

# *Master Plan for* Cimaglia Park at Fort Holabird

*Prepared for:*  
Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks

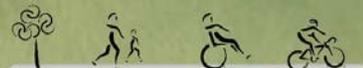
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## **LIST OF EXHIBITS**

- Exhibit ES: Illustrative Master Plan (Duplicate of Exhibit 6)**
- Exhibit 1: Aerial Photograph of Cimaglia Park at Fort Holabird**
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## **PART I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks retained Mahan Rykiel Associates to prepare a master plan for Cimaglia Park at Fort Holabird. The purpose of the master plan is to provide a framework to guide long- and short-term park enhancements that will be implemented by the City and/or community stakeholders. The master planning process was grounded in the stakeholder process and included site walks and meetings with stakeholders from Baltimore City and from the St. Helena community.

The master plan seeks to protect some of the remnants that recall the park's historic roots as part of the Holabird Vehicle Testing Track, which was built and operated by the United States Army from 1920 through the 1950's. The master plan also incorporates important considerations for successful parks including stakeholder involvement; having a broad appeal to a variety of users; safety and comfort; appearance and maintenance; and the four strategies of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design including, Natural Surveillance, Territorial Reinforcement, Natural Access Control and Target Hardening.

### **ASSESSMENT**

The design team conducted an assessment of existing park conditions, coupled with input received by the stakeholders. In terms of assets, Cimaglia Park has a great overall "structure," it is adjacent to a variety of residential and employment uses that can support the park, it has nearby food venues, it is accessible by the

surrounding road network, it has plenty of parking resources, it has an existing restroom building that can be renovated, there are appealing views from various locations throughout the park, there are extensive natural systems that can be enhanced, there are community gardens and well used recreation facilities and there is an interesting history to the park with existing remnants of this history still intact.

In terms of constraints, the park lacks appealing gateways and signage, it has limited visibility from the streets and adjacent uses because of overgrowth, it has limited pedestrian access points because of fencing, the overall image of the park is poor, excess pavement abounds, there is limited tree cover and shade in active use areas, the ball fields suffer from poor drainage and the park suffers from excessive use by off-road vehicles.

With the master plan, there are opportunities to enhance the park assets and overcome the constraints as described under Master Plan Recommendations.

### **MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS**

There are several specific recommendations for Cimaglia Park as part of this master plan. Based on existing conditions and input from the community, the overall goal is to improve recreation facilities and enhance the natural systems in the park. Specifically, the plan includes the following recommendations described below and illustrated in *Exhibit ES: Illustrative Plan*.

**Park Image:** Enhance the image of the park along the perimeters and, in particular, at the gateways. Gateways will include identification signage, special

landscaping and, possibly, information kiosks at the Pine/Oak Avenues entrance and at the Van Deman Street entrance. Additional improvements to enhance the image include streetscape of Pine and Oak Avenues and enhancement of the forests along the northern and southern perimeters of the park. In particular, some openings (through selective tree removal or limbing) will be established to create more visibility to the park from some of the adjacent uses.

***Parking:*** The existing main parking lot will be enhanced with additional tree planting islands and will be redesigned along the northwestern edge to discourage vehicular traffic from driving into the park. It will include approximately 108 spaces. An additional parking lot will be created south of the community garden to provide better access to the gardens and mulch bins. It will include approximately 21 spaces.

***Pathways and Trails:*** An extensive pathway and trail system, with a hierarchy of “loops” is envisioned for the park. The existing test track will be extended to form a complete oval and the pavement will be reduced to 8’ in width. This will be the Primary Pathway. A series of Secondary Pathways will extend off of this main loop and will access different areas of the park, including the gateway area at Van Deman Street. Nature trails will also be added in some of the meadows in the southwestern area of the park. These will be mulched paths or simple “mow paths”. Lastly, boulders will be used in a couple of areas along Colgate Creek to create stepping stone crossings.

***Active Recreation:*** The existing basketball court will be removed and two half courts will be constructed south of the community garden where they will be more visible to the street. The softball fields will be

regraded to provide better drainage through natural swales (the existing storm drains will be removed), sports lighting will be added to allow for evening games, black fencing will replace the existing fencing and shade trees will be added near the back stop areas to provide shade for players and spectators and to better visually integrate the ball fields into the site.

***Community Garden:*** The community garden will be expanded to eliminate the space between it and the restroom building. New black chain link fencing will be provided and areas for mulch, topsoil and compost will be provided off of the new parking area.

***Service/Restroom Building:*** The restroom building will be renovated to include single-stall restrooms and storage facilities. In addition, the roof will be extended to provide an overhang or arbor structure and to make the pavilion appear more “park like”.

***Community Gathering Area:*** A lawn area will be maintained near the Pine/Oak Avenues entrance to function as an informal community gathering area for small events.

***Picnic Areas:*** The existing basketball court area will be converted to a picnic grove, as will the shaded knoll immediately to the north of the main parking lot. Picnic areas will include picnic tables, waste receptacles and possibly fixed grills.

***Reforestation/Afforestation:*** Existing forest areas will be improved through the removal of invasive vegetation and replacement with appropriate native trees, shrubs and groundcovers. Some forest areas will be extended with new forest to create more viable habitats and to connect some of the existing forest stands. In some areas as identified on the plan, only

low groundcovers and shrubs and tall canopy trees will be used so that important sightlines and vistas can be maintained.

***Meadows:*** In addition to enhanced and new forest areas, meadows will be created to add diversity to the habitats and to enhance interpretive opportunities. The meadows will be planted with native grasses and wildflowers and will be mowed once or twice a season. The meadows are primarily located in the southwestern portion of the site and along the western segment of Colgate Creek.

***Wetlands:*** Wetlands, bio-retention swales and rain gardens will be established adjacent to the ball fields and at the base of the test ramps to help capture excess runoff and provide wildlife habitat.

***Historic Interpretation:*** The pathway system will expose park users to some of the remnant historic features including the three test ramps. The primary pathway loop, itself, will follow the alignment of the former test track. Interpretive signage will be provided to share the history of the park with park users.

***Park Signage:***

Ultimately, a consistent sign system will be used throughout Cimaglia Park, using new standards adopted by the Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks. In addition to park identification signs at park gateways, the sign system will include information kiosks with park maps, interpretive signs, regulatory signs, way-finding signs and memorial/donation signs.

## **PHASING PRIORITIES**

Park improvements will be implemented in phases over many years. Following is an outline of the park enhancements in general order of importance:

- Active Recreation Facilities
- Pathways and Trails
- Park Gateways
- Signage at Gateways
- Forest Cover
- Restroom / Service Building Renovation
- Picnic Areas
- Parking Area Adjacent to Community Garden
- Community Gardens
- Meadows
- Main Parking Area
- Signage Throughout Park



**LEGEND**

- ① ENTRANCE ALIGNING WITH CROSS STREET
- ② REFORESTATION AREA
- ③ STEPPING STONES ACROSS CREEK
- ④ GRASSY KNOLL
- ⑤ WETLAND WITH SCENIC OVERLOOK
- ⑥ EXPOSED HISTORIC TESTING RAMPS WITH INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE
- ⑦ BASEBALL FIELDS GRADED TO IMPROVE DRAINAGE
- ⑧ OPEN RECREATION AREA
- ⑨ OPEN MEADOW
- ⑩ HISTORIC REMNANT OVERLOOK
- ⑪ ENLARGED COMMUNITY GARDENS WITH BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS
- ⑫ NEW PARKING LOT FOR GARDENS AND COURTS
- ⑬ HALF COURT BASKETBALL
- ⑭ COMMUNITY GATHERING AREA MARKED BY ENTRANCE SIGN
- ⑮ PARKING LOT IMPROVEMENTS
- ⑯ ENTRANCE SIGN / PEDESTRIAN ACCESS
- ⑰ FLEXIBLE RECREATION / PICNIC AREA
- ⑱ BOARDWALK ACROSS SWALE (TYP.)
- (A) PRIMARY PATH, 10' WIDE, (TYP.)
- (B) SECONDARY PATH, 6' WIDE, (TYP.)
- (C) NATURAL TRAIL, 3' WIDE, (TYP.)

- MEADOW RESTORATION (TYP.)
- RAIN GARDEN (TYP.)
- EXISTING FOREST
- EXISTING TREES
- LARGE SHADE TREES
- SMALL SHADE TREES
- FLOWERING TREES
- ▲ FIELD LIGHTING
- ENTRY SIGN
- ENTRY SIGN AND FUTURE INFORMATION KIOSK
- PICNIC TABLES
- BENCHES
- .....➔ VIEW CORRIDORS

# ILLUSTRATIVE MASTER PLAN CIMAGLIA PARK AT FORT HOLABIRD

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND PARKS  
MAHAN RYKIEL ASSOCIATES, INC  
JANUARY 2008



## **PART II: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Cimaglia Park at Fort Holabird is located in the St. Helena community near the southeastern boundary of Baltimore City, adjacent to the Dundalk community. The park is located along Colgate Creek and is south of the Holabird Industrial Park and east of the Point Breeze Business Center. Refer to *Exhibit 1: Aerial Photograph of Cimaglia Park at Fort Holabird*.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this master plan is to provide a framework for long-term park improvements while guiding short-term priority projects. The plan will serve as a guide for both public and private sponsored implementation projects.

**Process:** Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks retained Mahan Rykiel Associates (MRA) in late 2006 to begin the stakeholder-based master planning process. MRA participated in a site walk with key stakeholders from the City and the community, conducted additional site reconnaissance, prepared three alternative concepts (see *Appendix A: Alternative Concepts*), presented the alternatives at a community meeting in early Fall 2007, refined the preferred alternative and prepared and presented a draft master plan at a follow-up community meeting in December 2007. Based on comments, the draft plan was refined and developed into the final master plan described and illustrated in this report.

### **BACKGROUND**

**History:** Fort Holabird became a Baltimore City park in the late 1970s when the land that was Fort Holabird was transferred to the City. Prior to this, the park had an interesting history and was the site of the Holabird Vehicle Testing Track, which was constructed in 1920. It was the site of the United States Army's location for the engineering and development of general-purpose vehicles from 1920 to 1950. The track included a variety of different road conditions to test new vehicles, including a testing hill with three tracks at different gradients, the steepest being 65 degrees. In the 1950's much of the vehicle testing was moved to other bases and the open spaces were converted to baseball fields and other recreation areas. The base was transferred to the City of Baltimore in the late 1970's and most of the former base was converted to an industrial park with the balance established as Fort Holabird Park. In 2006, the name of the park was changed to "Cimaglia Park at Fort Holabird" in honor of Joseph and Gladys Cimaglia, tireless advocates of the park and neighborhood.

A National Register of Historic Places (NPS Form 10-900) was completed in 2001 for the Holabird Vehicle Testing Track *Exhibit 2: Historic Photograph of Vehicle Testing Track at Fort Holabird*.

**Important Ingredients for Successful Parks:** The master plan for Cimaglia Park at Fort Holabird was developed with the understanding that successful parks rely on a number of ingredients beyond just physical improvements. Following is a summary of the factors that were considered in the development of the master plan and that need to be considered as implementation of individual projects occurs.



AERIAL VIEW

# CIMAGLIA PARK AT FORT HOLABIRD



MAHAN RYKIEL ASSOCIATES, INC

OCTOBER 2007

EXHIBIT 1



0 50' 100' 150'



HISTORIC AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH  
**CIMAGLIA PARK AT FORT HOLABIRD**

MAHAN RYKIEL ASSOCIATES, INC    OCTOBER 2007  
EXHIBIT 2

- **Stakeholders Involvement:** Cimaglia Park is fortunate to have a number of residents within the St. Helena community interested in the park. While many of the physical improvements will be implemented by the Department of Recreation and Parks, it will be critical for park stakeholders to partner with the City to help maintain the park, report undesirable activities, plan and sponsor events in the park and build the stakeholder base.
- **Broad Appeal:** Successful parks are filled with people. Therefore, there must be a variety of activities that will appeal to many people of different backgrounds and ages. This master plan strives to appeal to people who reside inside and outside of the neighboring communities and who are attracted to passive or active (or both) recreation. In addition, new paths are designed to be ADA compliant and many uses are located within close proximity to the parking areas and neighboring streets to allow for easy access to older park users and those with special needs.
- **Safety and Comfort:** In order for a park to be well used, it must be safe and comfortable and it must also *appear* to be safe and comfortable. Areas exposed to both sun and shade should be available throughout the park to make it more appealing in all seasons and seating should be provided in areas of heavy activity. The park should also be designed in a way that discourages undesirable activity. This is discussed further under #3 below.
- **Appearance and Maintenance:** Parks must be well maintained and have a positive appearance in order to be successful and attractive to a variety of people. Parks that are not well maintained appear

to be dangerous and give the impression that nobody cares about the space, making them less desirable.

***Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design:*** Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is an important consideration for parks as well as any outdoor space. According to the National Crime Prevention Institute, *CPTED is the proper design and effective use of the built environment which may lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime, and an improvement of the quality of life.*"

The four strategies\* of CPTED include:

- **Natural Surveillance** - A design concept directed primarily at keeping intruders easily observable. Promoted by features that maximize visibility of people, parking areas and building entrances: doors and windows that look out on to streets and parking areas; pedestrian-friendly sidewalks and streets; front porches; adequate nighttime lighting.
- **Territorial Reinforcement** - Physical design can create or extend a sphere of influence. Users then develop a sense of territorial control while potential offenders, perceiving this control, are discouraged. Promoted by features that define property lines and distinguish private spaces from public spaces using landscape plantings, pavement designs, gateway treatments, and "CPTED" fences.
- **Natural Access Control** - A design concept directed primarily at decreasing crime opportunity by denying access to crime targets and creating in offenders a perception of risk. Gained by designing streets, sidewalks, building entrances

and neighborhood gateways to clearly indicate public routes and discouraging access to private areas with structural elements.

- **Target Hardening** - Accomplished by features that prohibit entry or access: window locks, dead bolts for doors, interior door hinges.

*\*Source: National Crime Prevention Council*

## PART III: ASSESSMENT

As part of the master plan process, the design team conducted an assessment of existing conditions at the park. This assessment included on-site reconnaissance and facilitated input from stakeholders. Below is a summary of the assessment in terms of assets (to preserve and build upon), constraints (to address and overcome) and opportunities for the future. Refer to *Exhibit 3: Inventory-Assets; Exhibit 4: Inventory-Constraints; and Exhibit 5: Site Analysis-Opportunities*.

### ASSETS

**General Park Form:** Overall, Cimaglia Park has “strong bones”. The general landform, existing vegetation massing, spatial composition and interface with adjacent neighborhoods and natural systems are quite strong. In particular, the ball fields sit within a “bowl” allowing opportunities for spectator seating as well as for dramatic views from the upper areas of the park. Consequently, there is a solid foundation from which to build a better park.

**Available Land Resources:** In addition to the park having good form, the park, at 39.92 acres, has enough land area to accommodate many park uses in a variety of settings.

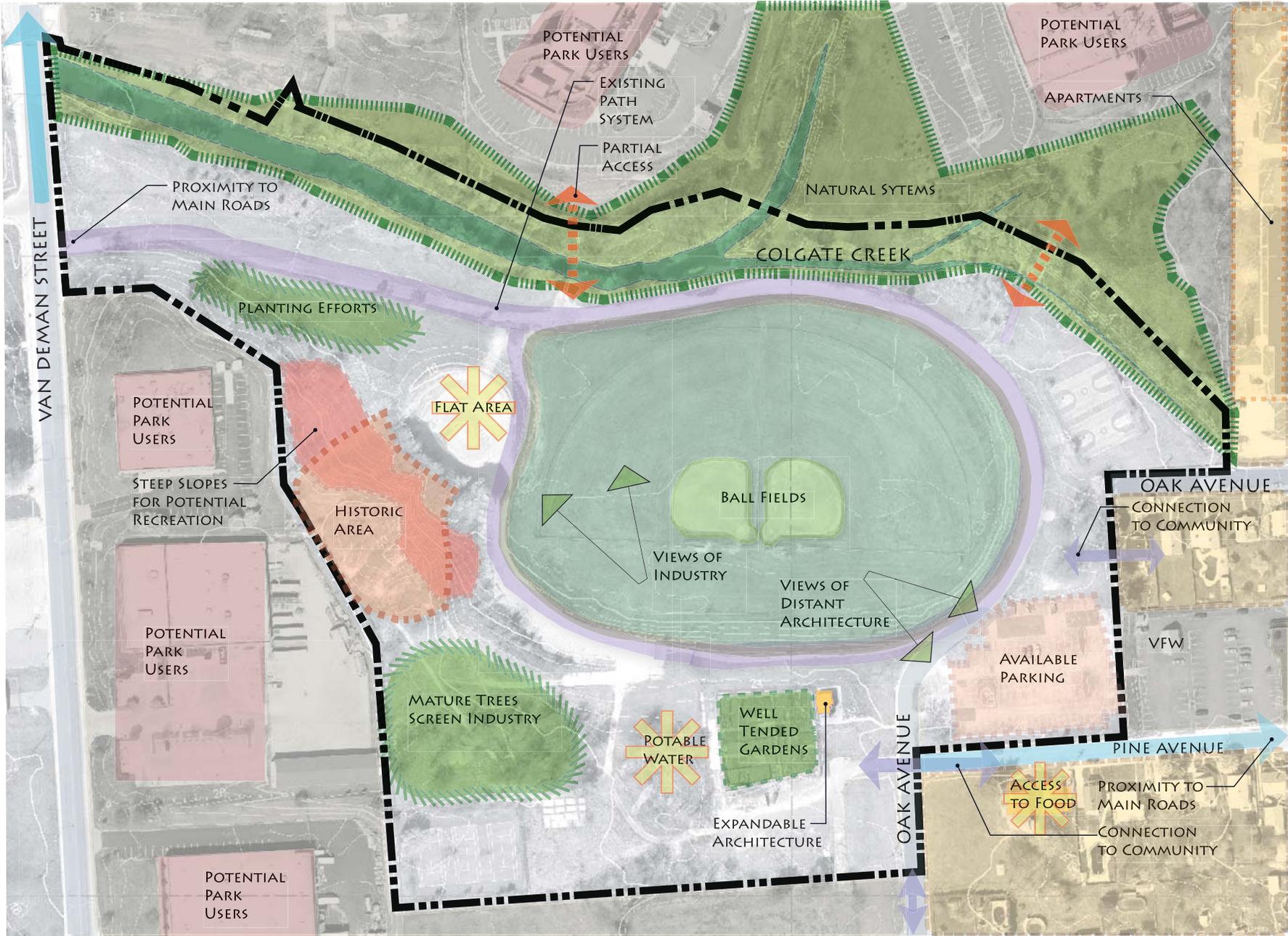
**Access to Adjacent Land Uses:** Cimaglia Park is surrounded by both residential and commercial/industrial land uses, making it possible for people to take advantage of the park during the weekday as well as evenings and weekends. The southeast portion of the park abuts the St. Helena neighborhood and a VFW Hall and is a significant neighborhood resource. The northern, western and a

portion of the southern perimeters of the park are adjacent to a variety of employment and light industrial uses located within Fort Holabird Industrial Park. Some park users have remarked that they like hearing the occasional train whistles from nearby railroad activity servicing the industrial park. Tulkoff Food Products, Inc. is currently constructing its new headquarters at the corner of Detroit and Oak Avenues, immediately to the south of the park.

**Access to Food:** The availability of food is an important component for a successful park. Cimaglia Park is fortunate to be located adjacent to Donna’s Restaurant, a popular neighborhood restaurant and bar that has recently expanded and which will eventually have outdoor dining in the warm weather months.

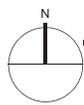
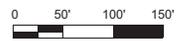
**Proximity to Road Network:** The park is well-served by the adjacent road network including Pine and Oak Avenues (off of which is the main entrance to the park), the eastern portion of Oak Avenue (pedestrian access only) and Van Deman Street (pedestrian access only).

**Available Parking:** There is an existing parking lot located off of Pine Avenue which can accommodate approximately 123 cars with some additional parking to the south of the community gardens. This parking resource is an important facility for the ball fields as well as any events that occur in the park. While the parking does somewhat detract from the park’s image along Pine Avenue, it is located in a highly visible area, which helps to discourage undesirable activity within the parking lot. The parking resource is also used as overflow parking for the adjacent VFW, which leases the lot from the City, so it also serves as a valuable community resource.



- GENERAL ASSETS**
- Available land
  - Residential access
  - Industrial users
  - Proximity to main roads
  - Available parking
  - Access to food
  - Expandable architecture for restrooms or storage
  - Interesting views of significant architecture & industrial features
  - Natural system / Creek
  - Wildlife
  - Mature trees screen industry at pedestrian level.
  - Historic features
  - Community gardens
  - Potable water
  - Ball fields
  - Basketball courts
  - Steep slopes for recreational activities
  - Train whistles

- LEGEND**
- SPECIAL CONDITIONS
  - EXISTING PATHS
  - PARTIAL ACCESS
  - ROAD CONNECTION
  - COMMUNITY CONNECTION
  - INDUSTRIAL/COMMERCIAL
  - RESIDENTIAL
  - NATURAL SYSTEMS
  - HISTORIC
  - STEEP SLOPES

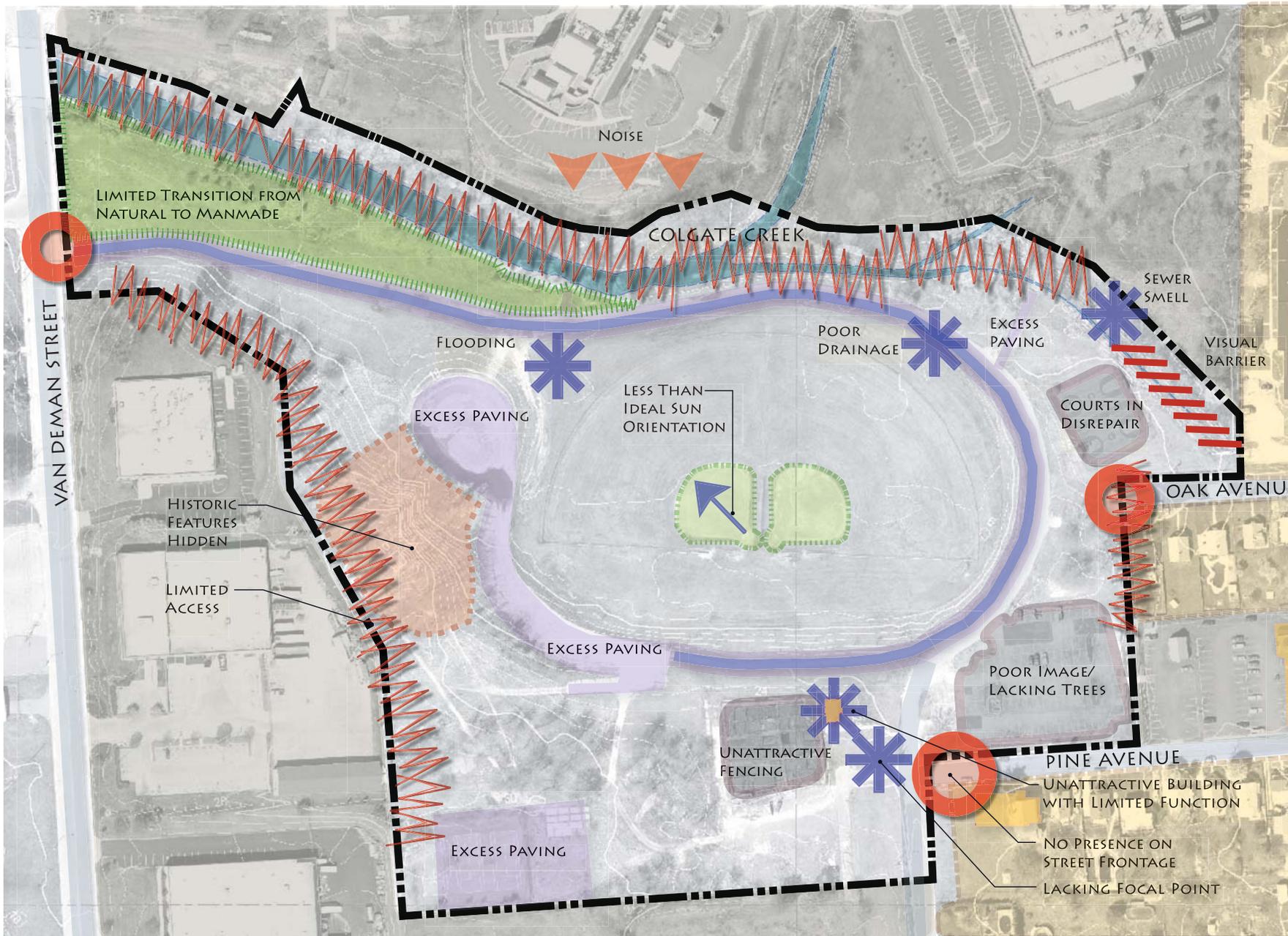


# INVENTORY - ASSETS

## CIMAGLIA PARK AT FORT HOLABIRD

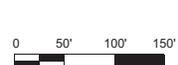
MAHAN RYKIEL ASSOCIATES, INC    OCTOBER 2007

EXHIBIT 3



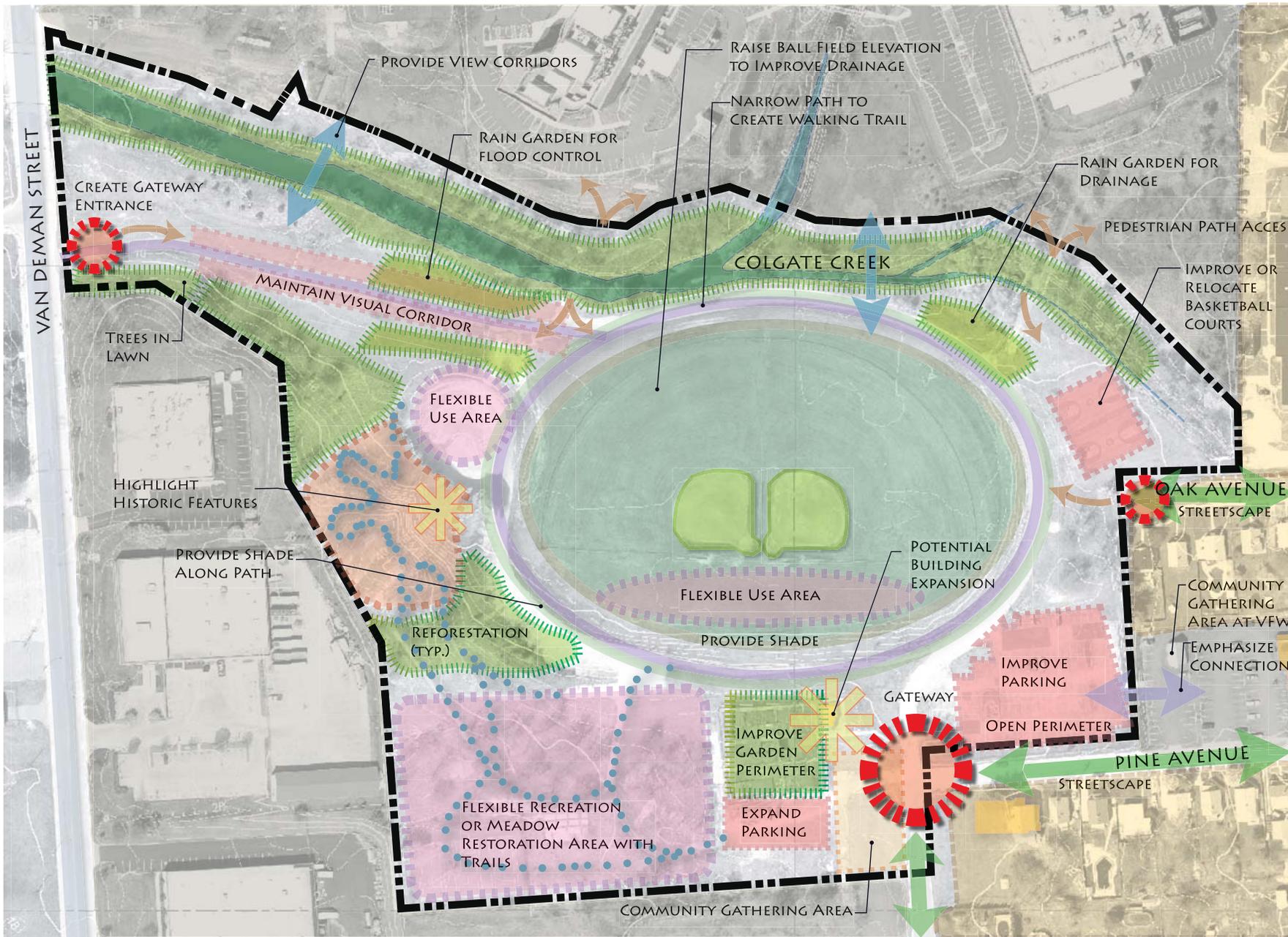
- GENERAL CONSTRAINTS**
- No signage
  - Limited visibility from street
  - No eyes on park
  - Limited pedestrian access
  - Lacking gateway
  - Visual barriers
    - Invasive vines along creek
    - Historic area
    - Basketball area
    - Entrance at Oak Avenue
  - Poor image
    - Bath house
    - Garden fencing
    - Pine Avenue fencing
    - Oak Avenue entrance
  - Excess paving
  - Limited tree cover
  - Poor drainage
  - Smell from creek
  - Poor baseball field location
  - Fence obstructions in open space
  - Noise from industrial area

- LEGEND**
- PROBLEM AREAS
  - NO PRESENCE ON STREET FRONTAGE
  - NO ACCESS
  - EXCESS PAVING
  - VISUAL BARRIER
  - POOR ORIENTATION
  - NOISE
  - POOR TRANSITION
  - POOR IMAGE
  - INDUSTRIAL
  - RESIDENTIAL



# INVENTORY - CONSTRAINTS

## CIMAGLIA PARK AT FORT HOLABIRD



- GENERAL OPPORTUNITIES**
- Maintain visual corridors into and within site
  - Increase opportunities for pedestrian access across creek
  - Designate reforestation areas and eliminate invasive species
  - Parking for community gardens
  - Potential flex areas
  - Highlight historic features
  - Improve or relocate basketball courts
  - Create gateway at building
  - Provide streetscape on Pine Street and Oak Court
  - Provide improved parking
  - Create pedestrian and bike connections to community
  - Provide wetlands and rain gardens to control flooding
  - Provide shade and accommodate seating in flexible use area
  - Keep water on site & off ballfield
  - Minimize asphalt

**LEGEND**

- GATEWAY
- FLEXIBLE USE AREA
- STREAM VIEWS
- STREETSCAPE
- CONNECTION
- INDUSTRIAL/COMMERCIAL
- RESIDENTIAL
- NATURAL SYSTEMS
- RECREATION AREA
- IMPROVEMENTS



# SITE ANALYSIS - OPPORTUNITIES

## CIMAGLIA PARK AT FORT HOLABIRD

MAHAN RYKIEL ASSOCIATES, INC    OCTOBER 2007

EXHIBIT 5

**Expansion Capability to Restroom Building:** There is an existing park restroom structure near the community garden. While this structure is in need of renovation, there is sufficient area around it to allow for expansion and/or renovation and new architectural treatments to provide for a more attractive and more useable park feature.

**Views and Vistas:** Some of the most appealing qualities to the park are the varied views and vistas from within the park itself. Views may be broad, such as across the ball fields from the upper park area, or they may be incidental, with quick “glimpses” through tree masses to the Colgate Creek or to the historic remnants from the testing tracks. Some views establish an important visual connection to the surrounding community, including views to some of the “industrial” structures of adjacent buildings or views to nearby church steeples.

**Natural Systems:** The northern edge of Cimaglia Park is defined by Colgate Creek, a tidal tributary of the Patapsco River. This natural corridor is mostly wooded with a combination of native and invasive species, and serves as a habitat for a variety of wildlife. The creek occasionally floods, overflowing its banks and encroaching onto the ball field area presenting some opportunities for interpretation of natural systems. Other areas of the park, particularly the steep slopes where the test tracks are located, have been reclaimed by woodlands.

**Historic Features:** There are a variety of remnants from the park’s early days as a vehicle testing track for the United States Army. The remnants include three hillside test tracks with varying degrees of steepness, the oval test track which now serves as a park pathway (and unintentional vehicular access) and remnants of

stairs and deck area associated with a former swimming pool where the community gardens are now located.

**Community Gardens:** As described in the previous paragraph, the former swimming pool area has been converted into a community garden. There are a significant number of garden plots that appear to be well used. The garden is in close proximity to the adjacent residential areas but tucked far enough into the park so that it doesn’t have to be the defining image for the park. While the fencing and general maintenance of the community gardens is somewhat unattractive, the overall use is a good one for the park, and it draws positive activity and additional “eyes on the park”. The community garden is also well served with a water source.

**Active Recreation Facilities:** Active recreation draws positive use into the park and provides additional “eyes on the park”. In addition to the positive activity provided by the community gardens, there are two well-used softball fields located in the park and one basketball court. While the basketball court is in poor repair and is poorly located so that it has become a detriment to the park, there is a desire to maintain a basketball function. The use is positive, however, the current location is a negative.

## CONSTRAINTS

**Lack of Gateways and Signage:** While the park is well served by adjacent roadways, it does not have a presence on any major roads and identification signage is limited. Therefore, many people outside of the neighborhood do not even know that the park exists. The community is, however, constructing an identification sign for the main entrance of the park near the intersection of Pine and Oak Avenues.

**Limited Street Visibility / Visual Barriers:** In addition to limited signage, Cimaglia Park does not have a lot of visibility from adjacent streets. Along Van Deman Street, there is only a 250' stretch where the park has direct frontage on the street and much of this frontage is overgrown with invasive plants. Along Pine Avenue, the existing parking lot has good visibility; however, the parking lot can block views further into the park from the street. In addition to poor visibility from the streets, the vegetation along Colgate Creek creates visual barriers from the employment areas to the north and vegetation along the western perimeter blocks visibility from the employment areas to the west.

**Limited Pedestrian Access:** While the park is bordered by a significant amount of employment uses, the park is essentially at the "back door" of these uses and is separated from them by a fence (along the western and southern perimeters) and Colgate Creek (along the northern perimeter). There is pedestrian access from the northwest off of Van Deman Street, however, the park image in this area, as described below, does not make this an appealing entrance for pedestrians.

**Poor Overall Park Image:** The overgrown and invasive quality of much of the vegetation, the fences along some of the perimeter, broken jersey barriers and trash at some of the former creek crossings and at the Van Deman Street entrance, the restroom building and the condition of the fence around the community gardens all negatively affect the image of the park.

**Excess Pavement:** While the remnant historic features lend themselves to interpretation and help define a circulation system for the park, there is generally too much pavement within the park. This excess pavement is overgrown with weeds, creates storm water runoff

and also encourages inappropriate vehicular access throughout the park, which, in turn, supports some undesirable activities.

**Off-Road Vehicles:** The use of off-road vehicles throughout the park is a particular problem. Vehicles get access to the park from the existing path system (former test track) and cause significant damage to the playing fields, newly forested meadows and steep wooded slopes.

**Limited Tree Cover/Shade:** While some of the existing tree cover provides a solid framework from which to expand forest and tree cover, most of the active use areas are devoid of tree cover. During the warm months, this is particularly undesirable as there is limited cooling shade adjacent to walkways and spectator areas for the ball fields.

**Poor Drainage:** The lower portion of the park, where the ball fields are located, is poorly drained. As a result, when flooding occurs, the ball fields are inundated and take some time to dry out.

**Ball field Orientation:** The eastern-most ball field is well oriented to the northeast. The western-most ball field is less desirable with a northwest orientation. The existing organization of the ball fields also results in the appearance of the backstops being located in the middle of the lower portion of the park, detracting from the overall quality of the open space.

**Noise and Odors:** Some have identified noise associated with the adjacent light industrial uses as a negative influence on the park. There is also noise associated with the off-road vehicles. In addition, there are sometimes unpleasant odors associated with Colgate Creek.

## OPPORTUNITIES

***Visual Corridors:*** Selective planting and thinning (or limbing up) of existing vegetation could allow for improved views into (and out of) the park from the adjacent streets and uses.

***Pedestrian Access:*** Additional paths could be developed to provide better connectivity of the park to the surrounding neighborhoods and uses as well as to different uses and attractions within the park.

***Reforestation/Afforestation:*** The framework is already in place to enhance existing forests by removing existing invasive vegetation and expanding woodlands with additional native tree, shrub and groundcover plantings.

***Enhancements to Community Gardens:*** The community gardens, already a positive feature within the park, could be enhanced with attractive fencing, expanded garden plots, parking resources and storage areas for mulch, compost and topsoil.

***Flexible Use Areas:*** Several areas of the park appear to be “leftover” space and could be enhanced with planting, grading and removal of excess pavement to become functional areas within the park. These areas do not have to be programmed for specific uses, rather they could be designed to be flexible and accommodate a variety of active and passive uses.

***Interpretation of Environmental and Historic Resources:*** The historic remnants of the vehicle testing facility and the environmental resources are interesting components of the park’s history and character. There

are numerous opportunities to provide interpretation of these resources through better trail access, visual access and signage.

***Improvements to Active Recreation Facilities:*** The existing ball fields can be enhanced through improved drainage, the addition of lighting and improved spectator areas. Because much of the park is bordered by light industrial and employment uses, this is one of the few parks in Baltimore City where lighting could be added with minimal conflict with residential areas. The existing basketball court could be improved by relocating it to a more visible location within the park.

***Enhancements to Park Image:*** The park image could be enhanced by improving streetscapes, particularly Pine Avenue and Oak Avenue; improving gateways with signage and appropriate landscaping; improving parking areas by the addition of some landscaping and to the overall park by removing the excess pavement.

***Improvements to Drainage:*** In combination with improving the drainage of the ball fields, site drainage could be designed to create a series of wetlands that enhance the bio-diversity of the park rather than diverting drainage to an underground storm drain system.

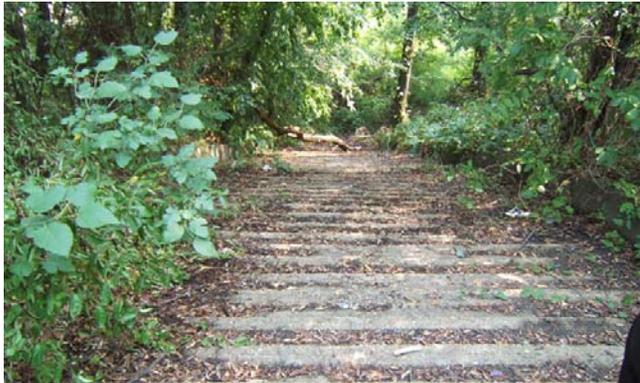
## ASSESSMENT IMAGES



The park has a very good overall form with strong spatial definition.



Interesting views include adjacent industrial buildings and architectural elements.



Remnants of test tracks create opportunities for interpretation.



Interesting views include adjacent industrial buildings and architectural elements.



Access to food compliments park activities.



The restroom building is unattractive but could easily be enhanced.

## ASSESSMENT IMAGES



Many historic remnants are concealed by overgrowth.



The basketball courts are hidden by overgrowth and are poorly maintained.



Excess pavement encourages unnecessary runoff and is unattractive.



The existing parking layout and wide paths encourage vehicular activity within the park.



Although a good foundation for a path system exists, there is limited shade along the paths.



The park connection to Van Deman Street is unwelcoming.

## PART IV: MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

### MASTER PLAN

The master plan recommendations establish a framework for improvements to be made to Cimaglia Park at Fort Holabird and will require further detailed design as each recommendation is implemented. Following is a brief description of the recommendations, which build upon the park's assets and help to overcome the constraints that have negatively influenced the park over the years. Refer to *Exhibit 6: Illustrative Master Plan*.

**Park Image:** Enhance the park image by improving park entrances, perimeter landscape and views into and out of the park. Specific recommendations include:

- **Van Deman Street Gateway:** Pedestrian access only. Gateway will include expanded pavement area, identification sign such as “Cimaglia Park at Fort Holabird” and landscaping primarily in the form of tall canopy shade trees. Flowers should also be considered if someone (or a group) in the community could be responsible for maintaining them. In addition, an information kiosk with a park map, calendar of events and other information should be considered in the future, once there is more activity in the park.
- **Oak Avenue (East) Gateway:** Pedestrian access only. Gateway to include re-design of perimeter fence, new tree planting along Oak Avenue, new pathway connection to Oak Avenue sidewalk and new identification sign (“Cimaglia Park at Fort Holabird”).
- **Pine/Oak Avenue Gateway:** Pedestrian and vehicular access. Gateway to include new community-sponsored identification sign (“Welcome to Cimaglia Park at Fort Holabird”) with additional community information and sponsorship. Gateway also to include removal of chain link fence along Pine Avenue, addition of new street trees (high canopied) along Pine Avenue and Oak Avenue. Low canopied flowering trees and tall shrubs should not be used along these streets as part of the gateway because they could block views into the park. Modest flowerbeds, however, should be considered in this area since it is the main entrance to the park. Perhaps a partnership could be established with a local business to sponsor the flower planting and maintenance. Similar to the Van Deman Street Gateway, an information kiosk with park map, calendar of events and other announcements should be considered at some point in the future, once there is more activity in the park.
- **Northern, Southern and Western Park Perimeters:** In addition to the creation of physical gateways, “visual gateways” should be established to give the park more presence to the surrounding community. Selective tree removal (and/or tree pruning) should occur in a couple of areas along Colgate Creek to establish some visual connection to the adjacent businesses. In addition, the same should occur in a few select areas along the western and southern property lines to establish some visual connection between the park and the businesses along Van Deman Street and the new Tulkoff facility.



**LEGEND**

- ① ENTRANCE ALIGNING WITH CROSS STREET
- ② REFORESTATION AREA
- ③ STEPPING STONES ACROSS CREEK
- ④ GRASSY KNOLL
- ⑤ WETLAND WITH SCENIC OVERLOOK
- ⑥ EXPOSED HISTORIC TESTING RAMPS WITH INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE
- ⑦ BASEBALL FIELDS GRADED TO IMPROVE DRAINAGE
- ⑧ OPEN RECREATION AREA
- ⑨ OPEN MEADOW
- ⑩ HISTORIC REMNANT OVERLOOK
- ⑪ ENLARGED COMMUNITY GARDENS WITH BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS
- ⑫ NEW PARKING LOT FOR GARDENS AND COURTS
- ⑬ HALF COURT BASKETBALL
- ⑭ COMMUNITY GATHERING AREA MARKED BY ENTRANCE SIGN
- ⑮ PARKING LOT IMPROVEMENTS
- ⑯ ENTRANCE SIGN / PEDESTRIAN ACCESS
- ⑰ FLEXIBLE RECREATION / PICNIC AREA
- ⑱ BOARDWALK ACROSS SWALE (TYP.)
  
- (A) PRIMARY PATH, 10' WIDE, (TYP.)
- (B) SECONDARY PATH, 6' WIDE, (TYP.)
- (C) NATURAL TRAIL, 3' WIDE, (TYP.)
  
- MEADOW RESTORATION (TYP.)
- RAIN GARDEN (TYP.)
- EXISTING FOREST
- EXISTING TREES
- LARGE SHADE TREES
- SMALL SHADE TREES
- FLOWERING TREES
- ▲ FIELD LIGHTING
- ENTRY SIGN
- ENTRY SIGN AND FUTURE INFORMATION KIOSK
- PICNIC TABLES
- BENCHES
- .....➔ VIEW CORRIDORS

# ILLUSTRATIVE MASTER PLAN CIMAGLIA PARK AT FORT HOLABIRD

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND PARKS  
MAHAN RYKIEL ASSOCIATES, INC  
JANUARY 2008



***Parking:*** The main parking lot should be redesigned to eliminate the wide connection to the pathway system and to add additional planting islands throughout to provide more tree cover. The newly configured parking lot could accommodate approximately 108 cars (some spaces were lost to landscape islands). Only high-canopied shade trees should be used so as to allow good visibility throughout the parking lot.

In addition to the main parking lot, an additional paved parking area of 21 spaces is proposed off of Oak Avenue. This parking area will provide direct access to the community gardens and provide an area for the delivery of mulch, topsoil and compost. This parking area should also be designed to include high-canopied shade trees.

***Pathways and Trails:*** An extensive pathway and trail system, with a hierarchy of “loops” is envisioned for the park. The existing oval (or portion of an oval) that is the remnant of the test track will serve as the primary path. The loop will be completed by extending the path on the southwest side to provide ADA accessibility to the parking area. The existing pavement will be narrowed down to an 8’ width to accommodate both pedestrians and bicyclists while discouraging automobiles. In some areas, excess paving will be removed from the “inside” of the loop and in other areas the excess will be removed from the “outside” of the loop, depending on where additional land may be needed for grading of the swales for the ball field drainage. Most of this primary path will remain as asphalt; however, some boardwalk sections are proposed to allow for drainage swales and the creation of wetland areas. Bollards will be added at Van Deman Street and at the pathway connection to the main parking lot to discourage vehicular activity.

Connecting to the primary pathway will be a series of secondary paths (6’ in width) leading out to different areas of the park. The most important will be the one extending out to Van Deman Street. The alignment of the existing path will be modified to be slightly more meandering to provide users with a more varied experience through new woodland areas and new meadows. Additional secondary path connections will be provided throughout the park to connect to Colgate Creek, the Oak Avenue gateway and other areas of the park.

Nature trails will also be added in the southwestern portion of the park. These will primarily be in the form of mulched paths or simply “mow” paths to provide access to some of the meadow areas. A nature trail will extend from the Van Deman Street entrance area along the higher ground near the western perimeter. This will provide access to, and bisect, the former testing ramps before connecting up to the community gardens and Pine Avenue gateway.

Large boulders and stones will be used in two areas of Colgate Creek to allow for crossing of the creek to access adjacent businesses. More importantly, these crossings will make the park more accessible to employees of these businesses who will help activate the park with positive uses during the weekday, particularly at lunchtime.

***Active Recreation:*** The active recreation areas will be improved by removing the existing basketball court and replacing it with an open lawn that will be flexible for a variety of different uses. A new basketball court will be added south of the community garden in the form of two “half courts”. This location will provide more visibility for the basketball court and will be an

appropriate transition to the new Tulkoff facility to the south.

The softball fields will be improved with new grading that will raise the infields and establish positive drainage to the perimeter. Natural drainage swales will be incorporated to draw the water to rain garden and wetland areas and to hold “overflow” during flooding events and the existing inlets and sub-surface drainage will be removed. New black fencing and backstops will be added and will be more aesthetically pleasing. Bench space for players will be added between fields. Field lighting will also be provided to allow for evening use. The area to the south of the ball fields will be enhanced with high canopied trees to provide shade for spectators and players not actively part of the game. Trees will be planted on the adjacent slope as well as along the southern perimeter of the ball fields to define an open space that could be used for passive play as well as spectator events.

***Community Garden:*** The community gardens will be expanded to eliminate the space between the restroom/service building and to allow for additional garden plots. The fence will be replaced with a black vinyl coated chain link fence to be more aesthetically pleasing and a major entrance gate to the garden will be provided adjacent to the new parking lot. In addition, areas for mulch, topsoil and compost will be provided adjacent to the new parking area.

***Service/Restroom Building:*** The service/restroom building will be renovated for ADA compliance. The building will be renovated so that half of the building is comprised of single-stall restrooms and the other half is comprised of storage. The renovations will also include a new roof and porch or arbor structure. Because of its prominent location, it should appear to be more “park-like.”

***Community Gathering Area:*** The sloped area between the service building and the intersection of Pine Avenue and Oak Avenue should be spatially reinforced with additional canopy trees but should remain open as a community gathering area, particularly for small events and for park users who want to be close to the activity of the basketball courts, community gardens and Donna’s Restaurant. Donna’s should be encouraged to have outdoor seating on their property. Outdoor patrons would serve as “eyes on the park” and would help activate the park and create more vibrancy at the park entrance.

***Picnic Areas:*** There are several flexible open space areas that could accommodate picnicking throughout the park; however, two areas are specifically designated as picnic groves. Both of these are along the eastern perimeter of the park near the main parking lot. The first is immediately north of the parking lot and the second is in the area where the basketball courts currently are located (but will be removed). Both of these areas have large shade trees, are close to parking and are within view of main park activities but remain separated. Picnic areas should utilize a standard durable picnic table design.

***Reforestation / Afforestation:*** The master plan recommends that existing wooded areas be augmented with new forest in the form of reforestation or afforestation. The primary areas for new forest include the north perimeter (along Colgate Creek) and portions of the western and southern perimeters. The goal for these areas is to remove invasive, non-native plant material and replace with native species in the form of groundcovers, shrubs, under-story trees and over-story trees in the general areas as illustrated in the master plan. Care should be taken to maintain

important sight lines so that park users feel safe and so that the park is visually more prominent to some of the adjacent uses. ***Refer to Exhibit 7: Planting Zones.***

***Meadows:*** In some areas where forest cover is not appropriate, meadows will be established. Primarily, these will occur in the southwestern portion of the site and along the trail that parallels Colgate Creek in the northwestern portion of the site as illustrated in Exhibit 7. Meadows will be planted with native grasses and wildflowers and will be mowed once or twice a year to maintain. Interpretation opportunities will be provided through the use of “mow path” and/or mulch path loops that connect with the secondary and primary pathway system.

***Wetlands, Swales & Rain gardens:*** Wetland areas, bio-retention swales and rain gardens as illustrated in Exhibit 7 will also be established adjacent to the ball fields and at the base of the test ramps to help capture excess runoff and provide wildlife habitat. Rain gardens are planted depressions (using native plants) designed to absorb rainwater runoff and improve water quality. The rain garden collects water runoff and stores it, permitting it to be filtered and slowly absorbed by the soil.

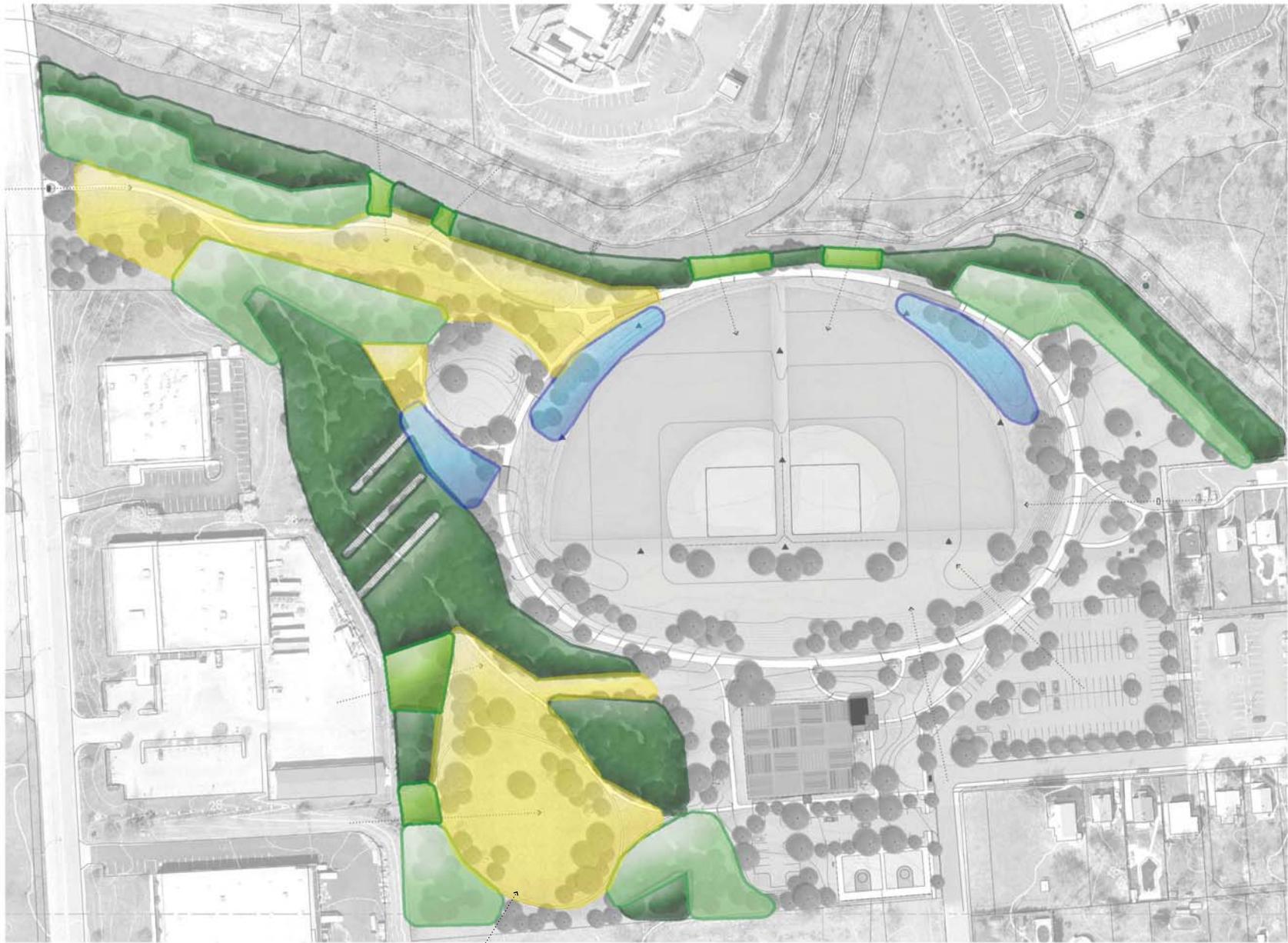
***Historic Interpretation:*** As described earlier, the pathway system will expose park users to some of the remnant historic features including the three test ramps. The primary pathway loop, itself, will follow the alignment of the former test track as well. Interpretive signage, as described below, should be provided in these areas to describe the historic significance of the site.

***Park Signage:*** Ultimately, a consistent sign system will be used throughout Cimaglia Park, using new standards adopted by the Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks. In addition to park identification signs at park gates, the sign system will include information kiosks with park maps, interpretive signs, regulatory signs, way-finding signs and memorial/donation signs.

## **PHASING PRIORITIES**

The master plan identifies numerous improvements to Cimaglia Park that will have to be implemented in phases over time. Following is a listing of the projects in general order of implementation. While the first couple of projects identified are the immediate priorities, projects listed later may move up or back in order of importance depending on numerous factors such as available City funding, available grants, community interest in a particular project (and, therefore, someone who will “champion it”), etc.:

- **Active Recreation Facilities** – remove existing basketball court and build new half courts. Re-grade ball fields, improve drainage (including creation of wetlands) and replace fencing.
- **Pathways and Trails** – remove excess pavement, reduce existing roadway down to 10’ width and complete “loop”. Modify existing parking area where it interfaces with primary pathway. Add secondary trail connections and boardwalks.
- **Park Gateway** – enhance three park gateways, including streetscape treatments along Pine and Oak Avenues.



LEGEND

- EXISTING FOREST
- FOREST COVER (NATIVE TALL TREES AND/OR LOW SHRUBS TO MAINTAIN VIEW CORRIDORS)
- AFFORESTATION
- MEADOW
- WETLAND
- TREES ON LAWN

# PLANTING ZONES

## CIMAGLIA PARK AT FORT HOLABIRD

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND PARKS  
 MAHAN RYKIEL ASSOCIATES, INC  
 JANUARY 2008



- **Signage** – provide identification signage at park gateways.
- **Forest Cover** – continue to remove invasive plant material and replace with native vegetation. Plant trees throughout park as illustrate on Illustrative Master Plan.
- **Restroom/Service Building** –renovate to be ADA compliant and to be more aesthetically pleasing.
- **Picnic Areas** – provide picnic tables in areas identified on master plan.
- **Parking Areas** – add parking lot adjacent to community garden.
- **Community Gardens** – expand and replace fencing. Establish mulch, topsoil and composting areas.
- **Meadows** – establish meadows in areas as designated on master plan.
- **Parking Areas** – modify balance of main parking lot as identified in master plan to include additional planting islands.
- **Signage** – provide full signage program throughout park.

## MASTER PLAN IMAGES



An arbor or trellis could be considered as an extension to the restroom building.



Potential character of boardwalk treatment for paths that cross wetlands.



Example of rain garden and meadow.



Example of stepping stones that could be used to provide informal crossing at Colgate Creek.

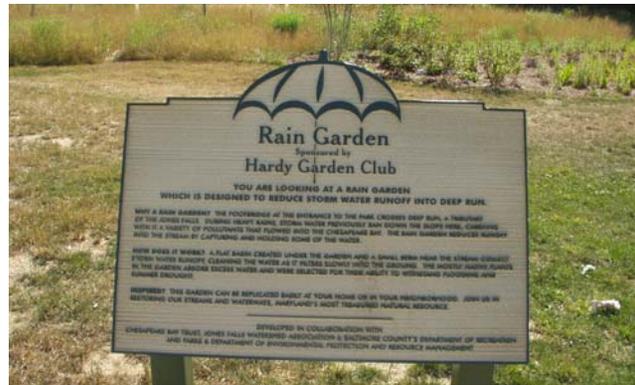


Example of stepping-stones that could be used to provide informal crossing at Colgate Creek.



Shade trees near ball fields can provide shade for spectators and minimize visual impact of fencing.

## MASTER PLAN IMAGES



Examples of interpretive signage for historic and environmental features.

## **PART V: APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A: PROJECT BUDGETS

Following is a description of project budgets for each element of the master plan. Elements may be implemented as a single project throughout the park (i.e.: all of the pathways), or elements may be implemented partially as they may be considered part of another project (such as implementing only the primary pathway in conjunction with the ball field renovations).

| <i>Project</i>                                       | <i>Budget Range</i>            |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. Park Image  | \$49,000 – 73,000              |
| 2. Parking   | \$154,000 – 230,000            |
| 3. Pathways and Trails                               | \$232,000 – 348,000            |
| 4. Active Recreation                                 | \$398,000 – 598,000            |
| 5. Community Garden                                  | \$59,000 – 89,000              |
| 6. Service/Restroom Building                         | \$96,000 – 144,000             |
| 7. Community Gathering Area                          | \$27,000 – 41,000              |
| 8. Picnic Areas                                      | \$45,000 – 67,000              |
| 9. Reforestation, Wetlands, Rain Gardens and Meadows | \$130,000 – 194,000            |
| 10. Historic Interpretation                          | N/A                            |
| 11. Park Signage (Excluding Gateway Signs)           | \$62,000 – 94,000              |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>\$1,252,000 – 1,878,000</b> |

## **APPENDIX B: CONCEPT ALTERNATIVES**

Three alternative concepts were developed for Cimaglia Park at Fort Holabird and reviewed with stakeholders at a St. Helena community meeting and are illustrated on the following pages. Following review of these alternatives, a preferred concept was selected and refined into the Draft Master Plan. The draft plan was then reviewed with the community and additional comments were incorporated and the final Master Plan was developed as described and illustrated in this report.



ENTRANCE SIGN-  
PEDESTRIAN ACCESS

RAIN  
GARDEN

NARROWED PATH

STREAMBANK RESTORATION

RAIN GARDEN TO  
CATCH DRAINAGE  
WATER

REMOVE  
EXCESS PAVING

HALF COURT  
BASKETBALL  
/REMOVE HALF OF  
PAVED AREA

REMOVE  
INVASIVE SPECIES  
AND PLANT  
TREES TO CREATE  
SITE LINES TO  
RECREATION  
AREA

COLGATE CREEK

BASEBALL FIELD GRADED  
TO IMPROVE DRAINAGE

OAK AVENUE

ENTRANCE SIGN  
PEDESTRIAN  
ACCESS

MAINTAIN  
EXISTING PATH

PLANT TREES ON BERM

RECREATION AREA  
REMOVE ASPHALT

REMOVE INVASIVE  
PLANTS TO EXPOSE  
HISTORIC TESTING  
RAMPS (INCORPORATE  
INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE)

BENCHES ALONG TRAIL

REMOVE EXCESS PAVING  
-NARROW PATH

PICNIC AREA

PARKING LOT  
IMPROVEMENTS

BUILDING  
IMPROVEMENTS

STREET TREES

ADDITIONAL SHADE TREES TO  
DEFINE RECREATION AREA

PINE AVENUE

REFORESTATION  
(TYP.)

REPLACE  
GARDEN  
FENCE

ENTRANCE SIGN

COMMUNITY  
GATHERING AREA

MULCH PILES  
PARKING FOR GARDENS



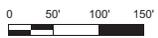
# CONCEPT 1 CIMAGLIA PARK AT FORT HOLABIRD

MAHAN RYKIEL ASSOCIATES, INC.    OCTOBER 2007



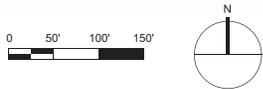
# CONCEPT 2 CIMAGLIA PARK AT FORT HOLABIRD

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# CIMAGLIA PARK AT FORT HOLABIRD

CONCEPT 3



DRAFT MASTER PLAN

# CIMAGLIA PARK AT FORT HOLABIRD

MAHAN RYKIEL ASSOCIATES, INC. DECEMBER 2007