

## RECREATION and OPEN SPACE

### OBJECTIVES

The Sector Plan Area affords many opportunities to integrate quality open space with development areas. The following objectives will guide the creation of new or the enhancement of existing open spaces throughout the Sector Plan Area:

- Provide recreation and open space facilities throughout the Sector Plan Area to benefit all Sector Plan Area communities, residents, employees and visitors. Strive to meet the Prince George's County park and open space distribution goal based on the Prince George's County Land Preservation and Recreation Program — which recommends a level of service of 35 acres per 1,000 population. This ratio should be further broken down as follows:  $\pm 15$  acres/1,000 population in community and neighborhood parks;  $\pm 2$  acres/1,000 population in plazas or village greens; and the remaining balance in other parkland or natural open space.<sup>1</sup>
- Enhance sector planning communities and subareas with: (1) improved streetscapes; (2) a comprehensive park system connected by a regional trail network; and (3) pedestrian-scaled development focused toward public open spaces.
- Implement a comprehensive streetscape program with street trees and street furnishings provided on all streets, including local, collector and arterial street rights-of-way to create an enjoyable, equitable and compatible environment for pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists.
- Upgrade existing building facades to revitalize streetscapes and improve the overall Sector Plan Area vi-

sual image. Prominently locate public buildings and spaces to focus and strengthen community identity and the Sector Plan Area's built environment.

- Develop a park network with a mix of park types, evenly distributed throughout the Sector Plan Area, to serve residents, visitors and employees with active and passive recreation opportunities.
- Connect parks, open spaces, neighborhoods, commercial and employment areas, the transit station and other destinations within the Sector Plan Area with a sector-wide trail network.
- Create interpretive sites in periodic locations throughout the sector to highlight environmental and cultural resources found in the area. Connect these sites to the open space, recreation and trail networks.
- Implement a public art program in the Sector Plan Area to encourage community identity and enhance architecture and open spaces.

### EXISTING SITUATION AND ISSUES

Civic buildings, spaces and parks, once the centers of communities, provided opportunities for gathering and interaction. Unfortunately, new developments are not typically structured around open spaces. Community activities become dispersed and open spaces become less accessible to most citizens. Likewise, the only public space common to many communities today is the basic street, which, unfortunately, caters to the automobile with very little pedestrian interaction. Many possibilities exist for quality open space if they are only capitalized

<sup>1</sup> Based upon limited land resources in some planning areas, these ratios may or may not be achieved. In this Sector Plan Area, these ratios may be relaxed if agreement/consensus can be reached with other types of adequate recreational facilities.

upon. For example, the public street realm, school yards, woodlands, parks and community centers can be easily accented to exemplify a community's identity. This plan seeks to maintain existing open spaces and create new open spaces in central locations easily accessible to the community.

**Connectivity of Open Spaces**—Presently, little continuity and connectivity of open space and recreation areas exist within this Sector Plan Area. Communities are divided by major highways, arterial roads or other obstacles. Bike lanes, trails and sidewalks are disconnected, making it nearly impossible for any convenient alternative mode of transportation. Additionally, sidewalks have limited site furnishings and other elements that contribute to a pleasant, safe and interesting pedestrian environment. Today, North College Park is isolated from other Sector Plan Areas by Greenbelt Road and the CSX/Metrorail tracks with only one pedestrian Metro access point provided; Berwyn Heights is separated by a heavily traveled Greenbelt Road with limited bicycle and pedestrian facilities; Springhill Lake is isolated by the Capital Beltway, Cherrywood Lane and Greenbelt Road; furthermore, Springhill Lake does not have direct pedestrian access to the Greenbelt station. Also, the USDA/BARC office complex is physically separated from the Greenbelt station by the Beltway, and pedestrian connections are not provided.

**School Sites**—School sites typically provide adequate active open space areas for students and other community residents, however, in this Sector Plan Area, schools sites are small and are marginally convenient for pedestrian and bicycle access. These civic places in existing communities are sited in isolated locations, are not the focus of the communities and could be enhanced with better linkages. Greenbelt Middle School is separated from the communities it serves as it is situated on top of an extreme hillside fronting Greenbelt Road and adjacent to a busy commercial shopping center. The Al Huda School is located in the far northeastern corner of the North College Park community and is not prominently located in the community. Also, the North College Park Elementary School is located west of Rhode Island Avenue, requiring students to cross a major street daily. These existing schools cannot be relocated, but efforts to improve access and upgrade recreation facilities could occur to meet community open space and recreational needs. In new developments, opportunities to integrate parks or open spaces with schools and connect with pedestrian or bicycle routes are numerous. New school sites should be centrally located to the community they serve with adequate linkages for pedestrians and bicyclists.

**Streetscapes**—Streetscapes, another type of public open space in this Sector Plan Area, are critical to the success of the subarea developments and the initiatives to reduce single-occupant vehicle automobile traffic. Streetscapes are linear open

spaces which can contribute an overall attractive image to the roadways within and surrounding the Sector Plan Area and serve functional purposes of moving pedestrian traffic. Unfortunately, many of the existing Sector Plan Area streetscapes do not provide an ideal pedestrian environment with street trees and pedestrian lighting or attractive commercial appearance with animated storefronts along many roadways. Many opportunities exist to make these linear open spaces interesting activity zones with pedestrian interaction and in turn, make pedestrian travel a viable option to the use of automobiles for reaching destinations within the Sector Plan Area. Major road corridors, such as Greenbelt Road and Cherrywood Lane, although different in purpose and number of vehicle trips, do not prioritize pedestrian movement. Sidewalks are not provided along the north side of Greenbelt Road or the west side of Cherrywood Lane. Sidewalks are provided on the south side of Greenbelt Road; however, sporadic strip development and multiple curb cuts prioritize automobiles and create an unpleasant pedestrian environment. Other roadways such as Springhill Lane and Breezewood Drive are more pleasant to walk along because of the mature street trees and convenient paths to building entrances; however, because of the parking lot location, pedestrians must frequently walk adjacent to and cross through parking lots.

**Existing Parks**—The 1989 *Approved Langley Park, College Park, Greenbelt Master Plan* identified the shortage of local park acreage needed to service the projected population growth. These deficiencies hold true today. Developed areas of the sector provide few opportunities for acquiring additional parkland to meet optimal park acreage standards for open space and active recreational activities. Consequently, alternative facilities, compared to the traditional recreation facilities such as ballfields, should be sought to compensate for the shortage of available open space. As mentioned above, opportunities to connect these park areas should also be sought to provide convenient access for most residents without the dependence of their automobile.

Existing parks in the Sector Plan Area include: Hollywood Community Park, DuVall Field and the Springhill Lake Neighborhood Park and Recreation Center. Hollywood Community Park is owned and maintained by M-NCPPC and provides a picnic area with a shelter, tennis courts, a basketball court, play equipment, one lighted softball field, a softball/soccer field combination and parking within its 22.54 acres. The City of College Park owns and maintains DuVall Field, Davis Field Tot Lot and Muskogee Tot Lot. DuVall Field is approximately seven acres and provides play equipment and one baseball field, one soccer/baseball field overlay, one football/baseball overlay, two basketball courts and a concession stand with restrooms. The two tot lots are less than one acre each and provide play equipment. The City of Greenbelt



*Hollywood Community Park.*



*DuVall Field.*



*Springhill Lake Community Center.*

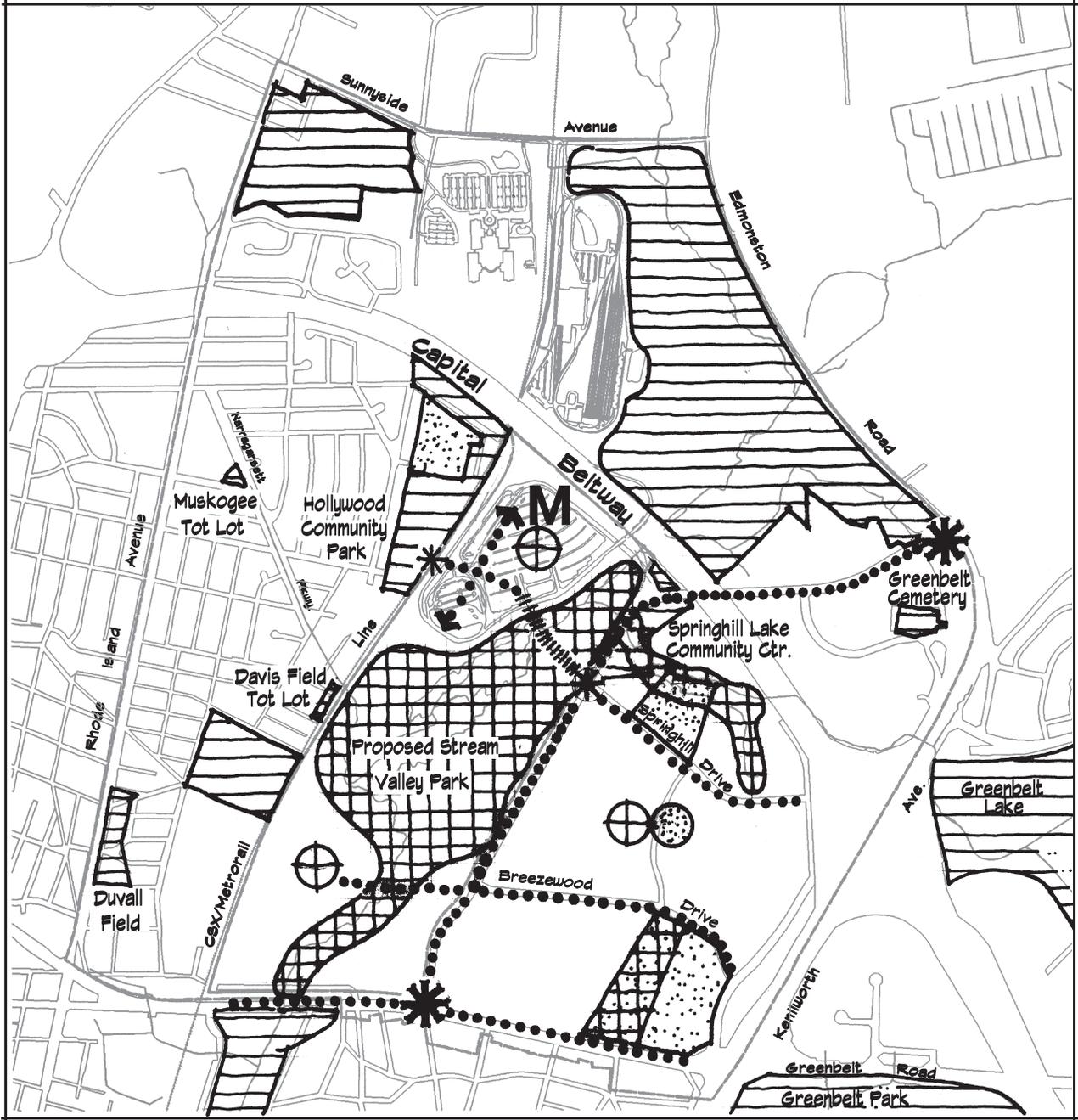
owns and maintains the Springhill Lake Community Center on 11 acres of land. This facility provides a gymnasium, game room, meeting rooms and a small kitchen. This center accommodates structured classes and activities and also has a

drop-in policy, where both residents and nonresidents may use the recreation facilities. (See Map 17.)

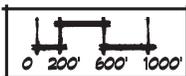
Other recreational open space opportunities do exist within the region, however, most are not easily accessible, other than by car, to the sector plan communities. Regional park and recreational facilities within a mile of the Sector Plan Area include the Greenbelt Park, managed by the National Park Service, and the Indian Creek and Paint Branch Stream Valley Parks owned by M-NCPPC. Greenbelt Park is 960 acres in size and provides a campground, trails and picnic areas. The stream valley parks are part of the 1,900-acre Anacostia Tributaries Stream Valley System with 15 miles of multiuse trails connecting an assortment of park, recreational, historical and cultural resources inside the Capital Beltway from Bladensburg to College Park.

Lake Artemesia is south of the Sector Plan Area and provides fishing, trails and picnic facilities; however, this park has limited pedestrian access for residents north of Greenbelt Road. Bicyclists typically access Lake Artemesia from industrial areas along Branchville Road and under Greenbelt Road to reach 55th Avenue in Berwyn Heights; some cross Greenbelt Road and pick up the Indian Creek Trail at 57th Avenue to continue to Lake Artemesia along the Indian Creek Stream Valley Park. The City of Greenbelt affords its residents many open space areas, particularly in Historic Greenbelt, and is attempting to connect them with trails or bike lanes along roadways. Unfortunately, potential park users from the Sector Plan Area must cross the Capital Beltway and Kenilworth Avenue to access these facilities. For example, Greenbelt Park requires users to cross major arterial roadways, such as Greenbelt Road and Kenilworth Avenue, without the luxury of crosswalks, bike lanes or sidewalks.

**Open Space Opportunities**—Even though the largest block of undeveloped land in the Sector Plan Area is centrally located near the Greenbelt station and could potentially serve many residents' and visitors' recreational needs, it is currently privately owned and therefore inaccessible to the community. This natural area, directly east and south of the Greenbelt station, has many environmentally sensitive features such as wetlands, open waters, and woodlands which will likely restrict its availability for development. However, these features are compatible and could be incorporated with passive recreation uses as an amenity to any development proposed adjacent to the station in the North Core Area. M-NCPPC considers the acquisition of stream valley parks, such as Indian Creek, a top priority. Through purchase or mandatory dedication of parkland by developers during residential and commercial development, the Commission will attempt to acquire parkland in the most economically reasonable manner. The



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|--|---|--|-------------------------------|
|  | Existing Park or Open Space   |  | Proposed Pedestrian Promenade |
|  | Proposed Park or Open Space   |  | Key Streetscape               |
|  | Proposed Park and/or Urban Open Space<br>(Plaza, Village Green, Park)<br>(Size, Location and Type to be determined) |  | Gateways                      |
|  | Existing School   |  | Focal Points                  |
|  | Proposed School<br>(Location and Size to be determined)   |  |                               |
|  | Proposed Park or Park/ School Site  |  |                               |



# Open Space Network

acquisition of the Environmental Envelope in the Core Area will extend the Indian Creek Stream Valley Trail to the north.

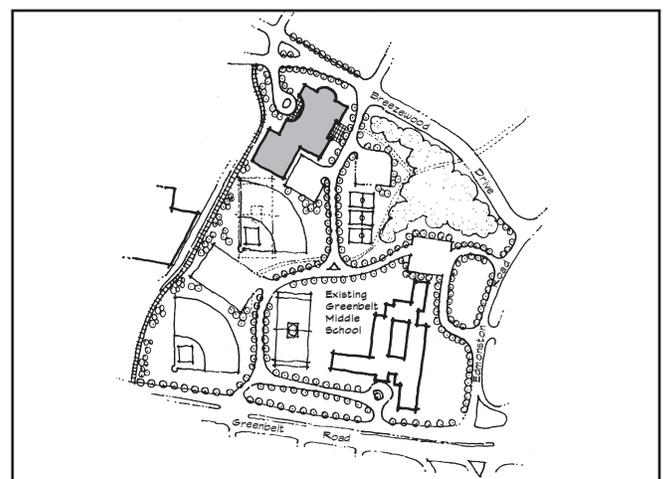
Presently, the Greenbelt Middle School shares its property with a school bus storage and parking lot. This site is another opportunity to reclaim open space for recreation and/or school uses, particularly if the Springhill Lake area were to be redeveloped.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Define communities, and their respective activity centers, with public open spaces such as streets, commercial centers and locally accessible parks, plazas, village squares.
- Improve the overall sector plan environment with a “green” open space network to provide better air and water quality and improve the community’s sense of satisfaction and ownership through regularly provided and well-maintained open spaces.
- Integrate civic spaces with daily activities.
- Integrate public buildings with open spaces and afford these buildings prominent locations for convenience, identity and quality. Restore the significance and physical function of public spaces within the Sector Plan Area.
- Organize a public art program to introduce public art into the Sector Plan landscape, including functional infrastructure elements, architecture and open spaces.
- Incorporate landscaped parks, greens and plazas, recreation facilities, tree-lined streets and sidewalks into new and existing developments to enhance the open space of the Sector Plan Area.
- Coordinate and provide sector-wide open space amenities linked to a regional trail and open space network. (See Map 17.)
- Group public parks in the Sector Plan Area into four categories: (1) village greens and plazas; (2) neighborhood parks; (3) community parks; and (4) a stream valley park — proposed within the Core Area’s Environmental Envelope, to meet the recreational needs of the Sector Plan Area and provide an efficient distribution of open spaces.
- Provide neighborhood recreation within walking distance of most residents and distribute park acreage to provide adequate facilities throughout the Sector Plan Area.
- Explore local, State, Federal, nonprofit and private partnerships to create and maintain the recreation and open space resources recommended by this plan.

## Park/Open Space Distribution and Location

- In the Sector Plan Area, parks and/or open spaces shall be planned and implemented in new developments, such as the Core Area and Springhill Lake, to avoid overuse of existing parks/open spaces, and meet the needs of new residents, visitors and employees.
- Existing communities should evaluate vacant land for potential park use to facilitate adequate recreation coverage for all residents.
- Village green and plaza open spaces should be provided within all transit-oriented mixed-use centers and neighborhood centers. This specifically includes the Core Area and the Springhill Lake community.
- Neighborhood parks should be located throughout the communities to allow walking distance of one-third to one-quarter-mile from most residences to the park facilities. A minimum of 60 percent of the neighborhood residential population should be within this walking distance radius, so that most residents are not required to cross an arterial roadway to access a neighborhood park. When possible, neighborhood parks should be adjacent to school sites and connect with the sector-wide trail and greenway network.
- Community parks are considered active recreation facilities and should be located within biking or short driving distance from the community. These facilities should be linked by the open space or trail network. Within the Sector Plan Area, two sites are feasible for community park locations: (1) the bus depot lot adjacent to the Greenbelt Middle School; and (2) an area in the South Core Area.



*Illustrative scheme for the proposed park/school facility on the existing school bus lot.*

## Park Program

- Village greens and plazas are localized open space areas that provide a place to focus civic activity at the center of town or neighborhood. These open spaces, generally one-quarter- to one-acre in size, should be used for public gathering opportunities such as multipurpose lawn areas/fields, small picnic facilities, amphitheaters, elevated stages and/or gazebos, larger hardscape areas and seating.
- Neighborhood parks provide small activity and recreation centers, immediately accessible to residents, that meet basic community needs. These park facilities, generally 1 to 20 acres in size, should include multipurpose lawn areas/fields, play equipment, small court game areas, community gardens, picnic facilities, seating and informal natural areas.
- Community parks, while serving a larger population, provide a greater range of recreation facilities. These park facilities, generally larger than 20 acres<sup>2</sup>, should comprise multiple playing fields, multiple tennis and basketball courts, group picnic areas, tot-lots, swimming pools, off-street parking and a community center with facilities such as a gym/weight room, meeting space with kitchen and dance floor. Where possible, paving large overflow parking lots with impervious material should be avoided. Instead, pervious materials should be used to increase green open space and control runoff throughout an entire site instead of in concentrated channels or swales. Open natural swales are encouraged.
- The stream valley park functions as a large greenway that serves local and regional communities with passive recreation facilities, such as multiuse trails, interpretive nature trails, peripheral picnic areas, and environmental and cultural interpretive observation overlooks. The passive recreation area should be considered a regional destination, accessible from the Greenbelt station, and should be coordinated with any development that occurs in the Core Area. This central greenway in the Core Area should serve as a critical link in the Indian Creek Watershed and the larger Anacostia Watershed open space system. See the Trails guidelines in the Transportation and Circulation chapter.
- The bus lot, adjacent to the Greenbelt Middle School, is approximately 18 acres and should be reserved for park/school or park facilities. Recreation facilities should include ballfields (soccer, baseball, softball, football and lacrosse) and parking. Lighting some of the ballfields should be considered.
- An interpretive program should be organized throughout the Sector Plan Area to highlight environmental and cultural resources, particularly those in the Core Area, and could be implemented with plant identification labels, kiosks, interpretive signs, trail markers or an interpretive center.
- Special taxing districts should be formed for the maintenance of the recreation and open space programs. M-NCPPC should undertake park maintenance for the stream valley park.
- Municipalities should continue to maintain municipal parks.
- Park and recreation facilities for the redeveloped areas of the Core Area and Springhill Lake should include:
  1. The acquisition and development of passive recreation activities in the Environmental Envelope as an extension of the Indian Creek Stream Valley Park owned and operated by M-NCPPC or some other public entity.
  2. Neighborhood parks and recreational facilities, either owned and maintained publicly or privately, should provide ballfields (softball, baseball, soccer, football



*Interpretive sites, like this one along Schoolhouse Pond in Upper Marlboro, provide places for pedestrians to see and learn about environmental or cultural features in the landscape. Interpretive sites should be considered along the proposed Indian Creek Stream Valley Trail.*

<sup>2</sup> Size of park facilities may be smaller due to the lack of land in developed areas of Prince George's County for parkland. In these instances, recreational facilities should be enhanced to compensate for smaller sites.



*Open spaces, such as parks, are sited in prominent locations to provide convenient access for all residents and are easily connected by a trail and sidewalk system.*

or lacrosse), tennis courts, basketball courts, play equipment for preschool and school-age children, picnic areas, swimming pools, fitness equipment, gymnasiums and/or meeting space.

3. During the development review process for the Core Area and Springhill Lake, the type, location and ownership of park and recreational facilities should be negotiated with the developer. The facilities may be privately or publicly funded and operated for public use and enjoyment.

### Park Design

- Parks should be sited and designed: (1) in prominent and convenient locations for all residents; and (2) to conserve valuable and sensitive natural features including wetlands, woodlands, streams and other wildlife habitat areas.
- Parks should be fronted by a mix of streets and buildings, except when they are bordered by woodlands, streams, wetlands or other significant open space features, and should be sited so they provide multiple observation places for residents, business owners and the police.
- Parks should be located to end vistas from surrounding streets. These vistas should not include views into park maintenance areas.
- Park paths should be directly connected to sidewalks, trails and nearby commercial areas. Paths should not be blocked with fences or gates, although bollards may be necessary to restrict unauthorized vehicles.
- Generally, park areas should include sufficient tree cover to provide shaded areas for summer use and sunlight-ex-

posed areas for winter use to maintain comfortable year-round use. Existing vegetation should be preserved, where possible.

- All parks should incorporate design elements that foster safety for all users. Comprehensive planning for landscape plantings, lighting, signs and public telephone systems are encouraged.
- All park facilities and recreational equipment shall comply with the Prince George's County Department of Parks and Recreation Park and Recreation Facilities Guidelines. In addition, all facilities shall comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) and all play equipment must comply with ADAAG and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission guidelines.

### Streetscape Areas

- The existing commercial street realm should be improved through facade renovations and the implementation of streetscape programs to encourage pedestrian activity in the Sector Plan Area.
- Street tree programs should be maintained or implemented in all communities and facade improvements should be implemented along appropriate streets.
- Site furnishings, such as benches, signs, trash receptacles and bike racks, shall be provided along street sidewalks to create a more pleasant pedestrian-friendly environment.
- The use of facade elements, such as awnings, canopies and overhangs, should be used to provide shelter for pedestrians and create an interesting and diverse street edge.
- Pedestrian lighting should be installed along all streets to improve safety.
- Sidewalks should be constructed along street rights-of-way. Public rights-of-way, including median areas, should be planted with street trees, shrubs, perennials, groundcover and/or grass.

See each Subarea Element, Design Standards and Guidelines chapter for additional guidelines related to streetscape areas.

### Bike Lanes and Multiuse Trails

- Bike lanes and trails should be connected to the recreation and open space network. (See Maps 7 and 8.)

See the Transportation and Circulation and each Subarea Design Policies and Guidelines chapter for additional bike lane and trail recommendations.

### Public Art Program

- Public art is important to the open space network because it can enhance the visual image of the Sector Plan Area. Public art should be used in public open spaces such as in plazas, parks and along sidewalks, and also be visible from open spaces such as building or parking facades and overpasses.
- Public art should be a component of new development projects starting with the planning phases to encourage continuity and an integrated overall design theme.
- A public art committee should be formed in the Sector Plan Area to include community members, municipal representatives, planners, developers, engineers, architects and, most importantly, an experienced public art consultant to collaborate and select ideas, themes, styles, artists, locations, placement and elements to ensure quality and compatible art pieces in the Sector Plan Area rather than unidentifiable or unsuitable art. The public art committee should have the responsibility of final determination of public art and its appropriateness for a development project.
- The introduction of public art into the Sector Plan Area should incorporate community participation and showcase local artists. The public art program should consider highlighting the environmental and cultural qualities of the Sector Plan Area.
- All types of site elements, including functional elements, should be considered for public art to ensure an integrated site design and add style to the development rather than merely placing a public art piece in an open space. These elements could include transit stations, pedestrian and vehicular bridges, architectural facades, sidewalks, site furnishings, transit vehicles, bus shelters, parking garages, plazas, parks and signs.
- The Sector Plan Area gateways and focal points should incorporate public art to attract visitors to the area and express the upscale image and community participation this Plan seeks to promote.
- Public art in new developments should generally range from one-half to two percent of the total construction costs of the development project.



*Public art.*

- The public art committee should develop a detailed budget for acquiring art and/or maintaining art in the Sector Plan Area.

### Schools

- Existing walkways and trails should be properly maintained and repaired and new pedestrian walkways and trails should be constructed to provide better access to existing schools.
- New school sites should be sited in central locations, accessible to a wider population in the community and have access from multiple points for pedestrians and bicyclists.