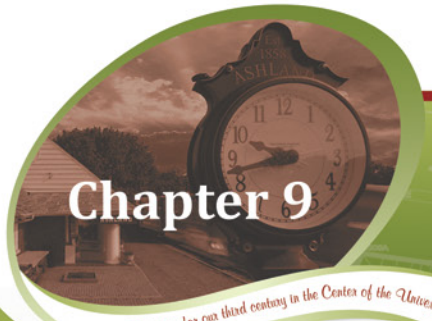
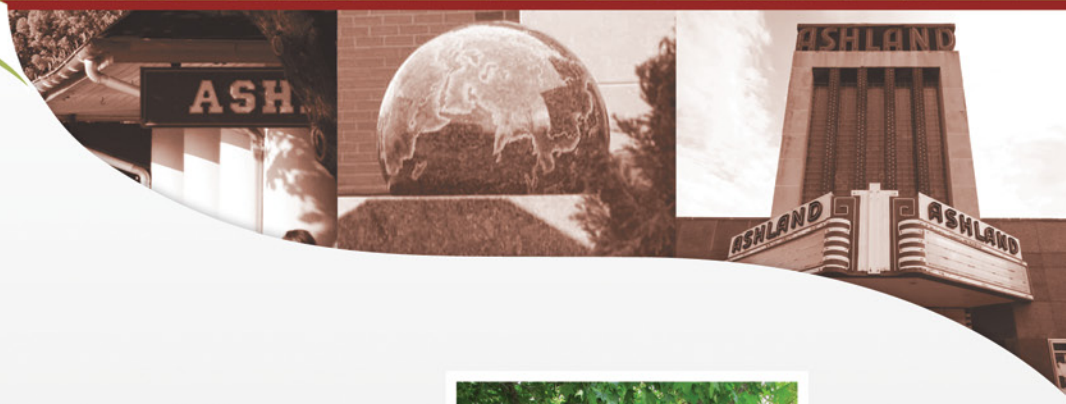


Chapter 9

PARKS & RECREATION

Planning for our third century in the Center of the Universe



Shared and collective stewardship

9.0 PARKS & RECREATION

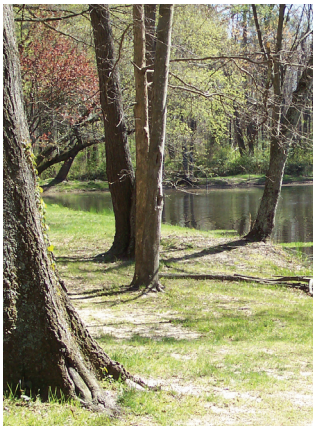
Abstract
The Town sees the value of open space and recreational facilities to enhance the quality of life for Town residents. This chapter provides the framework for a comprehensive system of parks, open spaces and recreational facilities that meet the needs of a diverse and changing population and take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

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

- *Providing a balanced and varied system of parks, open spaces and recreational facilities which keep pace with community growth and changing community needs.*
- *Planning for a diversity of active and passive recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.*
- *Ensuring 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 disability.*

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 recognize the responsibility to care for this legacy by preserving a natural setting for future generations.

This Comprehensive 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. The Plan establishes Guiding Principles for the protection and management of the natural environment; sets goals for a desired mix of parks, trails, facilities and programs; gives direction for the development of new parks and recreational amenities; and establishes benchmarks for evaluating the effectiveness of the parks system.



Current open space and recreational amenities within the Town boundaries include:

CARTER PARK is located between South Center Street and Maple Street Extended and consists of approximately 13.5 acres, most of which is heavily wooded. 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.

DEJARNETTE PARK is eight acres in size and located on Stony Run. It is bordered by residential uses on both sides. Access to the park is at the end of Beverly Road and at the end of Race Course Street. A one-acre, fully stocked pond underwent rehabilitation in 2006. The site remains largely in a natural state.

PUFFERBELLY PARK is approximately two acres in size and is located behind the Ashland Police Station on Randolph Street between England and Myrtle Streets. There is playground equipment, a village green, and a skate park.

RAILSIDE PARK is a one acre park located at the northern end of North Center Street. The park connects to Vaughan Road by a one-third of a mile long path along the rail tracks. The site remains largely open space with one picnic table and three benches that allow for watching trains pass by.

SOUTH TAYLOR STREET PARK is a one-half acre park located at the extreme end of South Taylor Street (725 South Taylor Street). Existing facilities include a picnic shelter, tot lot, rebound wall, 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. 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 into the northern part of Richmond.

NORTH ASHLAND PARK is the name for a future park to be located at the front of the existing twenty-nine acre Town-owned site on West Vaughan Road. The property has five to six acres available for recreational use fronting on West Vaughan Road. This site is home to an existing County-owned sewage facility plant and the Town maintenance and material storage areas.

STONY RUN TRAIL runs toward DeJarnette Park along Stony Run Creek

with access points at Ashcake Road and South Center Street. The trail remains largely in its natural state and does not currently connect to DeJarnette Park.

Map PR-1 showing the inventory of the Town parks is included on page 9-5.

Other public recreational facilities in and around Ashland, but not owned or operated by the Town include:

Poor Farm Park is located approximately two and one-half miles west of Town at 13400 Liberty School Road. This 254-acre park has three picnic shelters, trails shared by bicyclists and hikers, 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. 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. Phase 1 of the park (77 acres) is located 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.

Henry Clay Elementary School is operated by Hanover County and located at 310 South James Street. The school offers a playground, basketball courts, and a gymnasium with a stage that can serve as a public meeting space. Hanover Parks and Recreation offers summer programs for elementary students at this location.

John M. Gandy Elementary School is also operated by Hanover County and is located at 201 Archie Cannon Drive. The school offers a playground, basketball courts, and a gymnasium. Hanover Parks and Recreation offers summer programs for elementary students at this location as well.

Randolph Macon College allows the Town residents use of its tennis courts and walking/jogging trail. Priority is given to College-related users of these facilities. The college also hosts summer sports camps in activities such as competitive swimming, baseball, basketball, soccer

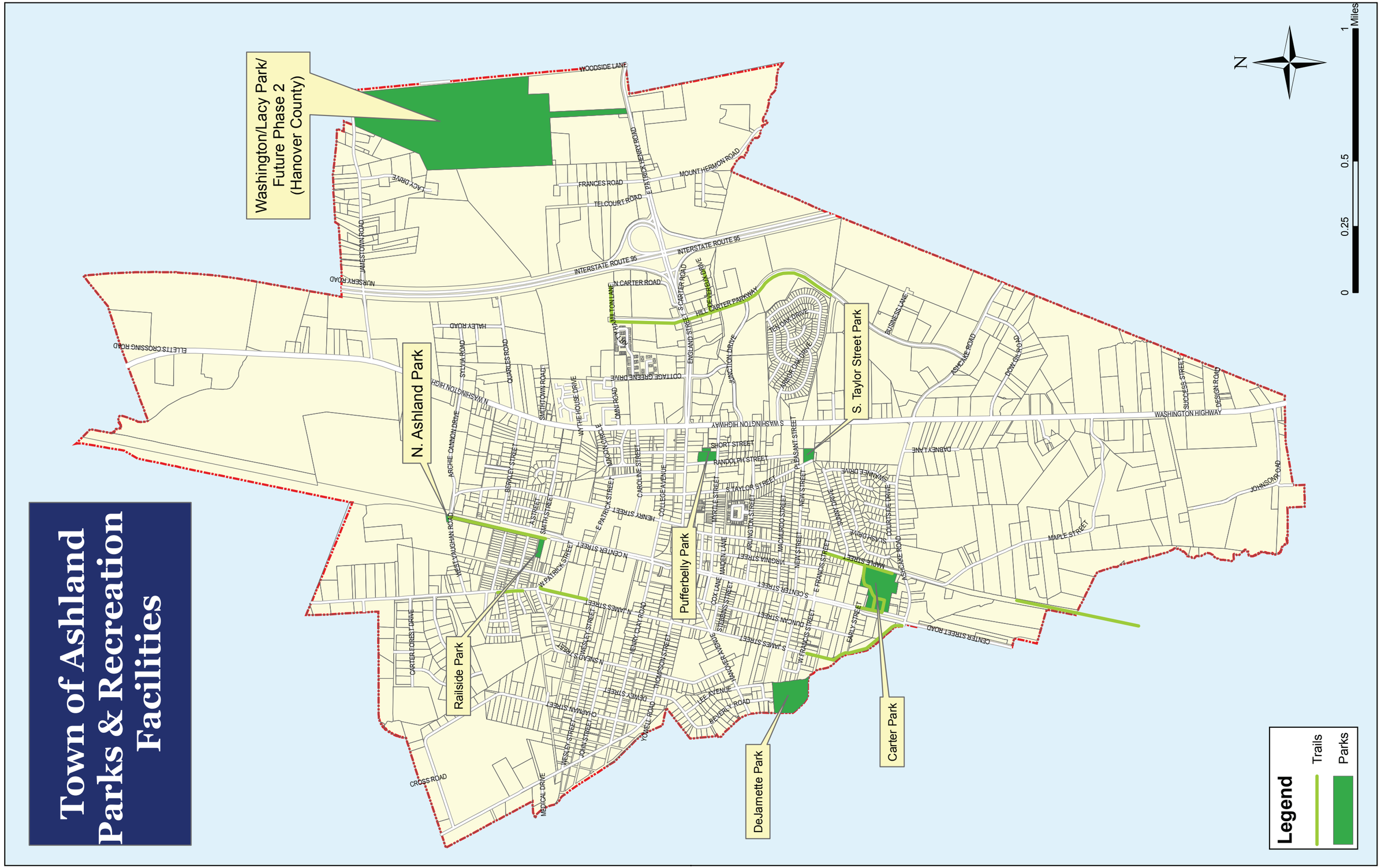
and lacrosse. These camps are open to youth from around the region.

There are numerous private facilities and organizations, which complement the Town and County's recreational offerings. These activities include fitness and weight training, roller skating, and youth athletic leagues. An example of one of the private facilities is the **Patrick Henry Family YMCA**. The YMCA is located at 217 Ashcake Road on approximately 24 acres in a new facility completed in 2010. This expanded facility has an indoor pool, community rooms and youth athletic fields. The YMCA offers a full-range of fitness and wellness programs focusing on families and their needs. Membership is open to all.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This chapter supports the Plan's Guiding Principles as follows:

1. **Preserve Ashland's Small Town Character**
   - 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.
2. **Protect Ashland's Unique Features**
   - Capitalize on Ashland's location at the crossroads of two interstate bike routes: Route 76 and Route
3. **Manage and Enhance Our Green Town**
   - Enhance the livability of Ashland by ensuring the provision of natural areas, open spaces, parks and other recreational 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.
4. **Encourage Continued Variety in Ashland**
   - Recreation and entertainment opportunities should be provided for people from all walks of like.
5. **Promote Continued Economic Development**
   - Promote Ashland as a recreation destination.
   - Take measures to ensure that future park development meets the needs of future development and growth within the Town.
6. **Provide a High Level of Government Services**
   - Continue long-range planning through maintenance of the Parks and Recreation Plan.



MAP PR-1 PARKS & RECREATION FACILITIES

9.1 Responsibilities

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.

Policy PR.2 Private Sector's Role

It must be recognized that the development of land reduces the amount of natural area and open space in the community. It is therefore the responsibility of private development to protect the natural environment where possible, and to provide open space and/or recreational amenities in proportion to the development's size and impact in accordance with the Town Code.

Policy PR.3 Parks and Recreation Master Plan

The Town should update and maintain the 1997 Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The Comprehensive Plan should continue to offer specific guidance as to the location and programming of parks and recreational facilities, and should be used by both the Town and private developers to anticipate parks and recreation needs and opportunities. Maintenance of the Parks and Recreation Plan allows for continued long-range planning to ensure that the social and communal benefits derived from parks, recreation, open space, and leisure opportunities are available for current and future residents.

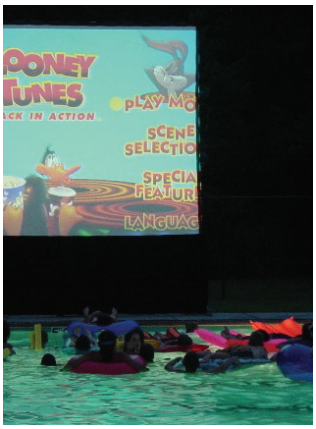
Policy PR.4 Future Parks and Recreation Needs

As part of a Parks and Recreation Master Plan, a metric should be established to assist the Town in determining the appropriate amount of park space needed as the Town population grows. Although guidelines have been established by the 2007 Virginia Outdoors Plan, it is important to remember that each locality's resources are unique as are the needs of each community. The established guidelines should be followed but with the metric modified to the resources, issues and needs of the Town. A few of the basic categories important to this planning process are guidelines regarding area, space, capacity and maintenance. The basic level of service is described in greater detail in the following

section. To create the metric, these standards should be applied to the population numbers and participation rates of the Town to aid in determining if the Town resident's recreation needs are being met. The availability of funding for maintenance and park staff should be considered in future planning. Adjustments to size and space recommendations will be made as needed in the Parks & Recreation Master Plan.

9.2 Criteria for Outdoor Recreation Planning

An ideal parks and recreation system should consist of a mix of the following types of facilities:



- Neighborhood Playgrounds, which are intended to serve the needs of small concentrations of residents in a neighborhood setting.
- Community Parks, which are intended to serve two or more neighborhoods, and which require more space than can be accommodated in a neighborhood setting.
- District Parks, which are intended to serve the entire community with intense recreational offerings, and must therefore be carefully and centrally located.
- Regional Parks, which are intended to draw users from multiple communities.
- Greenways, which serve as linear parks linking open spaces together, and connecting people to centers of activity.

Policy PR.5 Level of Service

The Town of Ashland should strive to provide complete circuits of greenways, at least one district park, several community parks, and a host of neighborhood playgrounds and pocket parks as part of a desirable comprehensive system. Provision of a regional park should be considered in conjunction with Hanover County.

The following park area standards are adapted from the *2007 Virginia Outdoors Plan*. These recommendations represent a minimum acreage that should be exceeded when possible as space permits. Another important consideration is the unique function of each park and recreation area and the trends in participation rates specific to Ashland. The future planning should consider accommodating as many types of activities and opportunities as possible to meet the range of needs of our citizens.

Neighborhood Playground

Neighborhood playgrounds, often referred to as pocket parks, are important in creating a sense of neighborhood identity, character and cohesion. Neighborhood playgrounds may include play equipment for young children, impromptu playing fields, formalized open spaces, or informal

natural areas. Neighborhood playgrounds should be one-quarter acre or larger. Neighborhood playgrounds should be located within a five-minute walk, or one-half mile of the target population.

Community Parks

Community parks provide recreation for sub-communities within the Town, and provide recreation for the whole family. Community parks may include playing fields, courts, picnic areas and other active recreation opportunities. Due to the potential for noise and other issues associated with more intense activity, Community parks should be carefully located so as not to infringe on the tranquility of neighbors. Community parks should range in size from five to twenty acres, and should be provided at a ratio of three acres per 1,000 residents (400 households.) Community parks should be located within a 20-minute walk, or one mile of the target population.

District Parks

District parks provide intense recreational activities intended to serve the entire Town of Ashland. Due to their size and the potential for noise, lighting, and other issues associated with intense use, district parks should be carefully planned to provide adequate buffering against residential areas. District parks include formal playing fields and courts capable of handling Town-wide recreational events. District parks generally contain five or more acres, and should be provided at a ratio of one acre per 2,000 residents (800 households.) District parks should be centrally located, with good automobile, pedestrian, and bicycle accessibility.

Regional Parks

Regional parks provide recreational opportunities that are unique to the region, and draw visitors from multiple communities. Due to their size, intensity, and accessibility requirements, Regional parks should be contemplated as part of a broader economic development strategy between the Town and the County.

Greenways

Greenways serve as linear parks, providing pedestrian and bicycle access in areas that are separate from vehicular travel. Greenways often follow creeks and other riparian corridors, but may also include sidewalks and designated trails alongside public streets. Greenways connect parks and open spaces to each other, and connect people to centers of activity. The Town should strive to develop a comprehensive system of greenway circuits, with frequent trailhead access. An ideal greenways system should provide trailhead access within a 15-minute walk, or three quarter of a mile distance, from 75 percent of the Town's population.

9.3 Accessibility and Safety

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 a majority 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.

To ensure this is a continued consideration in future planning, the 1998 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan should be updated and maintained. This Plan established a vision and framework for developing the trails, sidewalks, and other improvements that address the needs of Ashland residents. Future work on this plan should consider a complete network of bicycle and pedestrian routes and paths, including strategically located, safe crossings on Route 1 and other major roads; sidewalks and bike routes in commercial areas; and a mix of pathways in residential areas. It should be made clear that the pedestrian has priority on residential streets.

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.

Policy PR.8 Public Access

Use of Town-owned parks and recreational facilities shall be available to the public at large, and is not restricted to residents of the Town. The Town discourages the establishment of private recreational facilities such as neighborhood pools, courts, or other "gated community" amenities that are restricted to use by members of an exclusive neighborhood.

Policy PR.9 Public Safety

Public safety shall be of paramount importance in the provision of parks and recreation facilities. The Town shall ensure that its parks, open spaces and other recreational facilities are safe and well-maintained. The design and management of parks and recreation facilities should comply with recognized standards for public safety, including Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED.)

9.4 Ashland as a Recreation Destination

In July 2010, Ashland's Town Council passed a resolution stating its support for trails, bikeways, paths, and greenways and its active support for a safe, viable, and active transportation network for its citizens making the Town a more bikeable and walkable town. The resolution also voiced a commitment to working on connections of trails, paths bikeways and greenways with neighboring localities.

Ashland is located at the crossroads of two interstate bike routes; the TransAmerica Route/US Bike Route 76, which runs from Yorktown, Virginia to Astoria, Oregon and Interstate Bike Route 1, which runs from Calais, Maine to Key West, Florida. These two routes attract cyclists from around the globe. In addition to these existing routes, the Town is being considered for inclusion in the East Coast Greenway, a unique, national off-road bike and walking path which will run from Maine to Florida. Map PR-2 showing the East Coast Greenway and Bike Route 1 & 76 is included on page 9-13.

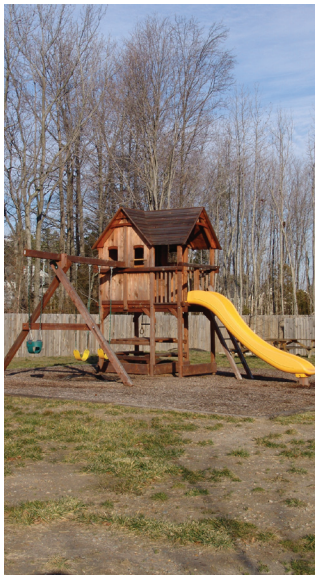
The Town of Ashland is the site a large number of recreational events, including several annual cycling and running events. These events are held primarily during the fall season, and attract many participants from around the region. Many of these events not only serve as fundraisers for various local organizations, but also attract participants from a wide radius, drawing a great number of people into the Town. Local businesses often participate in these events as sponsors.

Policy PR.10 Promoting 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.

Both traditional lodging and camping should be promoted in the area. Often, cyclists on long routes prefer camping as a lodging alternative. At the time of this writing, the campsite used by most cyclists is AmeriCamp on Air Park Road in Hanover. The Town should consider the possibility of opening Carter Park to primitive camping for cyclists.

East Coast Greenway



9.5 Contributions from New Development

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.

Policy PR.12 Location and Prominence

Parks, open spaces and other recreational amenities provided by new development should be situated in prominent locations, with good pedestrian and bicycle accessibility from within and outside the development. High visibility is important in ensuring proper maintenance and safety. Parks and recreational facilities should be designed and celebrated as community amenities.

Policy PR.13 Maintenance

Parks and recreation facilities provided by new developments may be privately-maintained, or may be dedicated to the Town subject to certain criteria and agreements. In the case of private maintenance, the responsible parties must demonstrate a financial ability to perform on-going and sustainable maintenance.

9.6 Anticipation of Need

Policy PR.14 Projecting Future Needs

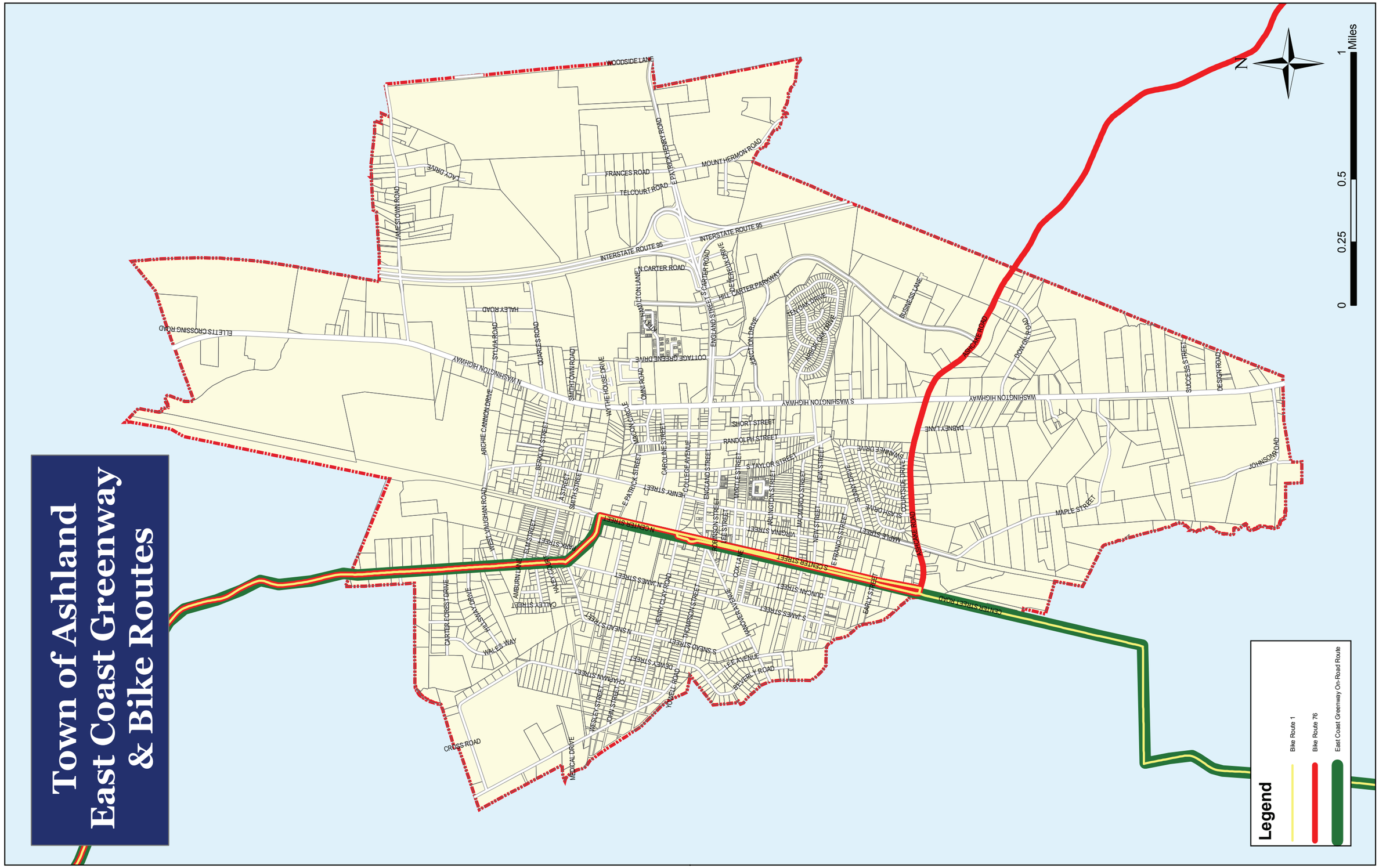
The Town recognizes that it is the responsibility of the entire community to preserve natural settings and provide outdoor enjoyment for future generations. Using the metric created as part of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the Town should closely monitor the rate of development and population growth within and surrounding Ashland, and take steps to ensure a commensurate level of parks and recreation facilities.

Policy PR.15 Parks and Recreation Monitoring System

An evaluation method should be developed that measures the physical and social conditions within the park system. Benchmarks should be established for evaluating the effectiveness of the parks system to ensure that the needs of the population are being met.

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.



MAP PR-2 EAST COAST GREENWAY & BIKE ROUTES

The Town should also seek private partnerships and facilitate private conservation efforts.

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.

TO DO LIST

1. Update 1997 Parks and Recreation Plan including:
   - Investigate potential for pocket park along Hill Carter Parkway
   - Investigate the creation of a Greenway along Mechumps Creek and consider access on both sides of the highway
   - Explore the possibility/need for partnering with Hanover County to add programming to parks within Ashland's borders.
   - Prioritize the completion of the trail connection between DeJarnette and Stony Run Trail
   - Develop a railside trail on the eastern side of the rail north of Berkley Street, on existing Town owned property. This is in future plans pending funding.
   - Provide a formal connection from the trail between Elm and Linden Streets to West Vaughn Road

2) Update the 1998 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan:
   - Improve pedestrian mobility and create bike lanes