



Foundation Document Overview

Greenbelt Park

Maryland



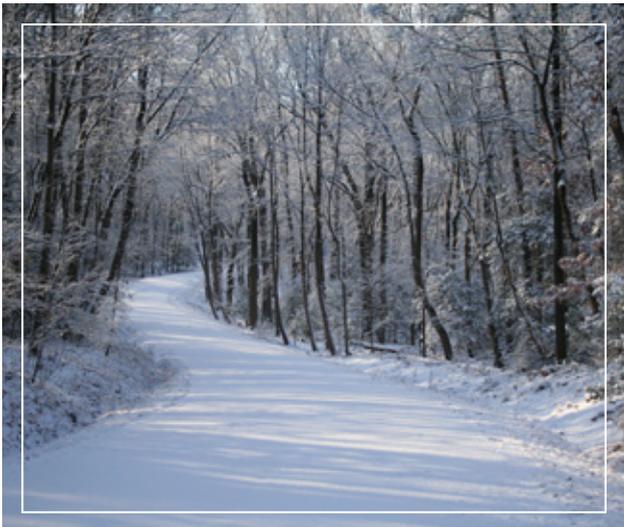
Contact Information

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Purpose



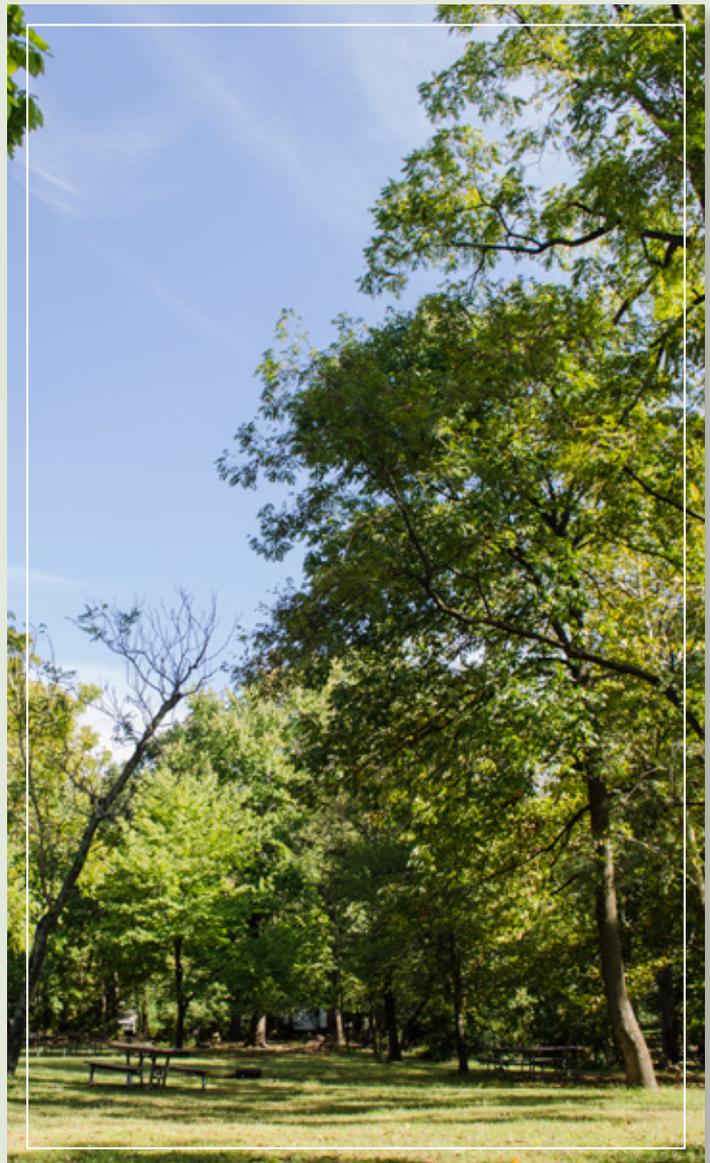
Situated along the scenic and historic Baltimore-Washington Parkway, GREENBELT PARK is part of the comprehensive and continuous development of the park system of the national capital. The park provides high quality camping, picnicking, and hiking in wooded areas and along stream corridors, preserving forests, and contributing to the protection of water quality in the Anacostia River watershed.



Significance

Significance statements express why Greenbelt Park resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Located 12 miles from downtown Washington, DC, Greenbelt Park offers more than 1,100 acres of easily accessible open space, camping, and high quality forests in an intensively developed urban area.



Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Natural Communities.** The park is mainly composed of high quality woodland—mixed pine and deciduous forest—with some small areas of grassy meadow. Two streams, Still Creek and Deep Creek, flow through the park and into the Anacostia River to the west. This natural setting offers visitors a chance to find serenity and quiet and provides an opportunity to escape from the bustle of an intensively developed urban area.
- **Recreational Opportunities.** The park provides visitors with a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities. Active opportunities include, but are not limited to, bicycling, field sports hiking, camping, picnicking, and bird watching.

Greenbelt Park contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Interpretation and Education.** The history of land use within the park provides opportunities for interpretation and education about the relationship of humans to nature and nature’s regenerative ability. The high quality habitat is situated within a heavily urbanized area. It is a place to foster understanding and learning among the broader community about the natural and manmade forces that shaped the landscape, as well as the resiliency of the natural environment.
- **Cultural Resources.** The land contained within the park has a long history of human use, both before and after European settlement on the continent. The land was used by prehistoric American Indians for hunting and camping, and later by European settlers for logging and farmland. The cultural resources associated with these uses can provide valuable insights into trends and patterns in human settlement around the nation’s capital.

Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- Greenbelt Park is an area of forest and natural scenery that was established as part of a comprehensive system of parks for recreation, preservation of substantial tracts of forests, and protection of source water in and around the nation’s capital.
- Greenbelt Park’s quiet forests, trails, and campgrounds provide an easily accessible refuge for urban dwellers to connect with the outdoors for natural exploration, relaxation, and recreation in the metropolitan Washington, DC area.



Description

Greenbelt Park was established by Congress on August 3, 1950, through Public Law 81-643 in association with the creation of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, which traverses the park. This 1,100-acre park is located just 12 miles from downtown Washington, DC, and 23 miles from Baltimore, Maryland.

The park features a 174-site campground, nine miles of trails, and three picnic areas. In some ways, Greenbelt Park is a “backyard” national park unit, as many locals come to camp, hike, picnic, and run. The park provides all the experiences of traditional parks, close to home. Greenbelt also attracts visitors from across the country and around the world who are drawn by the recreational opportunities, natural beauty, and the campground that is open all year.

Greenbelt Park is also a great place to experience nature in an urban area. Its high quality forests serve as a home to a variety of wildlife including coyotes, neotropical migrant birds, white-tailed deer, red foxes, woodchucks, opossums, skunks, beavers, chipmunks, and flying squirrels. The park also hosts nesting neotropical forest migrants. Fauna in the park includes mixed pine and deciduous forests, an array of wildflowers, and understory ferns.

The land that is now Greenbelt Park was originally intended to be a future extension of the town of Greenbelt, but was eventually preserved as a park for the community and region. In the 1930s, the town of Greenbelt, Maryland, became the first government-sponsored, planned community in the United States. Built on “garden city” principles, which emphasized self-contained, complete communities with ample green space, it was part of a larger plan for several such communities as part of President Roosevelt’s New Deal.

