and the surrounding area is expected to experience by 2040, new park development is essential to ensure all the Town’s population has access to parks and open spaces in the future.

Current Level of Service

The Town of Ashland currently has 176 public park acres available to residents. Out of 6 parks in Ashland, two are considered Neighborhood Playgrounds (0-5 acres), three are considered Community Parks (5-20 acres), and Washington Lacy Park is a regional park. The Town of Ashland also has three greenways. One park, Washington Lacy Park, a Hanover County park located mostly within the Town of Ashland, is a regional park with a total acreage of 165 acres. With a population of 7,264, the number of park acres per capita is 0.0242. The Town of Ashland

compares well to the four Virginia municipalities that were used to develop this peer analysis. However, when Washington Lacy Park is taken out of the equation, the park acreage in Ashland plummets to 11 acres and the park acres per capita crashes to .0015. Washington Lacy Park is in Ashland and is very much part of the community. However, the park is run and operated by Hanover County, most of the 165 acres of the park is wooded, and its only amenities are trails and a pavilion.

Based on the Planning District Commission's recommendations for an optimum park system and the peer analysis, Ashland compares well when Washington Lacy Park is included in the comparison, but there is much to improve for the Town of Ashland to meet the Planning District Commission's recommendations for an optimum park system.

Walkshed

After many discussions about guiding objectives, the Parks and Recreation Committee came to a consensus that they would like every Ashland resident to live within a 10-minute walk of an Ashland park facility. To complete this goal, the Town must know which residents of Ashland live within a 10-minute walk of an Ashland park facility and which residents do not. The Planning District Commission completed a walkshed analysis to determine in which areas of Ashland residents live and do not live within a 10-minute walk of an Ashland park facility.

A walkshed is an area one can walk to a determined feature or location using an identified pathway. For this Master Plan, representatives with the Planning District Commission used GIS-Extension – Network Analyst to determine the number of Ashland residential parcels that are located within a 10-minute walk of an Ashland park facility using Town of Ashland sidewalks, roads without sidewalks on which it is safe to walk, and trails. A 10-minute walk correlates to about a half-mile distance. The park or trail entrances were used as points to create the walkshed. The blue dots on Figure 10 show each point used to symbolize a park or trail entrance.

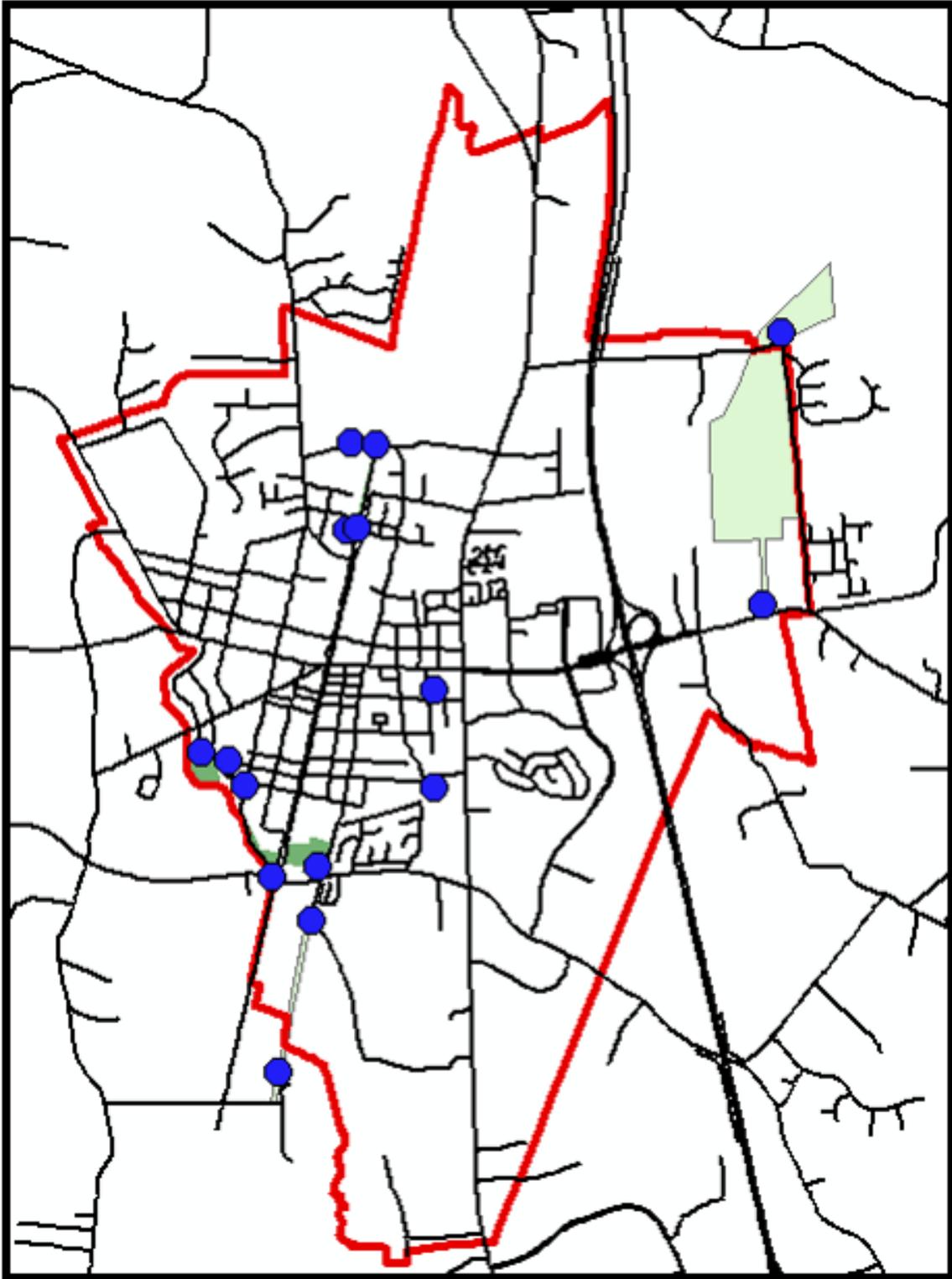
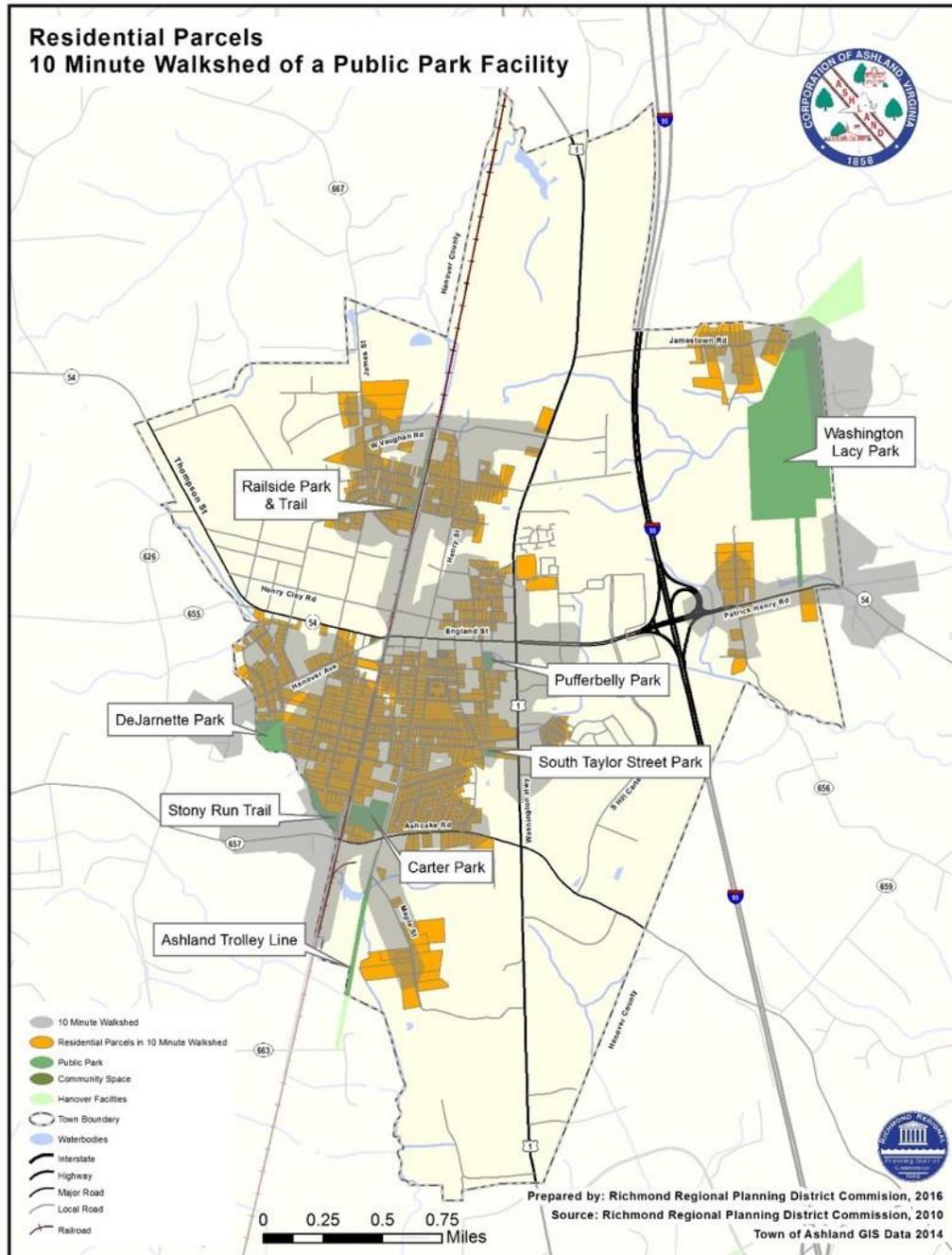


Figure 10 – This figure shows the points that were used to construct the walkshed.

Using every park and trail entrance, the Planning District Commission concluded that 58 percent of residential parcels are located within a 10-minute-walk of a Hanover or Ashland park facility. Although most residential parcels are located within the walkshed, 42 percent of residential parcels are not within a 10-minute walk of an Ashland park facility. With a goal of every Ashland resident living within a 10-minute walk of Ashland, a great deal of work must be done.



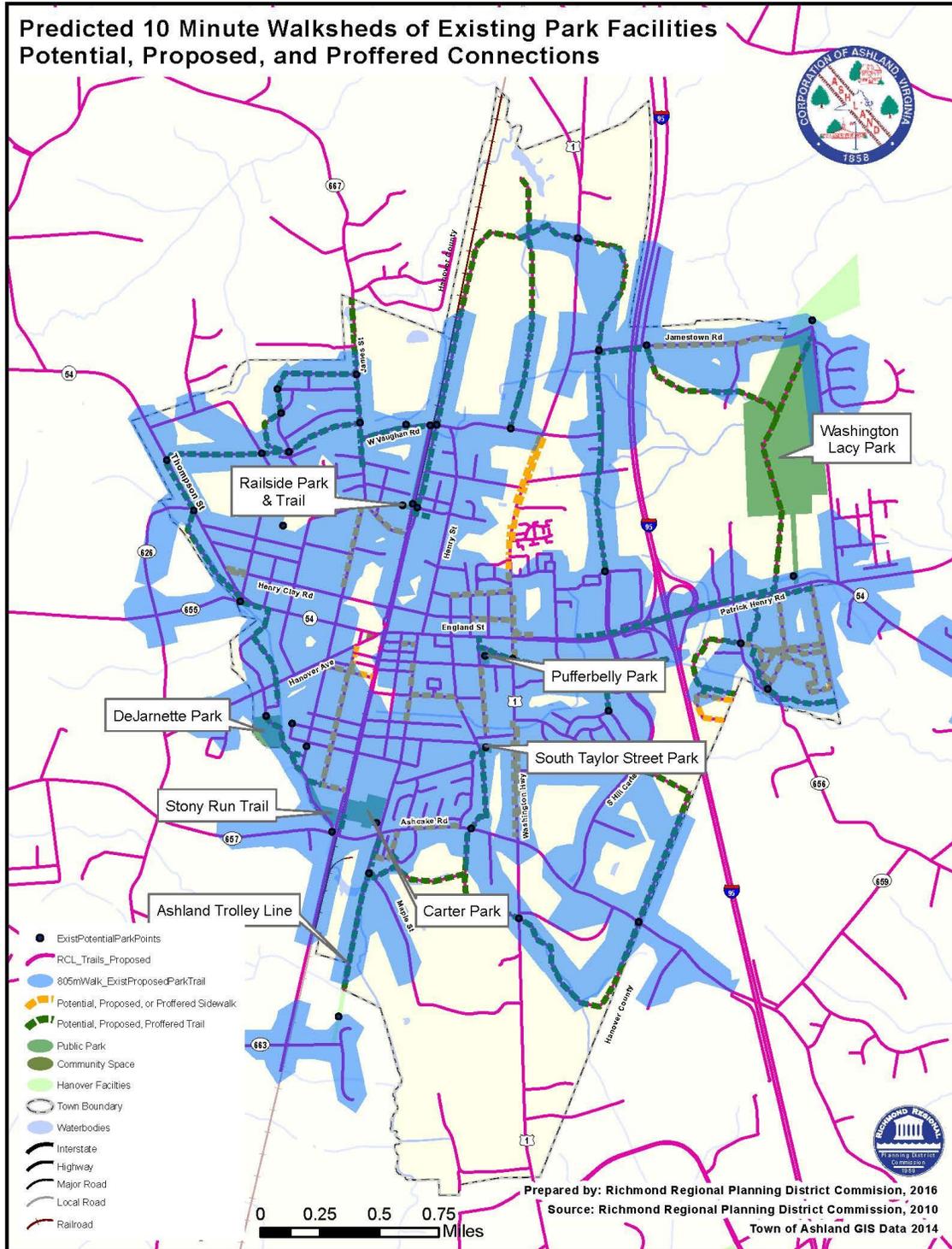


Figure 12- Ashland residents who live within a 10 minute-walk of an Ashland park or facility.

Although new parks must be developed to complete the guiding objective, improving connectivity to current Ashland park facilities would dramatically increase the percentage of residential parcels within a 10-minute walk of an Ashland or Hanover park facility.

Figure 12 shows what each park's and trail's 10-minute walkshed would look like if all the potential, proposed, and proffered trails and sidewalks were constructed. Residential parcels located within the blue shading on the map are within a 10-minute walk of a park in Ashland. If all the trails and sidewalks were developed, as represented in Figure 12, the percentage of residential parcels within a 10-minute walk of a park would increase to 96 percent, or 2,130 residential parcels. For a reference, Figure 16 displays a map of Ashland with the current, potential, proposed, and proffered trail and sidewalks without the blue walkshed.

The potential increase in the number of residential parcels in a park's or trail's 10-minute walkshed resulting from the completion of all potential, proposed, and proffered trails and sidewalks is promising. Increasing the number of trails and sidewalks would be a great tool to improve every resident's access to the Ashland park system, but many residents desire more than trails from their park system. With only three parks with playgrounds, many residents may live near an Ashland park facility with few amenities, like RAILSIDE PARK, and live within a 10-minute walk of a park. All four parks that provide residents with more than a trail or picnic table are located south of Route 54 and west of Route 1. Interestingly, it is entirely possible to live within a 10-minute walk of a trail or RAILSIDE PARK and live quite far from an Ashland or Hanover County park facility with playground equipment or other basic park amenities.



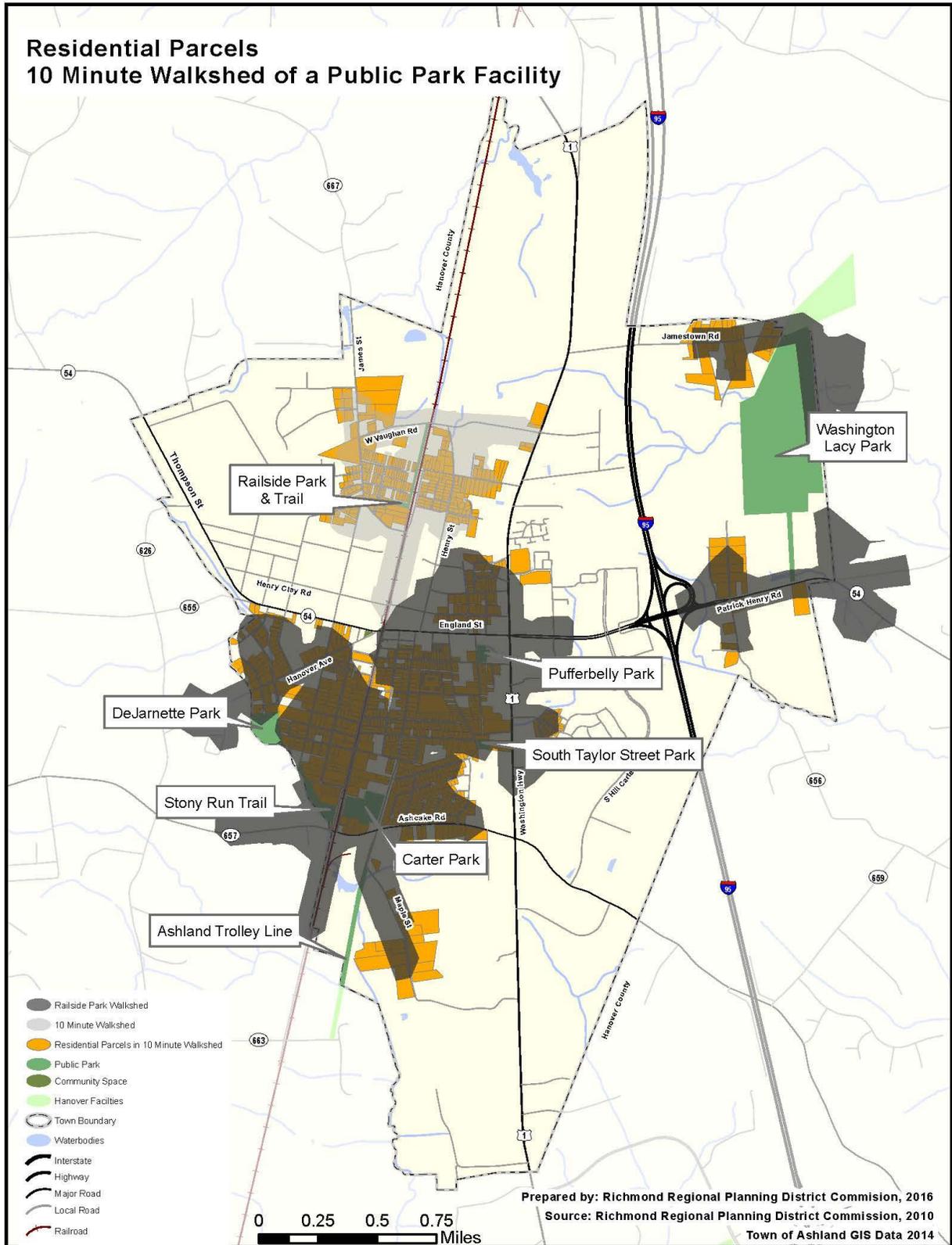


Figure 13 – 10-minute walkshed of every park in Ashland except Railside Park and Trail

Figure 13 shows the sharp decrease in the percentage of residential parcels that are within a 10-minute walk of an Ashland park facility when Railside Park is removed from the walkshed. There are 203 residential parcels that are within a 10-minute walk of Railside Park, which is shaded in light grey on Figure 13. The percentage of residential parcels within a 10-minute walk of an Ashland park facility decreases from 58 percent to 49 percent.

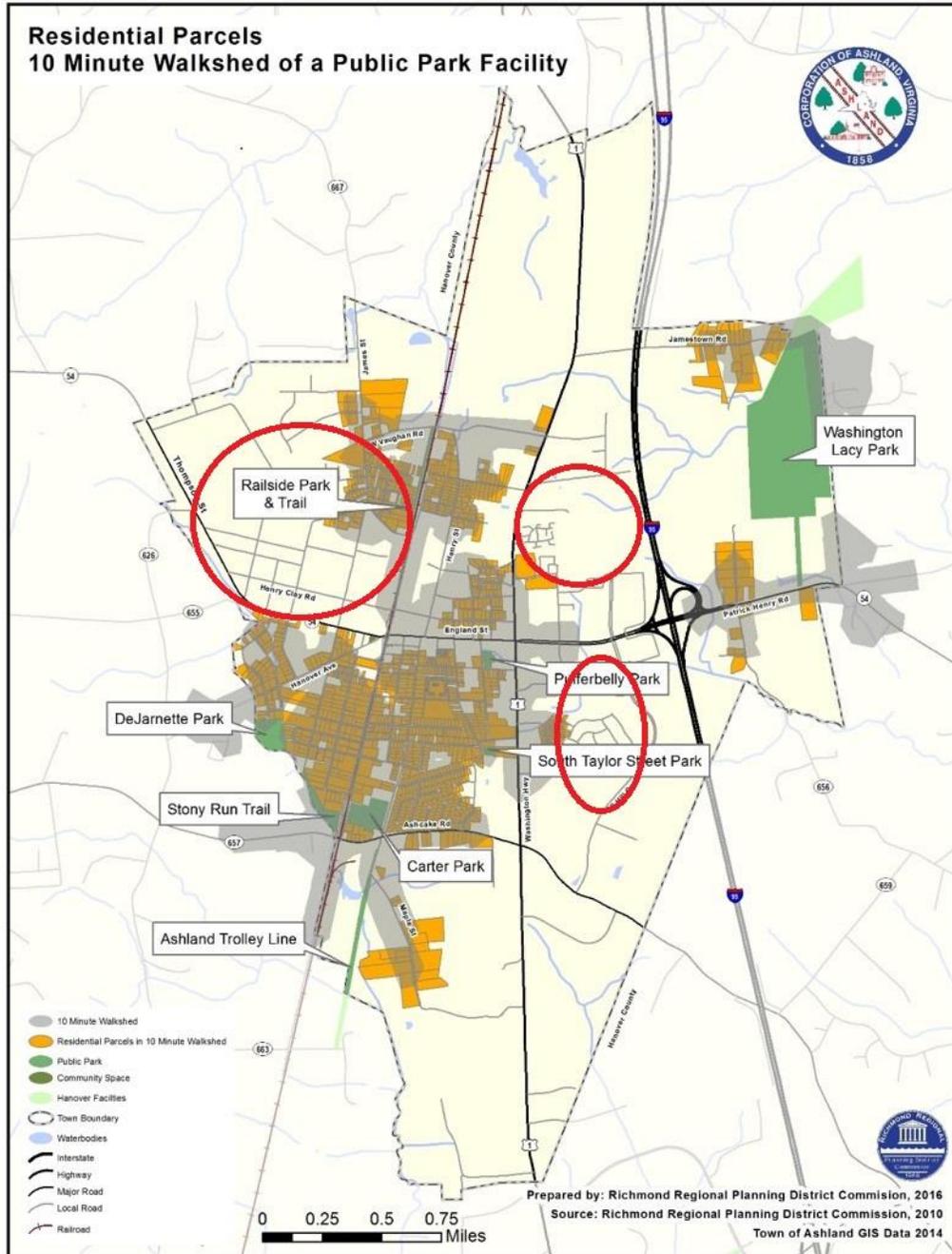


Figure 14 – 10-minute walk shed with three areas most in need of a park facility circled in red.

Per the Planning District Commission's analysis of population density in Ashland and future land use, it was determined that constructing a new park in each of the three circles would generate the largest increase in the number of Ashland residential parcels within a 10-minute walk of an Ashland park facility.



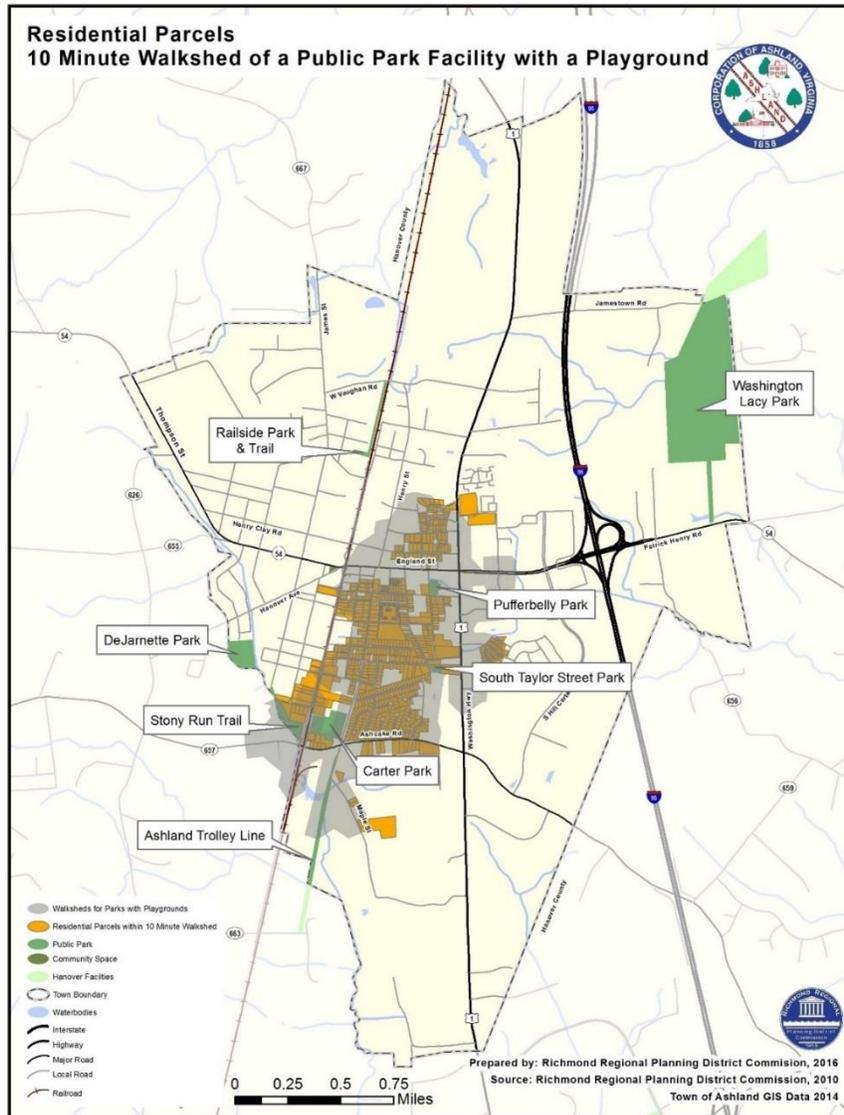


Figure 15- This figure displays the 10-minute walkshed when only Carter Park, Pufferbelly Park, and South Taylor Street Parks are only used as data points.

Figure 15 has been included to demonstrate the number of residential parcels that are within a 10-minute walk of an Ashland park facility with a playground. DeJarnette Park, Stoney Run Trail, RAILSIDE PARK, Washington Lacy Park, the Trolley Line Trail are all fantastic park facilities, but none of them have a playground. Only 33 percent of, or 729 of 2,214 total, residential parcels are located within a 10-minute walk of Pufferbelly Park, South Taylor Street Park, or Carter Park. For Ashland residents with children, a park with a playground within walking distance could be invaluable, especially for those who cannot afford any type of equipment for their kids to play on in their backyard. Having three separate parks with playgrounds is an important asset to the community, but 67 percent of residential parcels are not within a 10-minute walk of any of the three parks.

Chapter 4: Guiding Objectives

The Parks and Recreation Committee has compiled six Guiding Objectives for the Master Plan. The Guiding Objectives represent the vision the Parks and Recreation Committee has for the Ashland parks system. The Parks and Recreation Committee's corresponding initiatives are their recommendations on how to best complete the six Guiding Objectives. The six Guiding Objectives have been divided into two groups: A and B. The three Guiding Objectives with an A, have a higher priority than the Guiding Objectives with a B. Although completion of the three B Guiding Objectives is still very important to the Parks and Recreation Committee, the A Guiding Objectives are higher on their list of items they would like completed. The number that follows the A and B category is used to organize the Guiding Objectives. That is, the numbers that follow A and B in no way symbolizes their importance to the Parks and Recreation Committee.

In 2016, the Town of Ashland updated two long range plans: The Strategic Plan and the Comprehensive Plan. Both the Strategic Plan and the Comprehensive Plan encompass far more facets of the Town of Ashland's purview than this Master Plan, but both documents discuss numerous parks and recreation goals that are analogous to the Parks and Recreation Committee's six Guiding Objectives. After each of the Committee's Guiding Objective and corresponding initiatives are listed, corresponding objectives and initiatives from the Strategic Plan and policies from the Comprehensive Plan will be listed and a brief explanation will be provided explaining the relevancy.

The six Guiding Objectives and corresponding Initiatives are, as follows:

A.1: Diversify

The Ashland park system can successfully serve a diverse population with diverse needs and interests, but there is much room for improvement. Therefore, one of the six guiding objectives is to **diversify** the park system to serve a broader population.

Initiatives

A.1.1 Ensure the newly reconstructed pool is accessible to everyone regardless of age or ability.

The Carter Park Pool is currently in the process of a major renovation. The bathhouse and kiddie pool, at the time of this writing, are being renovated. The newly renovated bathhouse will include new fixtures and an entirely new family bathroom. The new family bathroom will simplify many activities for individuals who frequent the pool as a family. The newly renovated kiddie pool will include a zero-depth entrance, which will make entering and exiting the pool much easier and safer for children who may have physical ailments that do not allow them to use traditional pool entrances. In addition, the new kiddie pool will have a water feature in the shape of a beetle that squirts water and on which children can climb and play. The surface of the kiddie pool will consist of rubber pellets sealed with epoxy, which will provide an additional safety measure for children

who use the kiddie pool. The primary pool is expected to be renovated during the last few months of 2018 and the first few months of 2019. The newly renovated pool will also include a zero-depth entrance, water features for children, a section devoted for swim meets, a water slide, and a designated entrance designed for those who would not have access to the pool otherwise due to a physical limitation. Once the entire Carter Park Pool renovation project is complete, it will provide access to everyone regardless of age or ability, it will provide patrons with a much wider array of amenities than what is currently offered, and will help accomplish the **Diversify** Guiding Objective.

A.1.2: Construct a “Fitness Park.”

By “Fitness Park,” the Parks and Recreation Committee is referring to a park with fitness equipment or an obstacle course for people of all ages and abilities. With the explosion in popularity of workout regimens like “CrossFit,” “American Ninja Warrior,” “Spartan Races,” and “Tough-Mudder,” it has become clear that many adults long for recreational opportunities that diverge greatly with what many municipalities offer through their park system. Although the primary aim is to attract fit adults, the Parks and Recreation Committee stated that they would like the “Fitness Park” to include equipment for patrons of all ages. As the Baby Boomers age, many argue that they will want to remain active.⁶ Municipalities are beginning to pick up on this trend, and they are constructing or adding workout equipment to their parks systems for older adults to meet the demands of the aging Baby Boomer generation. This initiative will help complete this objective by providing amenities that are now in high demand. This same initiative will be able to complete several of the Parks and Recreation Committee’s six Guiding Objectives.



⁶ Tanya R. Fitzpatrick and James McCabe, “Future Challenges for Senior Center Programming to Serve Younger and More Active Seniors,” *Activities, Adaptation & Aging* 32, no. 3-4 (September, 2008): 198-213.

Placing fitness stations along a trail can make the park either a destination or a waypoint for visitors, increasing the potential for participation.

A fitness park creates an enjoyable atmosphere where adults can remain active.



“Well designed, environmentally friendly, and aesthetically pleasing playground equipment should be an available resource for everyone’s benefit at all ages and stages of life. Nearly everyone could benefit from getting out there and taking advantage of the adult playgrounds available in their area. We know playground equipment offers extensive physical, intellectual, emotional, and behavioral benefits. A thoughtfully-planned playground can inspire hours of activities that encourage active movement, creative exploration, and the development of social skills.”

- Martin Verni

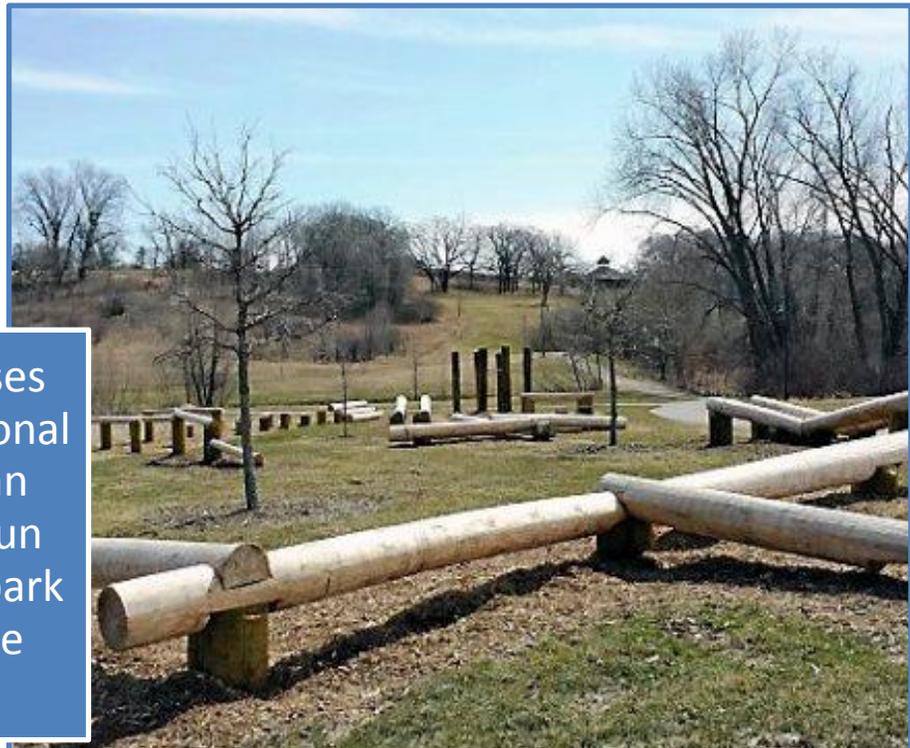


An obstacle course can be another way for adults and children to interact and get active.



Providing participants with goal-oriented equipment can foster healthy competition and is a great way to increase community participation and the objective to be healthy and fit.

Obstacle courses and non-traditional equipment can make fitness fun and make the park a place people want to be!



Fitness Parks can do the following:

- MAKE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY MORE AVAILABLE, ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE, AND ENJOYABLE.
- HELP GET ADULTS OUTSIDE AND EXERCISING IN WAYS THAT DIFFER FROM GOING TO THE GYM.
- BE A GOOD WAY FOR THOSE WHO LIVE ALONE TO INTERACT WITH THE COMMUNITY.



Specific pieces of equipment can be attained and implemented; there is no need to conform to one mold.



Non-traditional pieces of equipment, like those used in CrossFit and Ninja Warrior gyms, encourage adults and children to get active.

A.1.3: When updating current parks facilities, ensure the new equipment and new amenities can serve a broader population than the equipment or amenities that are being replaced.

Once the **Service** Guiding Objective is implemented, the Parks and Recreation Committee will have the opportunity to upgrade each park's amenities and/or equipment more frequently. Although the parks system can serve many patrons, each of the parks could be improved to serve a broader population. It is recommended that when a park's equipment is scheduled to be replaced, the Parks and Recreation Committee take the necessary steps to ensure the new equipment is more inclusive than the equipment it is replacing.

Examples of parks for all ages and ability levels:

San Jose, California: Rotary Play Garden

“Specific features have been included to ensure that adults can have a good time while joining in on all the fun. Swinging, spinning, climbing, and rocking equipment is strategically located throughout the play area while different types of tactile materials encourage creative exploration.



A true community park

should be accessible to everyone. The San Jose Rotary Park serves as a great example on how high-quality design can create a fun-filled space for the enjoyment and benefit of all.”

Washington State: “MOMentum” Playground

“They are a non-profit supporter of outdoor fitness parks focused on helping parents stay active while their children play. The parent-friendly adult playgrounds located in three parks throughout Washington State, each featuring low-impact cardio equipment and strengthening machines. By offering parents the ability to be physically active while remaining attentive to their children playing nearby, MOMentum’s adult playground equipment encourages an increase in playground usage by fun-loving folks of all ages.”



La Marque, Texas: playgrounds for seniors

“Playground equipment designed for those entering their more senior years helps to keep adults physically fit and facilitates the enjoyment of an active social life. The adult playground for seniors located in Galveston County, Texas features equipment developed to increase balance and coordination while having fun, too.”



By Completing Initiatives A.1.1, A.1.2, and A.1.3, the Ashland Park system will be able to serve a more **diverse** population by providing a wider array of amenities, which will attract residents and visitors who may not be interested in the amenities currently offered. Completion of these Initiatives will also increase the number of inclusive amenities for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities.

Strategic Plan

The Guiding Objective, “**Diversify**,” and the corresponding initiatives closely mirror the following objective and initiatives found in the Town of Ashland’s Strategic Plan:

- Objective 3.2: Provide high-quality recreational programming and amenities to attract and retain residents.

- Initiative 3.2.1: Upgrade Carter Park Pool as an attractive asset and a gathering place for Ashland’s diverse community.

Strategic Plan Objective 3.2 and Initiative 3.2.1 align with the goals outlined by Guiding Objective A.1 in two ways: A.1 seeks to attract visitors and retain residents by diversifying the types of amenities available through the Ashland park system, and by improving the accessibility of the Ashland park system, including Carter Park Pool, for all residents.

Comprehensive Plan

The **Diversify** Guiding Objective and the corresponding Initiatives closely parallel the following Comprehensive Plan Parks and Recreation policies:

- Comprehensive Plan Policy PR.1 Public Sector’s Role: “The Town of Ashland seeks to be a leader in the protection and management of the natural environment, and to establish a reputation as a community with outstanding parks and recreational amenities. The Town recognizes that natural areas, open spaces, parks, and other recreational amenities enhance Ashland’s livability and help make the Town an attractive place to call home. The Town shall provide and maintain a comprehensive system of parks and recreational facilities that are accessible to all. The Town is responsible for ensuring that such amenities keep pace with a diverse and changing population. The Town should invest responsibly in new parks and recreational facilities in anticipation of future needs.”
- Comprehensive Plan Policy PR.7 Barrier-free and Accessible Recreation: “The Town’s parks and recreational facilities should be accessible to people of all ages and ability levels, including the physically disabled and seniors. The Parks and recreational facilities should be designed in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.”

Comprehensive Plan Policies PR.1 and PR.7 are akin to the **Diversify** Guiding Objective because both outline the importance of recognizing and providing parks and recreational amenities that the residents of Ashland want and need.

A.2: Connectivity

Ashland is often characterized as a pedestrian friendly community, but there is room for improvement. There has been a great deal of citizen interest in expanding the trail, pathway, and sidewalk systems to improve the connectivity of many neighborhoods and parks facilities in Ashland. Therefore, one of the six guiding objectives is to encourage **connectivity** by using trails, pathways, and sidewalks to connect the community and promote enhanced accessibility to parks facilities and community amenities.

Results from the Department of Conservation and Recreation’s 2011 Virginia Outdoor Survey show that citizens identified several aspects of outdoor recreation that needed improvement in the Richmond region. Citizens encouraged the creation of fitness trails and walking and biking trails near various communities to promote wellness and make the connection between outdoor recreation and healthy communities. These ideas can be easily transposed to the Town of Ashland.

Through a public meeting and surveys, the citizens of the Town have also expressed a desire for the Town to place more focus on creating new biking and walking trails in Ashland. Although there were many clear conclusions from the November 17th Community Engagement Session and the survey, the overwhelming support for improved bike trails, bike lanes, walking trails, and sidewalks was the clearest outcome from both the November 17th Community Engagement Session and the survey results.

Please prioritize the objectives the Parks and Recreation Committee has developed to this point. In other words, which project(s) should be finished first/last. A score of "1" indicates that you believe it is the most important of the 6 objectives. A score of "6" indicates that you believe it is the least important of the 6 objectives.		
Answer Options	Rating Average	Number of "1" scores
Expand the Town’s parks system where necessary to ensure that every resident of Town is within a 10-minute walk of a Town or County park.	3.79	5
Construct a park that is unique to Virginia and attracts individuals from around the state and country.	4.20	6
Plan for adequate funding to replace park equipment in every park, every eight years.	3.07	7
Coordinate with the Comprehensive Plan to connect the community and parks using trails, paths, sidewalks, etc. to create a trail loop that connects the community to all the Ashland parks.	1.49	26
Expand or facilitate programming for residents of Ashland.	3.98	1
Diversify the park system to serve a broader population.	3.52	5

Table 10 – This table provides the results of a survey question that asked survey takers to rank the six-current objective one to six.

In Table 10, a score of “1” indicates the individual taking the survey believes the objective is the most important to complete of the six objectives. A score of “6” indicates the individual taking the survey believes the objective is the least important to complete. Those who took the survey were asked to rank the Parks and Recreation Committee’s six Guiding Objectives. Individuals who took the survey were asked to pair the numbers 1-6 to each objective. Individuals could only give a single score of 1,2,3,4,5, and 6. The guiding objective pertaining to improving connectivity in Town, the exact language has since been modified, received by far the most “1” votes with 26 of 50 votes, or just over 52 percent of all “1” scores. It also received the lowest average score of 1.49. The second lowest score was 3.07. In short, residents of Ashland have a strong desire for improved connectivity via bike trails, bike lanes, walking paths, and sidewalks.

As one of the Parks and Recreation Committee’s Guiding Objectives is to ensure that every Town resident is within a 10-minute walk of a park, creating new trails would encourage Ashland’s citizens to become more involved in an active lifestyle and improve connectivity to Ashland parks. Creating a more extensive trail system in the Town can ensure that this goal is met, see Figure 12, and that Town residents and visitors can enjoy a safe walk or bike ride to their destination.

Through an expansion of its trails and greenways, Ashland has an opportunity to impact the development of the East Coast Greenway (ECG). The ECG is a developing trail system, linking many of the major cities of the Eastern Seaboard between Maine and Key West, Florida. Over 30 percent of the route is already on traffic-free greenways, creating safe, accessible routes for people of all ages and abilities. In Virginia, the ECG travels south from Fredericksburg to Richmond, where the Greenway divides into two routes: the spine route, which continues south to North Carolina’s Piedmont region, and the Historic Coastal Route, which heads southeast through Jamestown and Williamsburg before aiming south toward Wilmington, North Carolina. The 299-mile spine route within Virginia is only 16 percent complete on traffic-free greenway trails. From Woodbridge to Richmond, the ECG is entirely on roads. The committee for the ECG is attempting to coordinate expansion efforts on a regional basis in Virginia. If Ashland were to contribute to the completion of the ECG, it would retain ownership and management over its section of the greenway, but the Town would receive some assistance from the non-profit ECG Alliance to ensure adequate maintenance levels. This could also be tied in with efforts to create a bike system between Ashland and Richmond, increasing travel between the two areas and increasing Ashland’s exposure to more people outside of the Town.

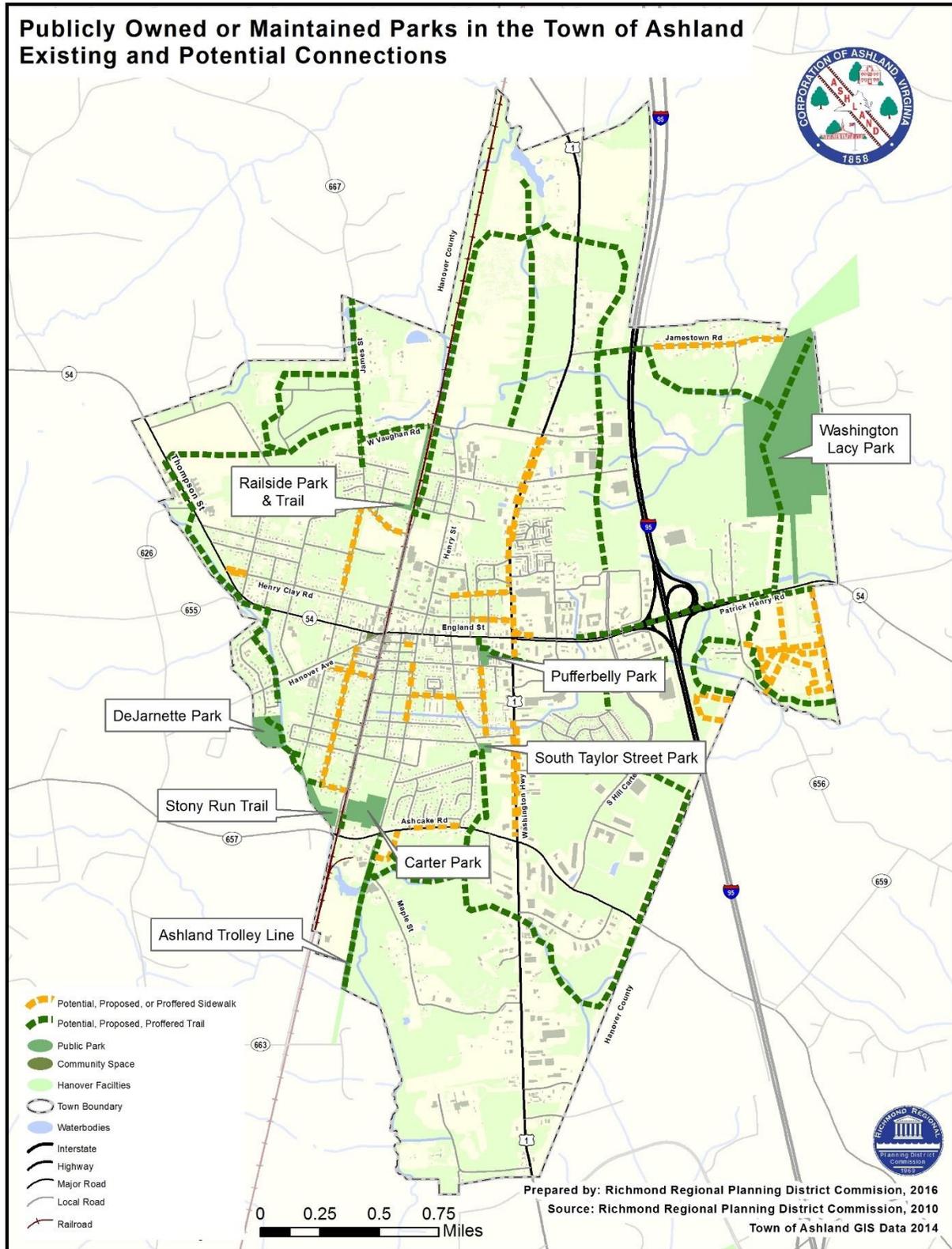


Figure 16 – All current and potential trails and sidewalks in the Town of Ashland.

Figure 16 represents Ashland's existing and potential trail system. The map was completed in conjunction with the Planning District Commission and the Town of Ashland's Department of Planning and Community Development. If Ashland were to construct every proposed trail, Ashland's trail and sidewalk system would add 57,757 linear feet, almost 11 miles, of new sidewalk or trail.

Initiatives

A.2.1 Coordinate with the Comprehensive Plan to connect the community and parks using trails, sidewalks, etc. to create a trail loop that connects the community to all Ashland parks.

Place an emphasis on identifying and connecting trail segments. By completing a town-wide system of trails, Ashland would be furthered as a recreation destination and would compete with surrounding jurisdictions for future residents.

A.2.2: Prioritize connections between small trail segments to develop a larger interconnected system.

- Investigate the creation of a greenway along Mechumps Creek and consider access on both sides of the highway.
- Prioritize the completion of the trail connection between DeJarnette Park and Stony Run Trail.
- Develop a raiiside trail on the eastern side of the rail north of Berkley Street, on existing Town owned property. Pending funding, this is in future plans.
- Provide a formal connection from the trail between Elm and Linden Streets to West Vaughn Road.

A.2.3: As Ashland expands its bike trail network and bike lane network, bike racks and bike storage facilities must be added in strategic locations to meet the increased number of cyclist in Ashland.

If resident and visitors do not have an appropriate location to secure their bikes, Ashland will not be able to capture the economic benefits of visitors using the trail network due to a fear of having their bikes stolen. In their 2013 article, "Bike-and-Ride: Build It and They Will Come," Cervero, Caldwell, and Cueller found, using regression-based models, that adequate bike racks and electronic locker spaces were statistically associated with increased bicycle transportation to San Francisco's Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system.⁷ Although bicycle access to a major public transportation system is quite different than the type of bicycle infrastructure for which this Master Plan is arguing, the benefits of bike racks still holds true whether bike racks are used in an urban environment or a suburban environment: If you want cyclists to park their bikes near an amenity or a business, they have to feel comfortable leaving their bicycle outside. This will

⁷ Robert Cervero, Benjamin Caldwell, and Jesus Cueller, "Bike-and-Ride: Build It and They Will Come," *Activities, Journal of Public Transportation*, 16, no. 4 (2013): 83-105.

only occur if there is an adequate number of places to safely park a bike near a business or amenity.

A.2.4: Once the trail system infrastructure begins to develop, begin expanding marketing efforts.

As the trail network and bicycling infrastructure improves, Ashland should update its advertisement material and begin expanding its marketing efforts of its connectivity.

A.2.5: Improve signage as the trail network improves.

As the trail network expands, it is imperative that residents and visitors are provided adequate signage on the trails to ensure they know where they are going and how to get to points of interest.

A.2.6: When designing bike trails, Ashland should use safety as the primary reason for choosing various design or construction standards.

Connecting Ashland's existing bike and walking trails will further enhance its resident's opportunities to exercise without the cost of a monthly gym membership. However, cycling can be a dangerous activity. Therefore, Ashland should only build trails that follow standards that, with adequate maintenance, will not be and will not become a hazard to patrons.

A.2.7: Construct a bike-able surface on Ashland's portion of the Ashland Trolley Line.

Once Ashland's portion of the Ashland Trolley Line is constructed, Ashland should work to extend this trail network to Center Street, to West Patrick Street, to North James Street, and into Hanover County. This trail has the potential to become Ashland's portion of the ECG.

Trails are most valuable when part of a regional connection, much like the ECG discussed earlier. The ECG Committee has developed an interim travel route, composed of carefully chosen and field-checked on-road linkages, has been defined and mapped, allowing experienced cyclists to use the entire route. An on-road portion has been mapped through the Town of Ashland. Travelling south, the Route enters the Town on North James Street, turns left on Vaughan Road, turns right on to the Railside Trail, and follows Center Street out of Town.⁸ Although the official ECG route in Ashland currently does not include the Ashland Trolley Line, it could easily be changed.⁹

⁸ "The East Coast Greenway Map," *East Coast Greenway*, accessed on January 18, 2017, <http://map.greenway.org/>.

⁹ "Creating the ECG," *East Coast Greenway*, accessed on January 18, 2017, <http://www.greenway.org/about-the-greenway/creating-the-ecg>.

In addition to being healthy lifestyle pursuits, walking and cycling infrastructure also have economic benefits. A study conducted by the U.S. Forest Service and the University of Georgia found that the Virginia Creeper Trail (VCT) users spent approximately \$2.5 million over the study period (2003-2004) on recreational visits related to this trail. The VCT is a 35-mile scenic trail in Southwestern Virginia. Non-local visitor spending generated \$1.6 million in economic impacts and supported close to 30 jobs.¹⁰ This is but one example of the economic impact potential of scenic trails. Recreational travelers passing through the area on long distance trips may be interested in camping sites, bicycle supplies, or dining opportunities while in Ashland.

If Ashland and the region is to benefit from this proposed trail, Ashland must partner with entities that will be enriched by the proposed trail. It is recommended that in addition to completing this proposed bike trail and other walking and bike trails, Ashland should work with the surrounding Counties, the City of Richmond, and the Planning District Commission to extend the Ashland Trolley Line Trail through multiple jurisdictions.

A.2.8: Work with Randolph-Macon College to expand bike and walking trails that connect much of the Town with the College.

Both the Town and the College would benefit greatly from increased connectivity. Students could more easily access Ashland’s many cultural and recreational opportunities, and more employees could more easily walk or bike to work. It is recommended that Ashland reach out to the College to coordinate efforts to improve connectivity for walking and biking in and around the College.

Strategic Plan

The **Connectivity** Guiding Objective, and the corresponding Initiatives closely mirror the following objectives and initiatives found in the Town of Ashland’s Strategic Plan:

- 2.2 Objective: Develop and promote destination venues, sites, and events in Ashland.
- Initiative 2.2.2: Complete the Trolley Line Trail in Ashland and work with neighboring jurisdictions to continue the trail into Richmond.
- Initiative 2.2.5: Encourage the development of regional destinations including, but not limited to, hotel conference centers, sports and recreation facilities, enhanced cycling routes, entertainment venues, technology destinations, museums, train watching sites, and historical sites.
- 3.2 Objective: Provide high-quality recreational programming and amenities to attract and retain residents.

¹⁰ J.M. Bowker, John C. Begstrom, Joshua Gill, “Estimating the Economic Value and Impacts of Recreational Trails: A Case Study of the Virginia Creeper Trail,” *Tourism Economics* 13, no. 4, (2007): 241-260.

- Initiative 3.2.4: Create a unified trail system that is an asset to the community.
- Initiative 3.2.5: Improve cycling on-road and off-road infrastructure, particularly related to national bike routes.
- Initiative 3.2.6: Require that new development include appropriate recreation amenities or dedications, including trails, paths, playgrounds, parks, and open space.
- Initiative 1.3.3: Complete the restoration of Mechumps Creek and develop a rest area along the creek with a trail connected to the town trail system.
- Initiative 4.4.1: Prioritize funding for infrastructure that adds or expands sidewalks, crosswalks, bike paths, turn lanes, or otherwise enhances the safety of pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers.

Completing the **Connectivity** Guiding Objective would improve connectivity exponentially within the Town and has the potential to attract visitors from the region to Ashland. In total, there are two Objectives and seven Initiatives from the Strategic Plan that closely mirror the encompassing goal of improving connectivity in Ashland by improving walking and biking paths.

Comprehensive Plan

The **Connectivity** Guiding Objective and the corresponding initiatives closely parallel the following Comprehensive Plan Parks and Recreation policies:

- Comprehensive Plan Policy PR.6 Pedestrian and Bicycle Access: “The promotion of healthy lifestyles is an essential goal of the Town’s parks and recreation program. In addition to promoting a healthy lifestyle, the use of bicycles and walking works towards preserving Ashland’s small town character. People walking and bicycling get to know their neighbors and strengthens the activity and liveliness within communities. Parks, trails, open spaces, and other recreational facilities should be located within easy walking and bicycling distance of much of the Town’s population. Parks and pathways should connect throughout the Town, linking key locations such as schools, recreational facilities, and bike parking areas.”

Comprehensive Plan PR.6, like the **Connectivity** Guiding Objective, lists numerous values of improving the connectivity of Ashland through bike trails and walkways. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the Strategic Plan, and the Comprehensive Plan list improving connectivity using bike trails and lanes, sidewalks, and walking trails as a high priority.

A.3: Unique

As the “Center of the Universe,” Ashland is uniquely located near the geographic center of the Commonwealth of Virginia, it is the intersection of United States Bicycle Routes 1 and 76, it is in the middle of the East Coast, one of the county’s busiest interstates passes through Ashland, and a great deal of people pass through Ashland via Amtrak. A significant number of people have driven through Ashland on Interstate 95, biked through it on Route 1 or 76, or have ridden a train through Ashland. By constructing a park that is unique to Virginia, Ashland could attract visitors from around Virginia and the country. The Initiatives are ideas for a unique park that could attract visitors from around the Commonwealth and the United States. Therefore, one of the six guiding objectives is to construct a park that is **unique** to Virginia, attracts individuals from around the state and country, and promotes Ashland as a recreation destination.

Initiatives

A.3.1: Capitalize on Ashland’s location at the crossroads of national bike routes 76 and 1.

Construct a facility in Ashland for cyclists to work on their bikes, fill water bottles, and relax. With few locations that provide this type of service along National Bike Routes 76 and 1, Ashland could attract cyclists to stop in Ashland, eat a meal, get a drink, and stay the night at a hotel. A facility like this could attract cyclists to spend more time and money in Ashland.

A.3.2: Coordinate with the Comprehensive Plan to connect the community and parks using trails, paths, sidewalks, etc. to create a trail loop that connects the community to all Ashland parks.

A description of this initiative can be found under the **Connectivity** Guiding Objective.

A.3.3: Construct a bike-able surface on Ashland’s portion of the Ashland Trolley Line.

There are many recreational and economic opportunities if a bike-able surface were to be added to Ashland’s portion of the Ashland Trolley Line.

A.3.4: Construct a “Fitness Park.”

A description of a “Fitness “Park” can be found under the **Diversify** Guiding Objective. In addition to providing Ashland residents of all ages with a unique way to exercise, a “Fitness Park” would also act as an attraction for individuals from surrounding counties, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the country. With still very few communities with this type of park, Ashland would be one of the only municipalities in Virginia and one of only a handful in the country with a “Fitness Park.”

Strategic Plan

The **Unique** Guiding Objective and the corresponding Initiatives closely reflect the following objective and initiative found in the Town of Ashland’s Strategic Plan:

- 1.2 Objective: Promote Ashland as a tourism destination.
- Initiative 1.2.5: Develop parks, museums, recreational opportunities, or other unique amenities that attract visitors from the region and country.

Strategic Plan Objective 1.2 and initiative 1.2.5 strive to accomplish the same goal as the **Unique** Guiding Objective which is attract visitors to Ashland using recreational amenities.

Comprehensive Plan

The **Unique** Guiding Objective and the corresponding Initiatives closely reflect the following policies found in the Town of Ashland’s Comprehensive Plan:

- Comprehensive Plan Policy PR.10 Promote Ashland as a Destination: “Considering the wonderful natural setting, the unique geography, the hospitable climate, the excellent topography, and the nearby historic sites, the Town makes an excellent location for a weekend getaway or a stop on a cross country bike trip. There are numerous routes of varying lengths originating in Ashland making a weekend stay worthwhile. The Town should include the idea of Ashland as a recreation destination in its tourism promotions. This information can be included on the Town website and at the Visitor’s Center.”

Comprehensive Plan Policy PR.10 is nearly identical to the **Unique** Guiding Objective. The **Unique** Guiding Objective and its Initiatives provide insight into how the goal of promoting Ashland as a recreational tourist destination may be achieved.

B.1: Programming

Aside from swim lessons at the Carter Park Pool, the Town of Ashland does not offer recreation programming. Based on comments from the November 17th Community Engagement Session and discussions with the Parks and Recreation Committee, it was determined that increasing the number and prevalence of recreational opportunities in Ashland should be a priority for the Town of Ashland. Residents who attended the community engagement event or completed the survey listed the following examples of recreational opportunities in which they are interested: tai-chi, a lacrosse league, a baseball league, a kickball league, a self-guided nature tour through DeJarnette Park, and mountain bike related recreational opportunities. Therefore, one of the six guiding objectives is to facilitate **programming**: recreation and entertainment opportunities should be provided for people of all walks of life.

Initiatives

B.1.1: Partner with Hanover County, Hanover County Public Schools, the Patrick Henry YMCA, or the Richard S. Gillis Jr./Ashland Branch Library to offer recreation programming to the residents of Ashland.

The Parks and Recreation Committee determined that it would be more effective to partner with Hanover County or the Patrick Henry YMCA, both of which offer robust recreation programming, to offer Ashland residents recreation programming in Ashland. Although there were specific comments about offering traditional recreation sports leagues and tai chi, more research is needed to determine what type of recreation programming Ashland residents would like offered in Ashland.

Strategic Plan

The **Programming** Guiding Objective, and the corresponding Initiatives closely mirror the following objective and initiative found in the Town of Ashland's Strategic Plan:

- 3.2 Objective: Provide high-quality recreational programming and amenities to attract and retain residents.
- Initiative 3.2.2: Increase the quantity and variety of recreation program options in Ashland.

As written in Strategic Plan Objective 3.2 and Initiative 3.2.2, increasing the number and variety of recreational programming in Ashland is a priority. Completing the **Programming** Guiding Objective would also fulfill Strategic Plan Objective 3.2 and Initiative 3.2.2.

B.2: Walkability

After many discussions about guiding objectives, the Parks and Recreation Committee came to a consensus that they would like every Ashland resident to live within a 10-minute walk of an Ashland park facility. Ashland prides itself on being a walkable, inclusive community. By many measures, Ashland is walkable community, but there is still room for improvement. Therefore, one of the six guiding objectives is to improve **walkability** to Ashland parks by expanding the park and trail systems to ensure every resident is within a 10-minutes-walk of a Town or County park. This will enhance the livability of Ashland by ensuring the provision of natural areas, open spaces, parks, and other recreational amenities for the enjoyment of residents. Preserving natural areas and open spaces is also an important aspect of this guiding objective because they are finite resources. Once developed, such resources are costly and difficult to reclaim.

Initiatives

B.2.1: Construct a park in each of the three areas in most need of park facility, per the Planning District Commission.

The Planning District Commission compiled an abundant amount of data to determine where residents in Ashland live and how close each residential parcel is to an Ashland park facility. Figure 14 shows, using red circles, which areas are in the most need of a park due to population density and lack of park facility access.

Area one, which is the area north of Route 54 and west of Route 1, stretches as far south as the intersection of Thompson Street and Dewey Street, as far north as the intersection of Wales Way and Hillsway drive, as far west as the intersection of Thompson Street and Wesley Street, and as far east as North Center Street. The center of area one is the intersection of Border Street and Chapman Street. Area one is also the only area circled currently with a park in the area, which is RAILSIDE PARK. RAILSIDE PARK, however, has very few amenities. The park consists of a trail, benches, and small green space. Therefore, a walkshed was generated, as shown in Figure 13, to demonstrate the large number of residential parcels north of Route 1 and west of Route 54 that are within a 10-minute walk of RAILSIDE PARK. The total percentage of residential parcels within a 10-minute walk of a park facility declines to 49 percent from 58 percent when RAILSIDE PARK is removed from the walkshed. More park facilities in Ashland are needed, and starting with construction of a park with amenities for residents of all ages and abilities north of Route 1 and west of Route 54 would dramatically increase the percentage of residential parcels within a 10-minute walk of a park with adequate amenities.

Area two, which is the area north of Route 54 and east of Route 1, stretches as far north as Quarles Road, as far west as Route 1, as far south as Sweet Tessa Drive, and as far east as Route 95. The center of area two is largely undeveloped. However, the western and southern edge of area two is considered High Density residential per the current land use map, Figure 8 shows that the western and southern portions of area two are represented as “Live-High Density,” and Figures 8 and 9 show that there is a concentration of elderly residents and youth residents. Therefore, residents in area two are likely an age that uses park facilities much more often than other residents, no one who lives in the area lives within a 10-minute walk of an Ashland park, and area two encompasses one of the most densely populated areas in Ashland. Constructing a park in these areas will make the biggest impact in the Town’s efforts to increase the percentage of residents who live within a ten-minute walk of an Ashland park.

Area three, which is the area south of Route 54 and east of Route 1, stretches as far north as Junction Drive, as far west as the intersection of Arbor Oak Drive and Water Oak Lane, as far south as the intersection of Business Lane and South Hill Carter Parkway, and as far west as Arbor Oak Drive. Sedgefield Mobile Home Park is in the geographic center of area three and is primary reason this area of Ashland was recognized as needing park facilities. Sedgefield Mobile Home

Park is considered High Density residential per the current land use map. Figure 5 shows that Sedgefield Mobile Home is represented as “Live-High Density,” and Figures 8 and 9 show that there is a concentration of elderly and youth residents. Therefore, residents in area three are likely an age that uses park facilities much more often other residents. No one who lives in the area lives within a 10-minute walk of an Ashland park.

B.2.2: Use the Future Land Use Map to determine where parks need to be constructed in the future, and continuously reassess park needs as development occurs in Ashland.

Natural areas and open space is a finite resource. Once land is developed it is expensive and difficult to reclaim. Therefore, it is imperative that Ashland regularly reassess its park and recreational needs. If Ashland grows as much as the Planning District Commission predicts and the Future Land Use map of the Town Ashland comes to fruition, Ashland will need far more park facilities.

B.2.3: Coordinate with the Comprehensive Plan to connect the community and parks using trails, paths, sidewalks, etc. to create a trail loop that connects the community to all the Ashland parks.

If all the trails and sidewalks were developed, as represented in Figure 12, the percentage of residential parcels within a 10-minute walk of a park would increase to 96 percent, or 2,130 residential parcels.

Strategic Plan

The **Walkability** Guiding Objective, and the corresponding Initiatives closely mirror the following objective and initiatives found in the Town of Ashland’s Strategic Plan:

- Initiative 3.2.6 Require that new development include appropriate recreation amenities or dedications, including trails, paths, playgrounds, parks, and open space.

As the Town grows, the Town must continuously reassess the number of residents who live within a 10-minute walk of a park in Ashland. Strategic Plan Initiative 3.2.6 is essential to the success of expanding the Ashland park network to ensure that all residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park in Ashland.

Comprehensive Plan

The **Walkability** Guiding Objective, and the corresponding Initiatives parallel the following policies in the Town of Ashland’s Comprehensive Plan:

- Comprehensive Plan Policy PR.11 Responsibility to Provide: “New residential developments are responsible for providing parks, open spaces, and recreational amenities in proportion to the size or impact of the development. Where specific parks

or recreational amenities have been identified in advance by the Town, the development should contribute toward the establishment of such facilities.”

- Comprehensive Plan Policy PR.14 Projecting Future Needs: “The Town recognizes that it is the responsibility of the entire community to preserve natural settings and provide outdoor enjoyment for future generations. Using the metric created as part of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the Town should closely monitor the rate of development and population growth within and surrounding Ashland, and take steps to ensure a commensurate level of parks and recreation facilities.”
- Comprehensive Plan Policy PR.16 Land Acquisition: “The Town should maintain an accurate inventory of parkland and undisturbed natural areas, and take appropriate and responsible steps to secure land for conservation or future park development. Where practical, the Town should actively acquire and bank land for future park needs.”

Comprehensive Plan Policy PR.14 states that the Town should closely monitor the rate of development and develop park and recreational facilities based on a metric outlined in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. That metric is the percentage of residential parcels that are located within a 10-minute walk of a park in Ashland. The goal is for 100 percent of residential parcels to be located within a 10-minute walk of a park in Ashland. Adhering to the three Comprehensive Plan Park policies, listed above, will make the goal of expanding the park system to ensure every residential parcel is within a 10-minute walk of a Town or County Park much simpler to complete.

B.3: Service

Ashland should always ensure that its park facilities and equipment is well maintained and safe for patrons. Therefore, one of the six guiding objectives is to provide a high level of government **service**: Plan for ongoing maintenance, replacement, and upgrading of park facilities and equipment.

Initiatives

B.3.1: Plan for adequate funding to replace park equipment in every park, every eight years.

Instead of replacing park equipment once it is outdated, Ashland should save an adequate amount of money each year to replace each park's equipment every eight years. Instead of taking resources away from different purposes to pay for new park equipment, Town Council will already have the resources reserved to replace park equipment before park equipment reaches a state of disrepair. Town Staff will work with Council to determine the level of funding required to achieve this initiative.

B.3.2: All park facilities and equipment should be well maintained for safety.

All park facilities and equipment should be regularly inspected for safety. If a park facility or equipment is deemed unsafe, the facility or equipment should be closed until the issue is fixed.

Comprehensive Plan

The **Service** Guiding Objective and the corresponding Initiatives are parallel to the following policies found in the Town of Ashland's Comprehensive Plan:

- Comprehensive Plan Policy PR.17 Funding: "Planning strategies must acknowledge the ongoing financial and staff resources required to sustain facilities. The Town should aggressively seek funding for parks and recreation development, by setting aside funds on an annual basis through the Capital Improvements Program. In addition, the Town should aggressively seek grant funding where available."

Comprehensive Plan Policy PR.17 articulates the need for the Town to save money for new park development and seek grant opportunities when available. Initiative B.3.1 of the **Service** Guiding Objective addresses Comprehensive Plan Policy PR.17 by affirming the importance of saving and the need to create a saving mechanism to set aside funding to replace each park every eight years.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The Town of Ashland has changed a great deal since the first Parks and Recreation Master Plan was approved by Town Council in 1997. The population has grown, the demographics of the population have changed, and citizen demands and needs for parks and recreation amenities have changed. A great deal of time was devoted to collecting feedback from residents of Ashland. All the objectives outlined in this Master Plan are a direct result of Town Staff working closely with the Parks and Recreation Committee and listening to the desires and concerns of Town residents. The Town should feel confident that this Master Plan and Guiding Objectives within it will address the demands and needs of Ashland residents for years to come.

A robust park system can improve the physical and mental health of patrons, improve youth development, improve the environment, increase social interactions, and increase property values. Parks can play an invaluable role in a community. Therefore, it is important to maintain parks once they have been developed, increase access to parks as new areas are developed, and alter park facilities as demand for new types of recreational opportunities increase. The Town of Ashland does not have to accomplish these goals alone. Within the Town of Ashland, there are several entities that do or can offer comparable recreational opportunities, as follows: The Patrick Henry YMCA, the Hanover County Department of Parks and Recreation, Ashland Little League, the Richard S. Gillis, Jr. Ashland Branch Library, Hanover County Schools, and several other semi-public/private entities that offer some type of recreational amenities.

This Master Plan will eventually become outdated as the 1997 Master Plan did. Therefore, it is imperative that a thorough update of the Master Plan be completed no later than ten years after this Master Plan is approved by Town Council. It is also recommended that the Master Plan be reviewed once the 2020 United States Census data is available. The Baby Boomers, who the oldest of the generation did not turn 65 until 2011, has more members than every generation that precedes it and one generation that follows it, by far. Therefore, the 2020 United States Census will show that the number of Americans over the age of 65 has increased exponentially. In 2010, 13.0 of the population of the United States was 65 years of age or older.¹¹ In 2029, the year the last of the baby boomer generation will turn 65, 20 percent of the United States population will be 65 years of age or older.¹² As the average age of the Ashland resident will dramatically increase over the next 12 years, the needs of Ashland residents will likely be different than they are today.

The Parks and Recreation Committee has outlined an ambitious list of objectives for the Town of Ashland to complete, and completing each of the objectives will not be easy. However, if completed, Ashland community and Ashland residents will benefit physically, emotionally, economically, and socially. Parks can make a profoundly positive impact for people and a

¹¹ *Older Americans 2012: Key Indicators of Well-Being*, 2-3, Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics. (Washington, DC, June 2012, Accessed July 23, 2015, http://www.agingstats.gov/main_site/data/2012_documents/docs/entirechartbook.pdf).

¹² Colby and Ortman, *The Baby Boom Cohort in the United States: 2012 to 2060*, 1-2.

community, and if the Parks and Recreation Committee's Guiding Objectives are completed, the Ashland community and its residents will benefit remarkably.

TO DO LIST

- 1) Use the Guiding Objectives developed by the Parks and Recreation Committee and the analysis completed by the Planning District Commission to achieve the Parks and Recreation Committee's vision for the Ashland park system.
- 2) Update the 1998 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. Improve pedestrian mobility and develop bike lanes, which would further enhance the connectivity of Ashland parks and neighborhoods.
- 3) Complete further research to determine what types of recreational opportunities residents of Ashland want.
- 4) Begin researching inclusive playground equipment to replace the Carter Park playground equipment.
- 5) Begin design plans for the "Fitness Park" at North Ashland Park.
- 6) Begin regularly researching grant opportunities to pay for Parks and Recreation projects outlined in this Master Plan.
- 7) Work with Hanover County, Henrico County, and other neighboring governmental entities and private entities to extend the Ashland Trolley Line Trail through Hanover County and onto the East Coast Greenway.
- 8) Reassess the 10-minute walkshed periodically to determine where new parks or trails need to be developed to increase or maintain the number of residents who live within a 10-minute walk of a park in Ashland.
- 9) Start a review of the Master Plan once the 2020 Census data is available.
- 10) Complete an update of the Master Plan no later than 10 years after this Master Plan is approved by the Ashland Town Council.
- 12) Determine the total park equipment replacement cost to assist with the 8-year replacement cycle.
- 13) Create and fund a park acquisition fund.
- 14) Develop Specific Designs for new parks and remodeling of current parks.
- 15) Consider the A and B ranking system of the Guiding Objectives to consider which projects need to take priority.