

Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks
Reimagine Recreation and Parks
Frequently Asked Questions

After a series of Open House and Community Listening Sessions, we compiled this document to address many of the community's most frequently asked questions about Department and the Reimagine initiative.

Baltimore County Recreation and Parks

Why change?

The Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks (the Department) provides programs and places that celebrate and build community through innovative, sustainable, and inclusive recreation opportunities, partnerships and facilities. To perform that mission, we are modernizing our delivery of programs, providing equitable opportunities to all communities, and streamlining services. After a series of Open House and Community Listening Sessions, extensive consultation with the Nature and Recreation Councils, we compiled this document to address many of the community's most frequently asked questions about our changes.

The Department is thankful to the input and guidance of the stakeholder groups, the Board of Recreation and Parks (the Board), our staff, and other County officials as we navigate needed changes and address new issues as they arise, with a transparent and equitable approach.

How will the Department communicate with residents?

The Department is hosting twice each year a series of Open House and Community Listening Sessions to hear feedback including concerns. Department leadership also holds regular meetings with stakeholder groups and the Board of Recreation and Parks (the Board). Residents are invited to take part in program surveys, email requests and attend local community meetings with Department representatives. Information on upcoming sessions is posted to [the Department's website](#) as soon as it is available.

How will the Department fund new positions?

The Department is growing its employee headcount to provide high-quality recreation programs, excellent customer service to organizations and individuals using the facilities, and appropriate stewardship to natural resources. The funding comes from a variety of sources, including fees from facility rentals, permits, and programs. The Baltimore County Council has also appropriated General Fund monies for additional staff positions.

Information on [working or volunteering](#) with the Department is available on our website.

How has accreditation affected the Department?

The National Recreation and Park Association's Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) is considered the gold standard for recreation and park management. The Department has pursued this mark of excellence while incorporating feedback from the public, a consultant review, a legal review, and an



internal review. The results are streamlined internal procedures responsive to the community's needs, regular review of our operations, consistency with legal requirements, and informed by best practices.

Is there a master plan document accessible to the public?

Yes. The Department's [Land Preservation Parks and Recreation Plan \(LPPRP\)](#) and [Strategic Plan](#) are both available on the Department's website.

Will the Department add more open gym opportunities for residents?

Yes. In addition to scheduling more open gym time at more than 20 facilities, the Department is building new Recreation Activity Centers and making facility reservations more transparent. The public may reserve facility time on our [CivicRec](#) online tool.

How will the Department manage maintenance projects?

A dedicated in-house maintenance team will soon begin working on recreation and park projects. The Property Management Division of the Baltimore County Office of Budget and Finance will assist with grass cutting in high-use areas. Both agencies will continue to work together to improve services countywide.

How can I provide feedback to the department about these changes?

The Department welcomes feedback to recparks@baltimorecountymd.gov In addition, Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks holds open house meetings twice a year. Please check our website for information on the next meetings. baltimorecountymd.gov/departments/recreation

Recreation and Nature Councils

What is a Recreation or Nature Council?

Recreation and Nature Councils are 501(c)(3) non-profit volunteer organizations that are certified by the Board. They are separate entities outside and operate independently of Baltimore County government and the Department. There are 44 Nature and Recreation Councils in Baltimore County, and each is responsible for its own finances, governance, and hiring. Councils hold meetings that are open to the public.

Are Recreation and Nature Councils part of Baltimore County Recreation and Parks Department?

No. Recreation and Nature Councils are separate entities outside of Baltimore County Recreation and Parks Department.

Who manages Recreation and Nature Councils?

Recreation and Nature Councils are run by volunteers and fall under the guidance of the Board of Recreation and Parks. The Board is a panel of appointed volunteers who serve as an advisory group to the Department. The Department is in the process of developing Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with each Recreation and Nature Council to guide the relationship.



Did the Department engage with Councils on these changes?

Yes, extensively. Several Councils were consulted as part of the report drafting process. All Council Presidents received an invitation to two input sessions in September 2023. The County has held at least ten meetings with Councils to discuss these meetings since December 2023. Additionally, the Department held four Open House Listening Sessions in the spring of 2024 related to discussion on these updates.

The County is continuing robust engagement with Recreation and Nature Councils, including developing Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with each Council, and is discussing specific concerns.

How will these changes affect the financial resources of Recreation and Nature Councils?

Councils will continue to generate revenue from programs that they organize, staff, and run.

Each Council is responsible for its own governance and funds. The Department is not involved in setting Council program registration fees nor determining how Councils spend their revenues.

Further information on [the Department's budget](#) – which is separate from the Councils – is available through the Baltimore County Office of Budget and Finance.

What happens to equipment owned by Recreation and Nature Councils?

Council-owned equipment will continue to belong to the Council.

How will recent changes affect employees that work for Recreation and Nature Councils?

Both the Department and Councils offer programs to the public. Department-run programs will be staffed by Department employees. Council-run programs will be run by Council employees, independent contractors or volunteers.

Why is the Department requiring Rec Councils to purchase insurance policies for volunteers?

In alignment with best practices, the Department will be requiring Councils to procure their own organizational insurance in order to provide increased liability protection. This is in addition to the County's current coverage. Individual volunteers will still be covered by the County's policy and there is no change for the volunteers involved directly in the programs. Additionally, the Department has created a transitional grant opportunity for Councils to offset this cost.

I am a volunteer coach for my child's team. Am I covered under the County's insurance?

In some cases, yes. Council volunteers acting directly in their volunteer capacity are treated the same as County employees for liability and insurance coverage.

Permits and CivicRec



What is CivicRec?

[CivicRec](#) is the Department's web-based, recreation management platform for reserving facilities, purchasing permits, and registering for Department programs. It features a comprehensive catalog of Department-run and Council-run programs. Council-run programs include a link to the Council's website for registration.

Do Reimagine changes impact the priority list for Recreation and Nature Councils?

Following robust feedback from Recreation and Nature Councils, other stakeholders, and the public, the Department will maintain the current Permit Process and Priority Access Policy. Recreation and Nature Council programs will continue to have priority access to Department facilities.

Will the permit order be affected if a neighboring Council wants to travel to a different facility?

No. The permitting priority policy will remain the same.

How will the Department handle requests for facility use from other community organizations and groups?

The Department will establish priority windows in the CivicRec system for specific groups to allow appropriate access. After that window, facilities will become available to other groups and the public.

What if there is a double-booking or a dispute during our permitted court times?

CivicRec will not allow two reservations for the same facility at the same time. In the event of a dispute, please see the on-site Department staff or contact your local recreation office.

Do neighborhood associations need a permit to have events at parks?

Yes, a permit is required to guarantee use of a facility.

If there is a cancellation, when does a park or site become available online?

Facilities become available in CivicRec as soon as the cancellation is processed.

Have these changes made adult sports less of a priority in Baltimore County?

No. The Department's first focus is on youth activities, but facility access for adult programs is on the Department's priority list.

Programs

What is the difference between Rec Leagues and Club/Travel leagues?

Recreational-Level teams or programs are open to all participants of the prescribed age-group. There is no secondary selection process based on skill, ability, or athletic prowess. Anyone that registers gets to play and participate.



Travel/Club teams or programs are formed exclusively of participants who are selected after passing some level of ability-based screening process such as a tryout. This does not include programs that hold evaluations so that they can attempt to evenly distribute talent throughout all competing teams within a rec program. In addition, Travel/Club teams typically have a higher program cost.

Will the Department increase accessibility to therapeutic recreation programs for multi-capable individuals?

The Department is working to increase the therapeutic recreation programs. These efforts include restructuring the Therapeutic Recreation team, identifying and establishing strong community partnerships, and providing training and development opportunities for Department staff. Residents are encouraged to contact the Department at tr-rp@baltimorecountymd.gov with suggestions and ideas.

Is there a written therapeutic recreation plan accessible to the public?

Not at this time. As part of the CAPRA process, the Department has begun ADA-accessibility inspections of existing facilities aimed at improving access.

If I want to play lacrosse or soccer year-round, can I?

Yes. As part of Reimagine Recreation and Parks, the Department focused on increasing access to all residents. Facility access will continue to be based on established priority permitting guidelines.

Fees

How are fees set and used?

Councils previously set, collected and directed all fees. The Department of Recreation and Parks did not previously receive any funds collected by Recreation or Nature Councils and did not receive any portion of the funds the Councils collect for maintenance and operations of public facilities.

Now, the Department will collect fees for Department-run programs. Fees were determined with review of other local jurisdictions and on collaborative discussion with stakeholder groups. Following completion of robust stakeholder engagement, the Department has released the [Fiscal Year 2025 fee schedule](#). Additionally, fees for each program and permit are listed in CivicRec.

Council led programs and events that have an associated fee are set, collected and directed solely by each Council.

What are the fees for rec and travel/club leagues?

There are no changes for in-house programs for recreation councils.

To provide field and facility maintenance, equipment, operational overhead and quality customer service with field and facility staffing to support on site needs, the Department will collect a nominal facility usage fee from Councils beginning in January 2025 for club and travel leagues.

Will nonprofit groups receive a discount?



Yes. The fee structure includes a discount for non-profit groups.

Resources for multi-lingual residents

How does the Department engage and connect with multilingual residents?

The Department is hiring two bilingual staff members, as well as offering culturally appropriate programs and resources for all residents. Translation of CivicRec listings is available through the web browser's translation feature. The Department's efforts to develop and improve relationships with New American residents includes work with the Baltimore County Office of Immigrant Affairs. In addition to the hiring of bilingual staff members, Baltimore County also offers free language training for staff who are interested in participating.

Will the Department update signage for multilingual residents?

Yes. The Department has begun adding bilingual signs to parks throughout the County and will continue to build on this progress to better serve residents.

Environmental Impacts

Does the Department consider environmental concerns when designing parks?

The Department considers environmental concerns and impacts in every project. As part of each project, the design and plan for the park is developed with community input, the results of environmental reviews, and consultation with other agencies.

Are environmental sustainability and the protection of natural resources a part of the Department's Mission and Vision Statements?

The Department's Mission and Vision Statements both identify sustainability as core pillars, and Goal 6 of our [Strategic Plan](#) focuses on sustainability, natural resource management and conservation.

How will the Department work to manage forest health in large wooded properties and increase tree canopy in smaller parks and recreation fields?

The Department is putting renewed effort into stewarding natural resources. We have begun conversations with both the Maryland Department of the Environment and the Baltimore County Office of Environmental Protection and Sustainability about ways to work together in order to improve the health of our parks and open spaces. The Department plans to hire a natural resource specialist in the coming year to further advance these efforts.

Turner Station

What are the Department's plans for the parks in Turner Station?

The Department's goal is to improve overall customer service in all parks, including increased staffing and a focus on park improvements. This work is included as an objective of increased Fiscal Year 2025 funding.



How much money is allocated to Turner Station Parks?

Replacement of the pier and additional site improvements at Fleming Park are currently in the design phase. Costs and a budget for the projects have not yet been determined.

Are there plans to merge Turner Station Recreation and Nature Council with a neighboring Council?

No. Each Recreation and Nature Council in Baltimore County is a separate entity. There is no Department plan to merge Turner Station Council with any neighboring Council or community.