



## *Chapter Two* *Heritage and Significance*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The natural and cultural resources of the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area (ATHA) are significant to the history of Maryland and our nation in four important ways:

- ✿ ATHA contains historical resources that chronicle the invention, development and improvement of transportation and communication firsts in the United States.
- ✿ ATHA contains distinctive examples of the settlement and growth patterns of communities that resulted from their proximity to the nation's capital.
- ✿ ATHA is the site of one of the most significant events in the War of 1812, the Battle of Bladensburg.
- ✿ The natural resources of ATHA, and the history of man's use of these resources, from Native American settlements to the space program, possess exceptional value in interpreting the heritage of Maryland and the nation.

### **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ANACOSTIA TRAILS HERITAGE AREA**

The Heritage Area contains intact and relatively unspoiled historic resources that can be used to tell a multitude of stories about the most significant aspects of transportation and communication advances that transformed the American landscape. Since settlement of this area at the end of the 17th century, each successive century has seen the original development or completion of a different mode of transportation or method of communication that has affected not only the local landscape but the national character as well. This is particularly true in the field of aviation as the entire timespan of aerospace history is represented within the Heritage Area. In 1784, the first documented balloon ascension in America took place in Bladensburg when a local attorney and inventor sent aloft an unmanned aerostatic globe. The Wright brothers



*Each successive century has seen the development of a different mode of transportation. This 1909 photograph shows a Wright aeroplane flying over a train on the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad tracks near College Park Airport.*

perfected their Wright B flyer at the first United States Army Signal Corps airport in the nation at College Park, which is now the oldest continuously operated airport in the world. And the hub of all journeys into space to the moon and beyond is located here at the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center.



*A stagecoach on the Washington and Baltimore Turnpike (present-day US 1) near Vansville, shown here in a print of about 1830. The sign reads to Was<sup>n</sup> 10 M<sup>s</sup> (10 miles to Washington).*

Nationally significant transportation and communication developments in the Heritage Area also include the operation of the Baltimore to Georgetown Road, over what is basically present-day US 1, which in 1783 became one of the first stagecoach lines in the country. This roadway also became part of the first federally funded mail route in the nation in 1785 and, in 1812, one of the first turnpikes in the country. The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, which was one of the first railroad lines in the country and the first in Maryland, constructed its Washington Branch through the Heritage Area in 1835, thus immediately fostering the development of new communities and trading centers. In 1844, Samuel Morse sent the first experimental telegraph test message into Washington from a point along the railroad line near the Riversdale plantation and hence began the means for nationwide conversation.

Linking this concentration of cultural and historical resources is the Anacostia Tributary Trails System. Nowhere else in the region are such a number of attractions so easily accessible and physically connected by a scenic greenway. Tourists may fly, drive, cycle or walk to the area, stay overnight at a comfortable hotel or campsite, use any of the numerous recreational facilities, visit museums, conduct research on a multitude of subjects, and view an art exhibit all without ever traveling more than a quick walk from the Anacostia Tributary Trails System.

The Anacostia Trails Heritage Area also contains sites that document the nature of settlement patterns around Washington, D.C., and the rise

of the African-American middle class. These include plantation and tobacco culture sites, a nationally known Depression-era planned “greentown,” streetcar suburb sites, and several examples of pattern book architecture from the 19th and 20th centuries. In addition, the area has one-of-a-kind educational and scientific study centers and diverse cultural resources.

## HERITAGE RESOURCES

As a consequence of Prince George’s County’s long and varied history, its citizens have been the beneficiaries of many extensive studies of the natural and historical resources of the area. The most complete listing of the county’s historic resources is found in the 1992 *Historic Sites and Districts Plan* prepared by The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC). The two best sources of information on the condition of the Anacostia River and its tributary trail system are the “Anacostia Watershed Restoration Information Packet,” published by the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin, and the “Anacostia Tributary Trail System Map,” published by M-NCPPC.

ATHA contains some of the most significant historic resources in the state, many of which are listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and four that have been designated as National Historic Landmarks: Montpelier Mansion in Laurel, Riversdale (the Calvert Mansion in Riverdale Park), the Spacecraft Magnetic Test Facility at NASA Goddard, and the City of Greenbelt. The Heritage Area also includes four National Register Historic Districts: Hyattsville, Mount Rainier, University Park and Greenbelt. Additional proposals for recognition of Riverdale Park and the Greenbelt Historic District are underway and efforts are being made to expand existing districts. In addition to these major historic and architectural landmarks, the Heritage Area also contains significant natural and recreational resources, the most noteworthy of which are the Anacostia Tributary Trails System, Laurel Riverfront Park, Lake Artemesia in College Park, Greenbelt Park, and Bladensburg Waterfront Park.

## Historic Districts and Communities

### *National Register Historic Districts*

The oldest of the four National Register Historic Districts in the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area is in the City of Hyattsville, which was incorporated in 1886. The Hyattsville Historic District is composed of approximately 600 buildings that represent the residential portion of the present city. Hyattsville developed at the intersection of the turnpike and the railroad (now the intersection of Rhode Island Avenue with Alternate US 1); a railroad junction village in the mid-19th century, it later became a streetcar suburb. The town is named for Christopher Clarke Hyatt, a local landowner and merchant who owned large tracts in the area in the 1840s. The historic district’s buildings reflect the styles popular from the 1870s to the 1930s, including the Second Empire, Queen Anne, Italianate, Bungalow and Mediterranean Revival styles.



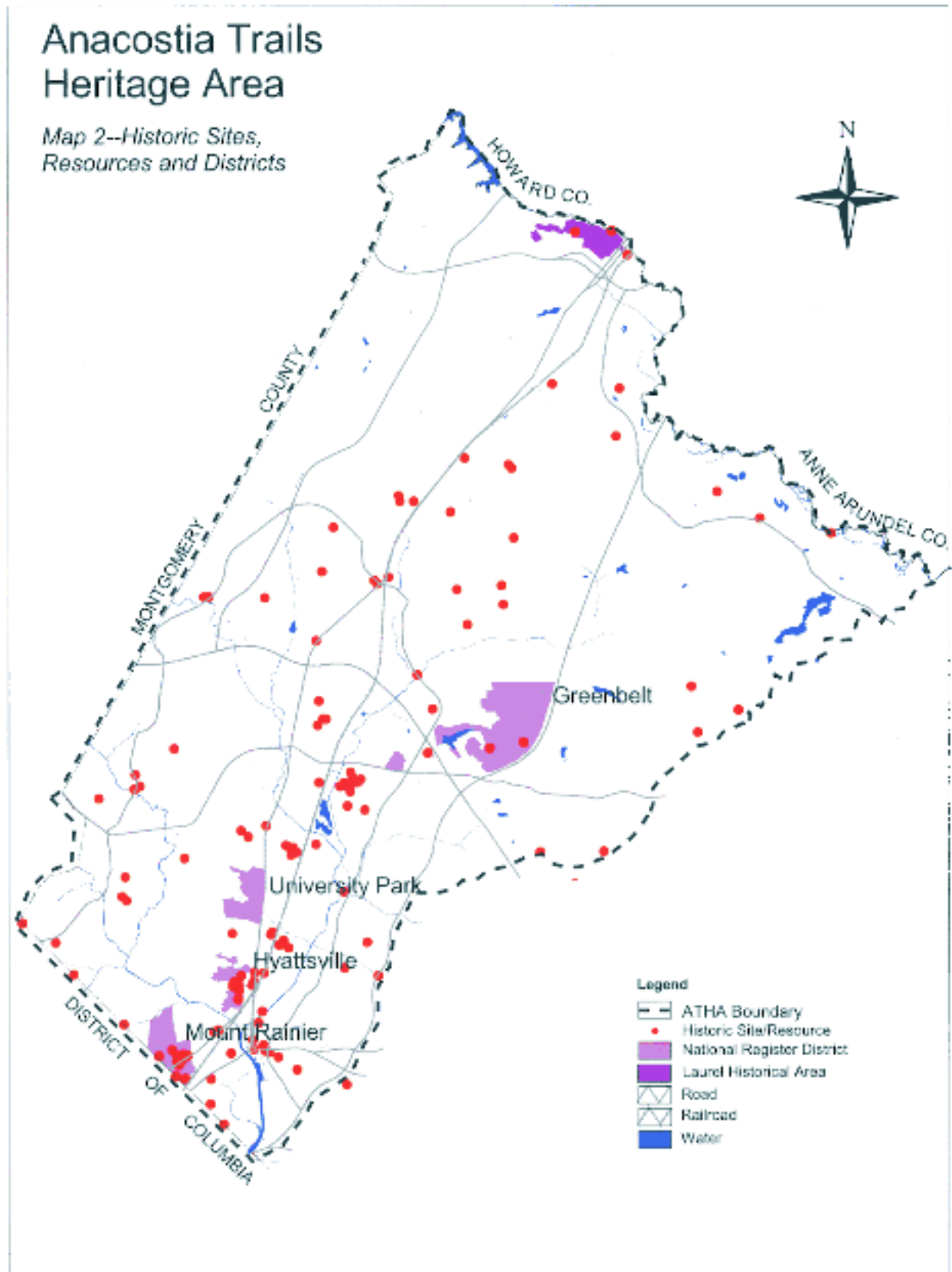
*Montpelier Mansion, built for the Snowden family in the 1780s, is one of four National Historic Landmarks in the Heritage Area.*

Eighteen individual houses within the district are included in the county's *Historic Sites and Districts Plan* as Historic Sites or historic resources. The county's Historic Sites, resources and districts are shown on Map 2.

The Mount Rainier National Register Historic District is significant as a large and essentially intact example of an early 20th-century streetcar suburb. During its period of settlement and growth, from 1900 to 1940, middle-class families moved into Mount Rainier and built modest houses. The town was incorporated in 1910. They used the Rhode Island Avenue streetcar line to commute to jobs in downtown Washington and surrounding suburbs. The tree-lined streets of Mount Rainier contain a diverse collection of vernacular dwellings and an important group of early 20th-century Revival-style churches. Four Historic Sites and seven historic resources in the district are listed in the county's *Historic Sites and Districts Plan*.

The University Park National Register Historic District is an exclusively residential community that was platted in 1923 and is typical of early 20th-century suburbs with its variety of Revival-style houses. The town grew steadily in the 1930s and was incorporated in 1936. A historic house, Bloomfield, built in 1830, remains and was converted into the residence of the developer of the community. University Park is unique as an early residential suburb that developed as a result of the automobile and, unlike the case in streetcar suburbs, this is reflected in the garages built with the original houses.

The Greenbelt National Register Historic District has also been designated as a National Historic Landmark. Greenbelt is one of three planned





*Shown here is a typical streetscape in University Park, a residential suburb developed in the 1920s and 1930s for an automobile society. It is one of four National Register Historic Districts in the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area (along with Mount Rainier, Greenbelt and Hyattsville).*

“greentowns” built by President Roosevelt’s New Deal Resettlement Administration of the late 1930s in response to the nation’s shortage of low- and moderate-income housing. Greenbelt was conceived by Rexford G. Tugwell of the Resettlement Administration, whose dream was to provide housing within the format of a self-sufficient community with open space for recreation. Incorporated in 1937, Greenbelt was the most successful of the greentowns: it retains its original plan and International-style buildings, most with very few alterations. The Greenbelt Center School, a designated Historic Site, is an outstanding example of the streamlined Art Deco style.

A nomination for listing in the National Register is being prepared for the College Park campus of The University of Maryland. The nucleus of the campus is located on US 1 on what was once the Rossburg Farm and where the Rossborough Inn still stands. Charles Benedict Calvert deeded this property to the Maryland Agricultural College in 1858 and became the first chairman of the Board of Trustees. In 1914 the State of Maryland assumed full control of the college, and in 1920, when it merged with the Medical School in Baltimore, it became The University of Maryland. The campus is dominated by the Georgian Revival institutional style of architecture.

In addition to these National Register Historic Districts and Landmarks, the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area includes 10 other municipalities. All have independently pursued heritage preservation and tourism projects and have recently united in the Anacostia Heritage Area Partnership in an effort to further these goals.

The Town of Bladensburg, established in 1742 and incorporated in 1854, was an important colonial port and the site of the Battle of Bladensburg in August 1814. Although the community has undergone many changes, a number of significant historic buildings remain from the colonial and early federal periods, including three 18th-century residences, an 18th-century commercial building and an early 19th-century church.



*Laurel is one of 14 municipalities in ATHA; the town grew as a result of the mill industry. Shown here is Avondale Mill (built in the early 19th century), which was destroyed by fire in 1991.*

In the early 19th century, a stone gristmill was erected near the banks of the Patuxent River, and as many other mills sprang up nearby, the village of “Laurel Factory” developed. In 1835, with the introduction of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, Laurel became a prosperous town and a major station on the new railroad line. The city was incorporated in 1870. Since the creation of the Historic District Commission (HDC) in 1975, the City of Laurel has established seven historic districts within the city’s traditional Main Street corridor. The HDC and the City of Laurel have been instrumental in the adaptive reuse of several of the city’s most historic structures. The Phelps Center, originally the oldest high school in the county, now houses the Laurel Boy’s and Girl’s Club. The Laurel Factory House, an original dwelling for mill workers in the city’s earliest days, is now the Laurel Museum. The B&O Railroad Station is the focal point of a redevelopment effort around the eastern terminus of Main Street.

The Town of Berwyn Heights was originally platted in 1888 as Charlton Heights and later incorporated in 1896. The town includes a range of buildings that reflect the residential community as it developed over a 50-year period. Several of its historic homes were constructed from specifications produced by R.W. Shoppell’s Cooperative Building Plan Association and 15 of its older structures have been surveyed by the M-NCPPC Planning Department.



*Built in 1888 from a Victorian pattern book plan, this is one of the first houses in the town of Berwyn Heights.*

Platted in 1889, Riverdale Park was laid out around the tracks of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad on the portion of the Riversdale plantation that included the 1801 mansion of the Calvert family. The subdivision was unusual in that it focused on the plantation house as a central amenity and was laid out as a “village park,” including traffic circles and other park areas reserved as public green space. The forms and styles of the buildings range from the Queen Anne transitional of the 1890s to the craftsman-inspired bungalows of the 1930s. Riverdale Park was incorporated in 1920 and is in the early stages of seeking local historic district designation.

College Park developed largely as a result of the growth of the Maryland Agricultural College. The first subdivision was platted in 1889 by John O. Johnson on land originally part of the Riversdale estate. After a succession of subdivisions were developed, College Park incorporated in 1945. The oldest buildings in College Park date from the late Victorian period, but the city is largely composed of structures in the Colonial Revival style.

Located in the Rhode Island Avenue corridor, the Town of Brentwood is representative of the type of middle-class suburb that changed the character of the area beginning in the 1890s. Originally an area of large farms, the development of Brentwood was largely initiated by Captain Wallace Bartlett, a retired army officer and inventor. Bartlett had lived in the area since the 1880s and had also been active in the development of Mount Rainier and North Brentwood. Brentwood’s streets are filled with a range of modest, early 20th-century house types. The town was incorporated in 1922.





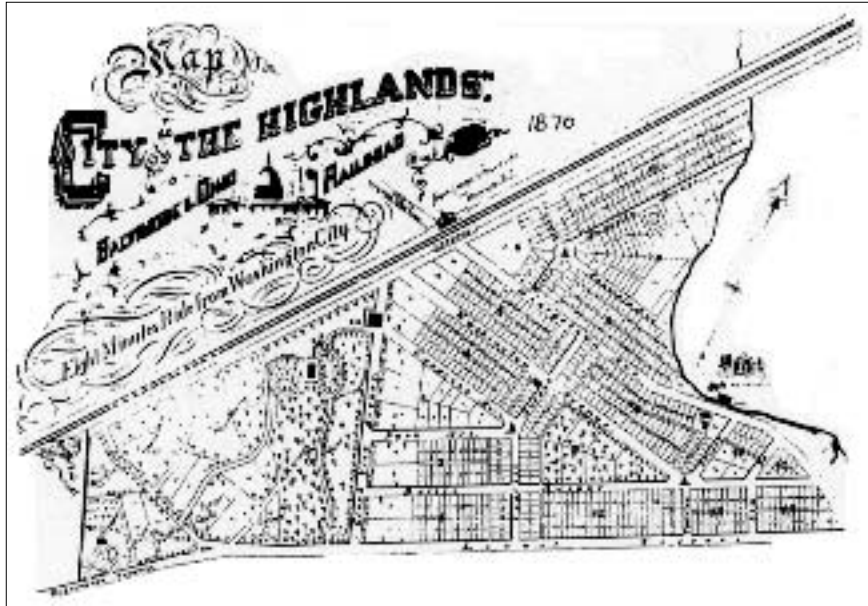
*M-NCPPC staff and town residents begin the historical/architectural survey of North Brentwood, Prince George's County's first black municipality.*

North Brentwood was the first black community to be incorporated in Prince George's County. Captain Wallace Bartlett, who had commanded a company of black soldiers during the Civil War, was instrumental in the development of the area. By 1904, a schoolhouse and 23 dwellings had been constructed for black families and in 1924 the town was incorporated. The entire town has been surveyed and 15 individual buildings have been documented.

The development of the Town of Edmonston (incorporated in 1924) began around 1900 on land platted by J. Harris Rogers of Hyattsville and, shortly afterwards, on adjoining land belonging to Dr. Charles A.



*A typical streetscape in Edmonston, a small community which began to develop circa 1900 along the railroad and streetcar lines.*



*Shown here is the 1870 plat for The Highlands. The envisioned community never materialized (only one early house survives), and the land was developed as Cottage City in the 1920s.*

Wells. The first residents were attracted to the area by the ease of transportation to Washington, D.C., via the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and the City and Suburban Streetcar line. Several outstanding examples of late Victorian domestic architecture survive in Edmonston.

Cottage City and Colmar Manor developed in the years following the First World War. The site of Cottage City had been subdivided in 1870 as The Highlands, an exclusive suburban retreat, but The Highlands never materialized, and the area was not developed until the Cottage City and Colmar Manor subdivisions after the war. Both communities are characterized by 1920s cottages and bungalows, tightly packed into small building lots. Both offered affordable housing and an easy commute into the District by either train or streetcar; both were incorporated in the 1920s.<sup>1</sup>

### **Major Historic and Architectural Landmarks<sup>2</sup>**

The Anacostia Trails Heritage Area has an abundance of historical and architectural landmarks, ranging from impressive mansions noted for their architectural elegance to mills, taverns, war memorials, and an airport. These landmarks span the three centuries of the county's history from the springhouse at Fort Lincoln Cemetery to NASA Goddard Space Flight Center. Several of the most remarkable historic landmarks

<sup>1</sup> Most of the information on historic districts and settings in this section was taken from the county's *Historic Sites and Districts Plan*.

<sup>2</sup> See also previous discussion of the Greenbelt National Register Historic District, which is also a National Historic Landmark.

that have retained their integrity of setting and cohesive character are described below. Most are in good to excellent condition and several are currently undergoing major renovations or restorations.

Montpelier Mansion is one of the finest examples of 18th-century Georgian architecture in the state. It was the center of Major Thomas Snowden's vast landholdings that at one time included over 9,000 acres in Prince George's County alone. A National Historic Landmark owned by M-NCPPC, the mansion stands on 70 acres of rolling parkland unencroached by suburban development. In the garden is an original 18th-century summer house, one of only two known to have survived in the United States. Montpelier Mansion is furnished as a historic house museum and is available for interpretive tours.

Riversdale (also known as the Calvert Mansion) in Riverdale Park is a unique combination of high-style American and European architecture. It was built by Henry Stier, a Belgian refugee of the French Revolution, and completed by his daughter, Rosalie Stier Calvert, and her husband, George Calvert, a descendant of the Lords Baltimore. Riversdale has been the home of a number of nationally significant people, including Charles Benedict Calvert, principal founder of the Maryland Agricultural College, now The University of Maryland at College Park, and Hattie Caraway, the first woman elected to the United States Senate. A wealth of documentation exists for the historical interpretation of Riversdale, including the letters of Rosalie Stier Calvert, its first mistress, and the records of Adam Francis Plummer, once a slave on the Riversdale plantation. The property is owned by M-NCPPC. National Historic Landmark status was conferred on Riversdale in December 1997. The house is furnished and available for interpretive tours.



*Riversdale was begun in 1801 by the Stier family and finished by Rosalie and George Calvert. The plantation house combines American and European features, and is one of four National Historic Landmarks in the Heritage Area.*

College Park Airport, owned by M-NCPPC, is the world's oldest continuously operated airport. It was the testing grounds for the Wright brothers' early airplanes in 1909 and has been the site of many important aviation firsts, including the first controlled helicopter flight and the first regularly scheduled United States Air Mail service.

The Bladensburg Waterfront Park is owned by M-NCPPC and is currently undergoing major renovations that have been funded, in part, by a grant from the State of Maryland. The park is located at the site of the Port of Bladensburg, which was one of the busiest tobacco inspection ports on the eastern seaboard in the 18th century. The park has an existing visitor center, around which will be constructed a new riverfront promenade. Future phases are expected to include a pedestrian bridge across the Anacostia River and an amphitheater. Other facilities that can be developed nearby include a history museum, balloon launch, and retail plaza. On a hill above the port stands Bostwick, built in 1746 by Christopher Lowndes, a prominent merchant and town commissioner. Lowndes' son-in-law, and the second owner of the house, was Benjamin Stoddert, first Secretary of the Navy. The Town of Bladensburg owns Bostwick.



*An early photograph of the George Washington House, built as a store circa 1760, and later one of several taverns on the Washington and Baltimore Turnpike, now US 1.*

Also in Bladensburg are two important examples of early commercial buildings: the George Washington House, originally built as a store in approximately 1760 and now owned by the Aman Memorial Trust, and the Market Master's House, built in 1765 at the edge of the town's bustling market space.

Rossborough Inn and Brown's White House Tavern reflect the history of the old Washington and Baltimore Turnpike system. Built circa 1803 and 1834 respectively, they served for many years as stopping places for stagecoach travelers on the road until the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad put the stage line out of business. Both buildings have served a variety of purposes since that time. Restored and renovated in the 1930s, the Rossborough Inn is now the home of The University of Maryland's Faculty and Alumni Club. Brown's White House Tavern served for more than 50 years in this century as the center of a motel complex; now in deteriorating condition, the tavern building awaits restoration as part of a commercial/office development. The original turnpike milestone (the only surviving milestone from this turnpike) was removed from the tavern grounds for safekeeping in 1998 and will be returned and stabilized once the tavern is restored.



*African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, built 1920 in North Brentwood, a church which reflects the long history of African-American religious traditions in the county.*

ATHA is also rich in African-American sites. St. Paul's/Free Hope Baptist Church in Bladensburg, the AME Zion Church in North Brentwood, Queen's Chapel in Rossville, and St. Mark's Church in Laurel are examples of churches that reflect the long history of the African-American religious traditions in the county. Abraham Hall in Rossville, which was built for the Benevolent Sons and Daughters of Abraham in 1889, is the

focal point of that Reconstruction-era community and is also significant as the first African-American Historic Site in the county to be restored with public funds.<sup>3</sup>

### **Distinctive Environmental Features**

ATHA lies in the geographical area known as the Coastal Plain, a wedge-shaped region primarily composed of unconsolidated sediments, such as gravel, sand and clay. Some of these materials came from upland erosion, but most are the deposits of successive advances and retreats of the sea over the last 50 to 100 million years. The corridor between Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, which includes the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area, is considered distinctive and significant because of its unusually high concentration of these sediments and is known to geologists as the “Bad Lands.” The iron-rich clays of the plain have provided building materials since the 1790s and have long formed the basis for brick making in the area.

The Northwest Branch is one of the two major tributaries of the Anacostia River and has the highest riverscape diversity and some of the most scenic spots in the Heritage Area. It travels through the most dramatic and rugged stretch of the Anacostia watershed where it descends a deep, narrow gorge and drops 40 feet. An extensive stream valley park system, managed by M-NCPPC, provides stream protection and ample recreational opportunities along the Northwest Branch Trail of the Anacostia Tributary Trails System, including Lane Manor Aquatic Facility, Adelphi Mill, equestrian paths, numerous recreation centers, and several neighborhood parks. The Anacostia Tributary Trails System, a key linkage in ATHA, is composed of several branches along the tributaries of the Anacostia River.

The Northeast Branch trail of the Tributary Trails System runs through a highly urbanized area with a mixture of residential, commercial and industrial land uses. These trails serve both recreational and commuter functions by linking College Park with Riverdale Park, the Maryland Commuter Rail (MARC), and the Metrorail Green Line, as well as recreation facilities such as the Herbert Wells Ice Rink with Fletcher’s Ball Field.

Indian Creek has shallow slopes and, typical of a Coastal Plain stream, meanders with stretches of pools and riffles through relatively wide valleys. Indian Creek is entirely within ATHA and its land use changes radically between its headwaters and its confluence with Paint Branch, from rural, low-density wooded areas to highly developed urban centers. The trail system along Indian Creek links College Park Airport and

<sup>3</sup> Most of the information for this section was taken directly from the county’s *Historic Sites and Districts Plan*. The M-NCPPC facility managers and historians provided additional information.



*One of the hiker-biker bridges at Lake Artemesia, part of the Anacostia Tributary Trails System.*

Aviation Museum with Lake Artemesia and the Berwyn Heights Neighborhood Park.

The Paint Branch boasts scenic views, especially the rocky, tumbling section upstream of Powder Mill Road. Wooded parkland, most of which is managed by M-NCPPC, buffers the branch and encompasses the trail system. Paint Branch Trail extends to include Paint Branch Golf Course and in the future may extend through the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center to Fairland Regional Park and Laurel.

Sligo Creek has considerable public appeal. It is easily accessible, gets high recreational use, and is bordered by a narrow greenway of parkland that highlights attractive riverscapes of natural channels and pools. The Sligo Creek Trail presently links several neighborhood parks and extends through Takoma Park and beyond in Montgomery County.








The Anacostia River Trail connects the Port Towns of Colmar Manor and Cottage City and is intended to connect to Bladensburg at the Bladensburg Waterfront Park via a pedestrian bridge over the Anacostia River. Although this is the most urban area of the river and trail system, it is buffered by an extensive stretch of parkland at the southern end of the Anacostia Tributary Trails System that includes the Bladensburg Waterfront Park, Dueling Creek Natural Area, and the Colmar Manor Community Park.

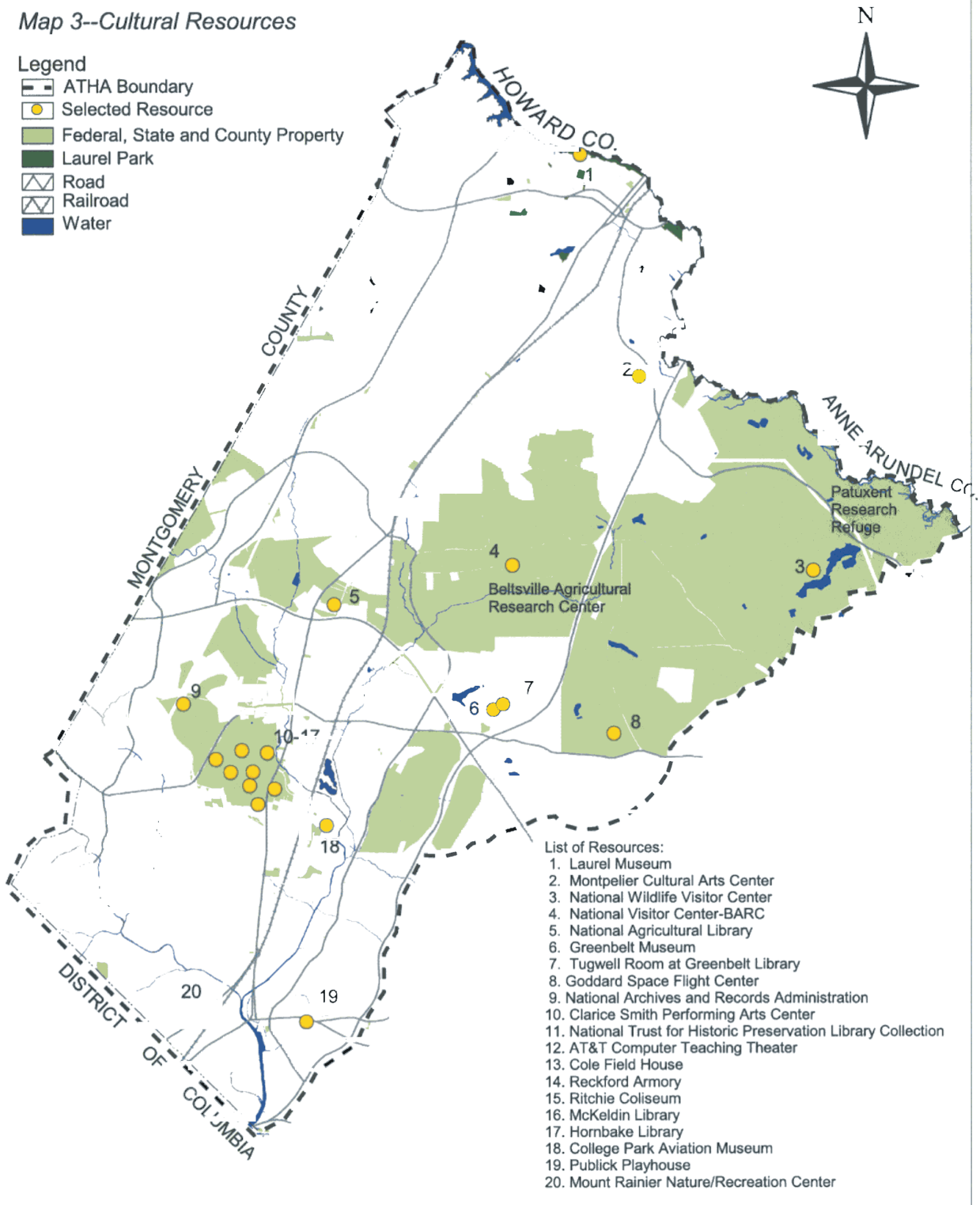
The northern third of ATHA drains away from the Anacostia River and toward the Patuxent watershed, with the Patuxent River itself forming the northern borders of ATHA, Prince George's County and the City of Laurel. Three river tributaries flow through the city from west to east; the Walker, Crow and Bear Branches. A large portion of the areas immediately adjacent to the tributaries and the Patuxent River are steep

# Anacostia Trails Heritage Area

Map 3--Cultural Resources

## Legend

-  ATHA Boundary
-  Selected Resource
-  Federal, State and County Property
-  Laurel Park
-  Road
-  Railroad
-  Water





slopes. Development plans and Forest Conservation Easements have protected many of these sensitive areas. Additionally, the city has created Riverfront Park to buffer much of the Patuxent's natural character as well as giving an accessible recreational use to residents.

### **Distinctive Cultural and Educational Resources**

The major concentration of cultural and educational landmarks in Prince George's County is located within ATHA. (See Map 3.) The University of Maryland at College Park is one of the most outstanding educational complexes of the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area, as well as one of the nation's best-equipped campuses. With over 30,000 students enrolled in 125 different areas of study, it is a major center of scholarly activity. The university has eight lending libraries and houses the National Trust for Historic Preservation Library Collection, an AT&T Computer Teaching Theater, Cole Field House, Reckford Armory, Ritchie Coliseum, and many recreational facilities. The Maryland Room, now located in Hornbake Library, is a major center for the study of state and local history, containing a world-class special collection of historical Maryland literature and artifacts. The Hornbake Library features state-of-the-art storage facilities, an expanded research room, enhanced exhibit space appropriate for visiting displays from other institutions and organizations, and conference facilities. Future plans call for expanded hours to better serve the community.

In 2001, the university opened the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center. This facility is a collaborative effort of the state, Prince George's County, and the university and promises to provide a superb environment for the study, practice and enjoyment of the arts. The University



*The main entrance to the College Park campus of The University of Maryland, one of the nation's best-equipped campuses.*

of Maryland and many of its facilities are directly linked by the Anacostia Tributary Trails System.

The NASA Goddard Space Flight Center near Greenbelt is another educational landmark within the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area. Established in 1959, it was NASA's first science center and has been in the forefront of space research and exploration ever since. An existing visitor center, with several interactive exhibits highlighting the many milestones accomplished by NASA, is open to the public and attracts over 125,000 visitors yearly.

The National Visitor Center at the USDA's Beltsville Agricultural Research Center is housed in a log lodge built by the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps in 1937. The design of the lodge was based on blueprints from ski lodges at Yellowstone National Park. Visitors to the center learn about food and farm sciences in plant breeding, animal and human nutrition, and the products and inventions of agricultural science. The National Agricultural Library, which is associated with the Agricultural Research Center, houses the largest collection of agriculture-related texts in the world. Plans exist to extend the Paint Branch Trail of the Anacostia Tributary Trails System through the Agricultural Research Center. Spur trails can be added to connect visitor sites, such as the Agricultural Research Service National Visitor Center.

Located a few short miles off the Anacostia Tributary Trails System, but within easy distance by car, bike or bus, the Patuxent Research Refuge near Laurel is dedicated to protecting wildlife diversity and habitats across the United States. The refuge, which covers 12,750 acres, is an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior and is its largest environmental education center. The new National Wildlife Visitor Center, on the grounds of the refuge, is designed to provide visitors with knowledge and appreciation of the role of wildlife research in preserving the earth's vital resources. Interactive exhibits focus on global environmental issues, migratory bird routes, wildlife habitats, and endangered species recovery efforts. Surrounding forests, lakes and trails provide opportunities for wildlife-oriented recreation, educational programs and tour groups. In FY 1997, the visitor center was visited by more than 170,000 people.

The National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, which is generally called Archives II, acquires, protects and makes available for research records of enduring value created or received by the various branches of the federal government. Archives II is open to the public for research or study concerning any subject involving government services. Through its virtually complete United States census and military records collection, Archives II is becoming a mecca for both amateur and professional genealogists.

Montpelier Cultural Arts Center near Laurel is Prince George's County's premier multifaceted arts facility. Located on the grounds of



*National Archives and Records Administration (Archives II) in College Park houses records created or received by the federal government, and is open to the public for research and study.*

Montpelier Mansion and also owned by M-NCPPC, the center houses three galleries, classrooms, workshops and studio space. Cultural events in both the visual and performing arts are offered regularly and include visual art exhibits, classical music competitions, masters' workshops, and dance programs. The center is open seven days a week.

The Publick Playhouse in Cheverly is owned by M-NCPPC. It presents many professional programs with nationally known artists; however, its



*The classrooms, galleries and studios of the Montpelier Cultural Arts Center are housed in a modern barn structure on the grounds of Montpelier Mansion.*

main mission is to provide a fully equipped facility for use by local performing arts companies and offer affordable arts and dance presentations to residents of the area.

### **Museums**

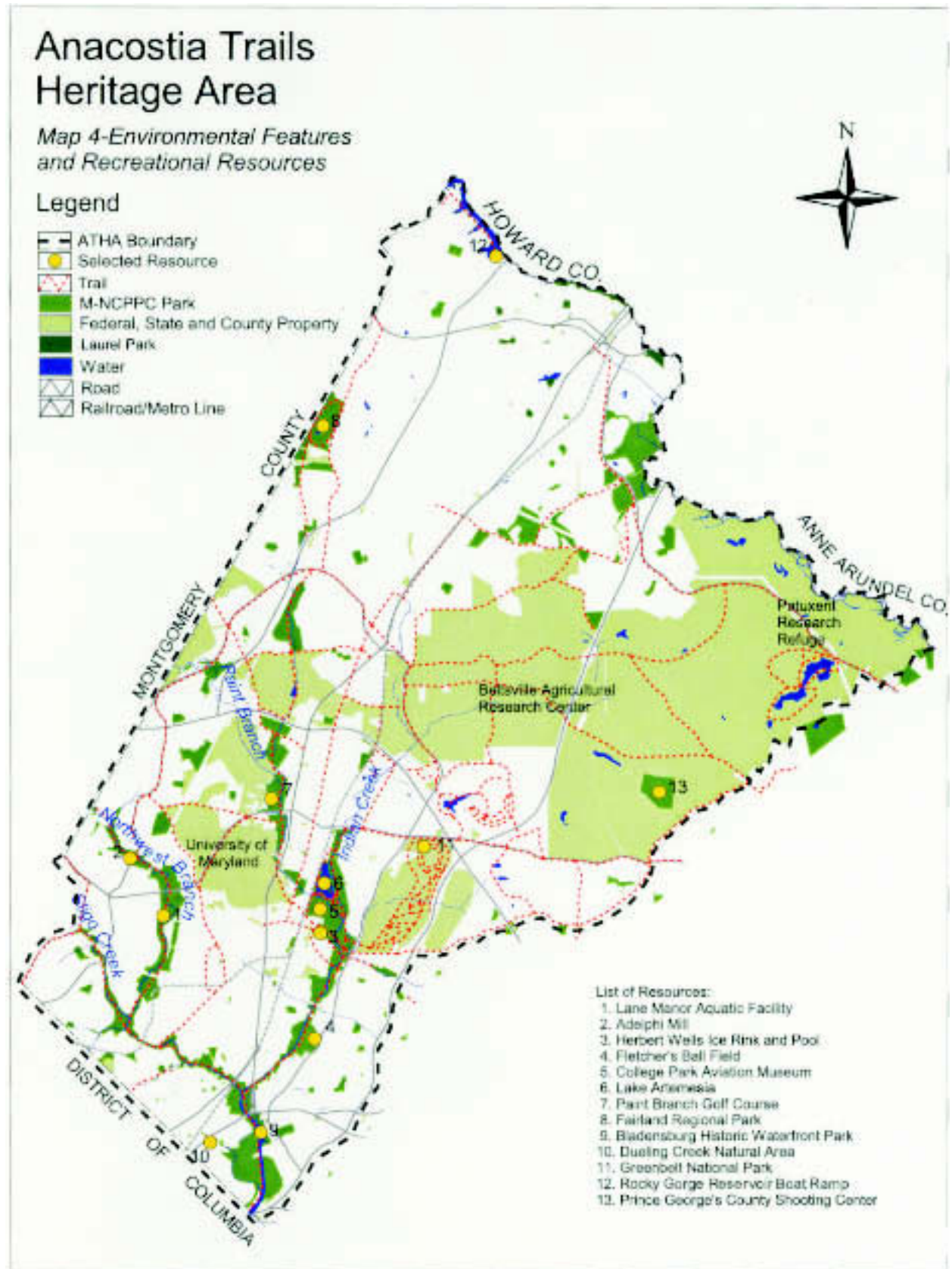
The new College Park Aviation Museum, located on the grounds of the historic College Park Airport, opened in 1998. This 30,000-square-foot, \$7 million museum features a replica of the Wright B flyer, one of the early Wright brothers' planes that was flown at College Park, and highlights the many firsts in aviation history that took place on the airfield, such as the first air mail flights and the first manned helicopter flight. The museum is owned by M-NCPPC and offers many outstanding educational programs, volunteer opportunities, and hands-on children's activities.

The Greenbelt Museum, opened in 1987, is owned by the City of Greenbelt. The museum includes an original International Style house near the town's center that is restored and furnished with objects from the Depression and World War II. The streamlined furniture on display was designed and built to fit these homes by the Resettlement Administration's Special Skills Division. The walls are hung with original architectural renderings and artwork of Greenbelt created by New Deal artists and architects.

The museum also has an exhibition space in the Art Deco-style Greenbelt Community Center that contains changing interpretive exhibits. The Community Center's outer wall features dramatic limestone friezes depicting the Preamble to the Constitution created by New Deal sculptress Lenore Thomas. The museum's collection includes an extensive library of photographs and print materials.



*The Greenbelt Museum is located in one of the units of the 1937 planned "greentown." It is fully furnished to its original period and tells the history of this Depression-era community.*



The Laurel Museum, owned by the City of Laurel, is housed in an 1840 mill worker's house and highlights the history of the City of Laurel and the great cotton and textile factories of the early 19th century that were located there. Laurel was an industrial town whose wealth came from the mills and foundries rather than tobacco.

The Town of North Brentwood is planning to construct a museum on the history of the African-American settlement of the area. North Brentwood is the oldest African-American incorporated community in Prince George's County. The museum in North Brentwood will focus on the history of the town and the causes and effects of the nation's racial policies as they have influenced the development and settlement of the region.

### Important Recreational Resources

An outstanding variety of leisure-time options for both participants and spectators is available within the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area. (See Map 4.) M-NCPPC, which oversees most of the recreational facilities within the Heritage Area, has an award-winning parks system. M-NCPPC manages 18 neighborhood parks, 6 community centers, 4 playgrounds, 2 swimming pools, several ballfields, an ice rink, Bladensburg Waterfront Park, and Lake Artemesia, all along the 15-mile-long Anacostia Tributary Trails System. Paint Branch Golf Course is a nine-hole, public golf facility that includes the Golden Bear golf training center. It is linked via the trail system with the Linson/Wells Recreational Complex, where a 50-meter swimming pool and an ice skating rink covered for seasonal use are available for residents and visitors. M-NCPPC also operates Fairland Regional Center in Beltsville, which includes an aquatics complex and an indoor ice skating rink. Some municipalities, such as Laurel, Greenbelt and College Park, also offer park and recreation facilities and programs.



*Hikers and bikers alike enjoy the trails at Lake Artemesia.*

Several M-NCPPC facilities along the trail system have been created on recycled land. The Colmar Manor Community Park area was a landfill and is now the site of ball fields and park areas. Lake Artemesia along the Paint Branch Trail is 38 acres in size and has abundant wildlife as well as opportunities for fishing, hiking, biking and horseback riding. The materials dredged to create the lake were used as a bed for the Metrorail Green Line.

In addition to the many recreational opportunities provided by M-NCPPC, The University of Maryland at College Park Recreation Center features gymnasiums, racquetball courts, indoor and outdoor pools, weight-training areas, and an indoor jogging track. Greenbelt Park, owned by the National Park Service, includes among its many features equestrian and nature trails, picnic areas and camping. The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) permits boating and fishing at its Rocky Gorge Reservoir located at the northern end of ATHA. A boat launching ramp and sanitary facilities are maintained by WSSC on the West Laurel side of the reservoir.