

**DORCHESTER COUNTY**  
**RECREATION AND PARK**  
**PROGRAM**  
**FY 2018**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The FY2018 plan for Dorchester County's Program Open Space illustrates our desire and commitment to several goals outlined in the 2012 LPPRP, while taking into consideration important guidelines for the County's growth, continued advancement toward acquisition, and development projects in the best interest of our citizens.

While led by the Department of Recreation and Parks, and joined by the Recreation and Park Advisory Board, the Tourism Department, and Council's staff, the FY2018 plan was developed with these guidelines in mind:

- the 2012 Land Preservation Park and Recreation Plan (LPPRP);
- the Maryland Planning Act of 1992;
- input from community stakeholders;
- and the County Comprehensive Plan.

These guidelines helped determine the best outcome with the funding available; and we are positive the new opportunities we have identified are realistic, timely and sustainable. These opportunities also build upon the beginning of a very successful 2017. After several years, thousands of man hours, and much collaboration, Dorchester County hosted the grand opening of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park. This opening garnered the attention of nearly 100 news outlets both across the nation, and internationally. The publicity has been great, and we plan to leverage our heritage tourism as a platform to build upon more recreation programs for locals and tourists.

With broader goals, and the collaborative efforts of Tourism, Recreation & Parks, Planning & Zoning, and the Recreation and Park Advisory Board, the County has developed short-term goals for FY2018 that align with realistic budgetary constraints, while leveraging potential partnerships for more growth in the future.

Dorchester County is known as the heart of the Chesapeake because of the geographic shape of the County, but we in the County staff choose to believe it is because we truly love the potential our beautiful County has to offer citizens, regional visitors, sports enthusiasts, and history buffs.

Our FY2018 Program Open Space is affirmation that we are committed to providing the best open space in conjunction with recreational opportunities to take advantage of – while protecting – our natural resources. As John Muir said, “Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul alike.” We in Dorchester County believe this to be true, and have developed a plan to help provide our citizens with opportunities to engage in outdoor recreation and activities.

## **Summary of FY2017 Annual Plan**

Previously, the FY2017 plan allowed for the completion of Phases 1, 2, & 3 of the Busick Tennis Court Surface Renovation. This work is currently being done, and the County is excited at the prospect of the reputation as a regional destination for tennis tournaments; and due to the popularity of Pickle Ball, lines for that sport have been applied to several courts; providing support and encouragement of the growing interest in that recreational sport.

## **ACQUISITION PLANS**

The current acquisition budget provided by the Department of Natural Resources is \$64,769.

This prohibits the County from acquiring land identified for Program Open Space, but we are continually looking for opportunities to find funding sources from the general fund, as well as both public and private sources, to move forward on acquisition projects to expand our urban spaces, improved greenways, water access, and such.

One example of a potential acquisition site is a parcel along Cedar Street in Cambridge which is parallel to an abandoned rail line which we have plans to convert to a bike/pedestrian trail (Map C). The acquisition of this parcel would provide vehicular access to Cannery Park and would allow easy access for park users to Cambridge Creek.

## **DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS**

We are excited to move beyond the last few years of concentrating – rightfully so – on tennis courts. The work on the last of the Busick Tennis Courts in Cambridge is currently being done, and we are truly looking forward to leading the way in our region as the tennis tournament destination on the Eastern Shore.

With the ‘big lift’ of that project behind us, we are looking forward to smaller, more diverse projects, both in location, as well as use.

### **Lighting of the Hurlock Softball Field**

This is an exciting prospect for North Dorchester. Providing a safe, well-lit, softball field for continued use into the evening is a big win for Hurlock, and specifically, those that play Softball. This project has been discussed for years, and the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board determined this to be their number one priority.

At the approximate cost of \$110,500 it is another large ticket item, but still allows flexibility with the remaining development budget.

(Map A)



## Sailwinds Park Walking Path Design

Dorchester County's Welcome Center in the Sailwinds Park area is first rate. It is an inviting location for children to stretch their legs while on family road trips; as well as a fantastic park asset used regularly by local County residents. Adding a vibrant waterfront walking path is the first step in building a recreation area that could hold a candle to any waterfront open space community in the country.

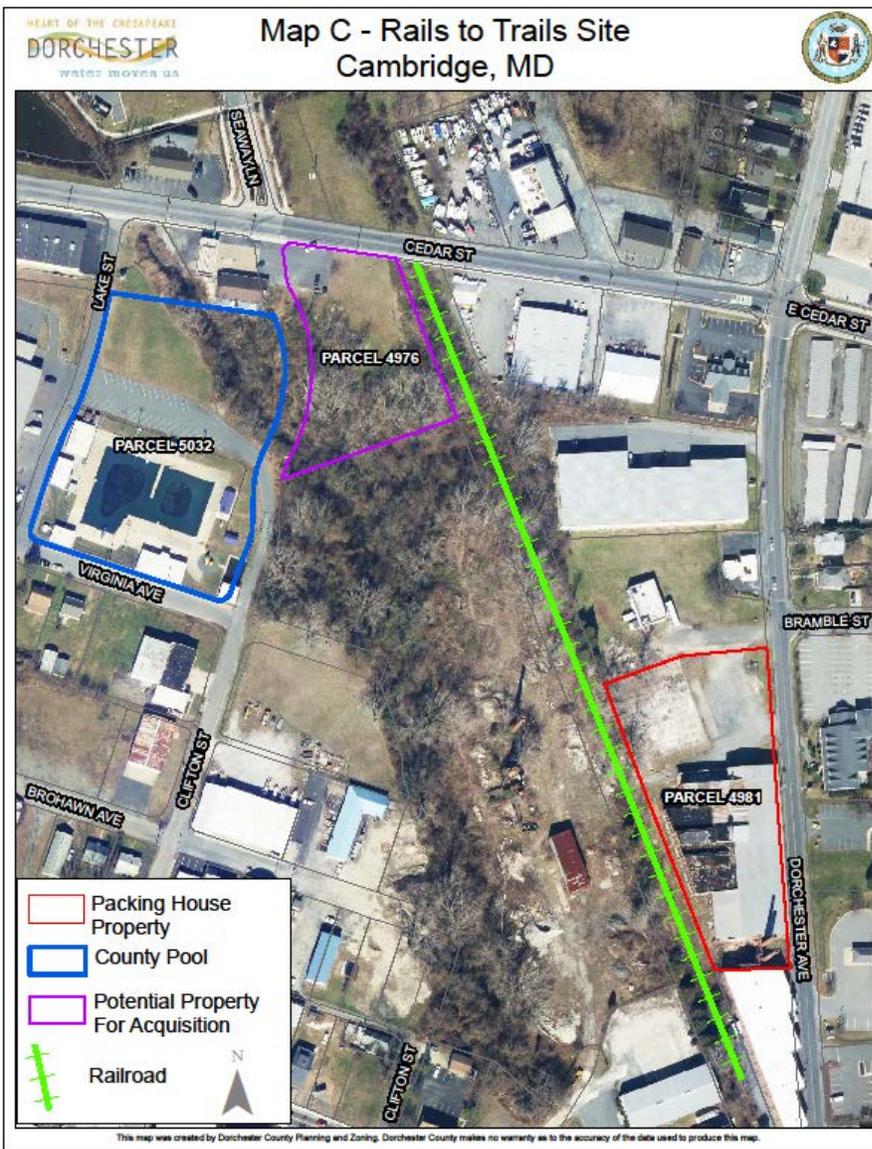
Capitalizing on the Choptank River waterfront for a walking path, the County plans to collaborate with the SHA for funding and planning. Expanding our Open Space goals with new ideas, and potential funding partners, allows the County to concentrate on longer term projects with sustainable funding structures. The 2017 Land Preservation Park and Recreation Plan outlines a more complete picture of the future goals for Sailwinds Park, while this plan highlights a smaller, first step to developing that area. (Map B)



## Rails to Trails

We have the wonderfully historic Phillips Packing Co. as part of a legendary business that was thriving decades ago. Due to a confluence of many factors, that thriving economic regional powerhouse has declined, yet the packing house building remains. Over many years, we have worked with organizations to develop ideas to utilize the space. As a part of that, we would like to get started on the Rails to Trails design to create a walking path within an urban location. Next steps would be the acquisition of land as described above in the “acquisition” section to create a community space for myriad recreational activities. This is realistic – especially with collaboration with other private and non-profit partners - and the Rails to Trails planning is just the start.

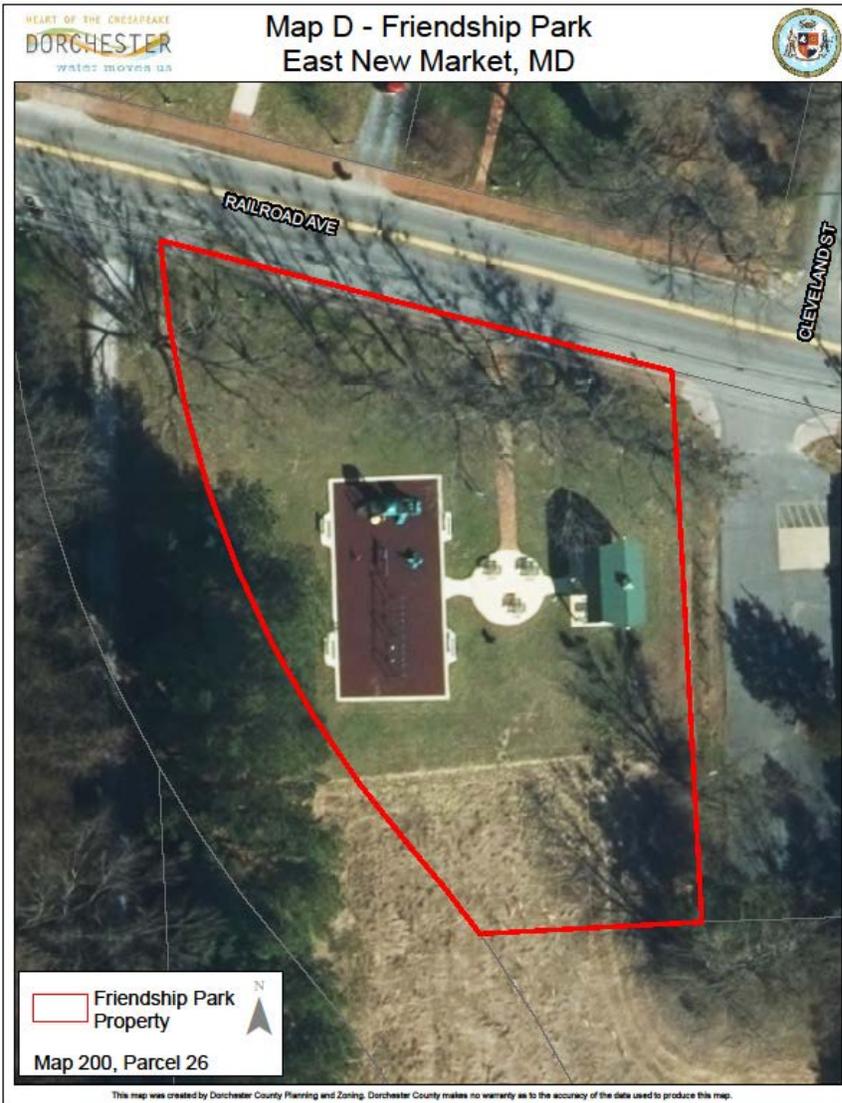
(Map C)



## Friendship Park in East New Market

Friendship Park provides a great space for the local East New Market community. Improvements over the years have included the installation of a playground, the addition of a walking path with benches and a pavilion. Our plan is to add a circuit training course for those in the area that like to get out and exercise. We strongly believe that not all plans and programs should be geared toward organized sports. Our goal is to provide more open space in general; and to balance that space with the demands from our citizens: picnic tables, paths, green space, conservation, etc. This is a start.

(Map D)



## Conclusion

Dorchester County is very excited about the prospect of these projects – partly because they are realistic and incorporate input from many people; and partly because they are the best fit for what is needed in our communities. (Map Attached)

Sustainable planning for both the acquisition and development of Program Open Space is the goal of the FY2018 Annual Plan and beyond. We have encouraged, and will continue to encourage, community input to build upon great assets that already exist; while applying smart growth to our selections in the future. Additionally, we will continue to build upon capabilities of our staff, in conjunction with public and private partnerships, to move Dorchester forward.

<b>Park</b>	<b>Development Plan</b>	<b>Budget (Proposed)</b>	<b>County (10%)</b>	<b>P.O.S. (90%)</b>
Sailwinds Park - Cambridge	Design Plan for Walking Path	\$50,000	\$5,000	\$45,000
Friendship Park – East New Market	Circuit Training Equipment	\$4,500	\$450	\$4,050
Hurlock Softball Field	Lighting for (1) field	\$110,500	\$11,050	\$99,450
Cannery Park – Cambridge	Design Plan for “Rails to Trails”	\$25,000	\$2,500	\$22,500
		<b>\$190,000</b>	<b>\$19,000</b>	<b>\$171,000</b>