



# 2024 Annual Report



Charles County  
Recreation, Parks & Tourism



# Department Highlights

## Charles County Sports & Wellness Complex

- In July 2024, purchased the former **Sears Building at the St. Charles Towne Center** to convert into a Sports and Wellness Complex.
- **Funded CIP Project** - \$53 million through FY25-FY29
- Phase 1 planned features include a **50-meter competition indoor swimming pool** within the current building structure. Phase 2 plans will include **additional indoor sports facilities** to be built on the property.
- Initial feasibility and site analysis completed by **A. Morton Thomas & Associates, Inc.**



## New Recreation, Parks & Tourism Offices

### 107 Centennial Street

Suite A, La Plata, MD 20646

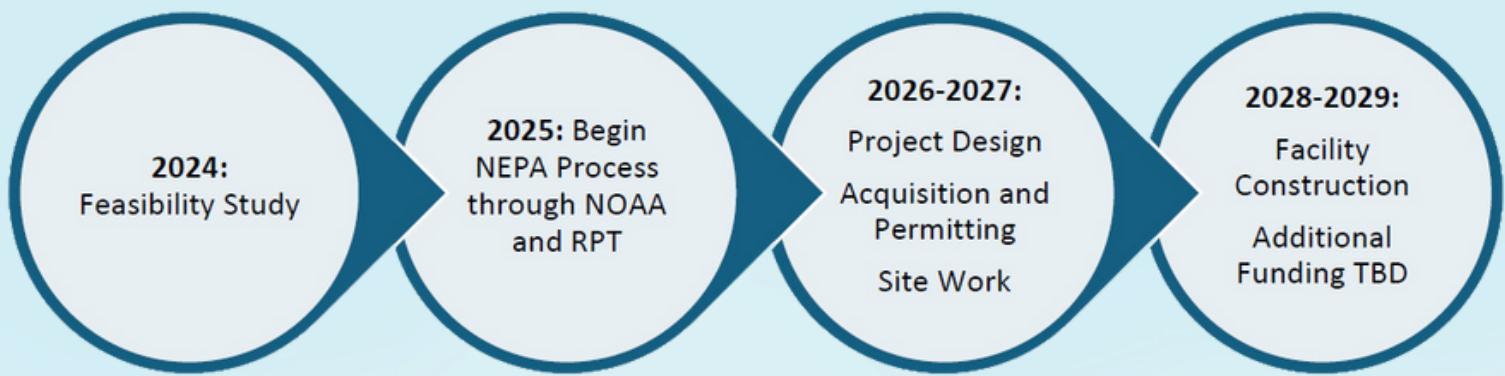
- In 2023, Charles County Government purchased the building at 107 Centennial Street which will become the new headquarters for the Department of Recreation, Parks & Tourism. Throughout 2024 the ongoing renovation project was led by the Department of Public Works.
- Renovations include:
  - New employee entrance
  - Reception area for public entrance
  - Open work areas and offices
  - Safety and security enhancements
  - Roof and HVAC replacement
- 24,243 sq ft with 2,600 sq ft balcony on third floor



# Department Highlights

## Mallows Bay

- **Electricity and Broadband Network Fiber** project was completed in Mallows Bay Park to bring connectivity and future security enhancements into the park.
- A **feasibility study**, funded by the Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund Grant, for the **proposed heritage center** was completed in December 2024.
- Charles County was awarded **\$5 million in federal grant funding** to support the pre-construction and design phase of the future Mallows Bay Heritage Center.
  - This funding is part of a substantial **\$3.3 billion investment by NOAA** under the federal Bipartisan Inflation Act.
- The future heritage center will aim to **enhance education, exploration, and economic opportunities** for both visitors and residents by providing increased accessibility, educational initiatives, and improved amenities.
- This initiative ties into the newly established **Southern Maryland National Heritage Area**, further emphasizing its cultural significance.



## Popes Creek Trail and Waterfront Park

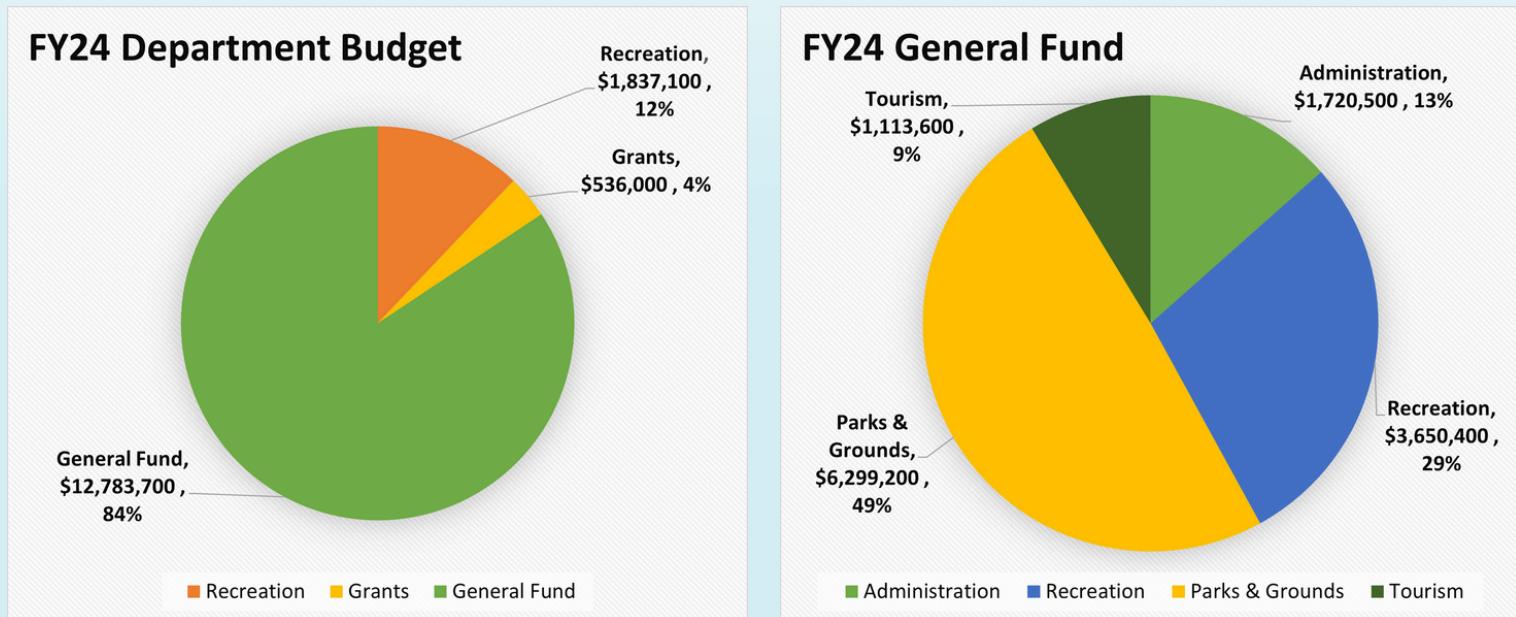
- The Resilience Authority, in partnership with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and Southern Maryland RC&D, is seeking a NOAA grant to design a living shoreline at **Popes Creek Waterfront Park** in Newburg.
- The site, classified as a Disadvantaged Community by NOAA, is **highly vulnerable to sea level rise and storm surges**.
- The project will **enhance habitats, improve water quality, reduce flooding and erosion, and boost climate resilience**.
- Collaboration with Charles County Recreation, Parks & Tourism will establish the first **public beach** in the county, supporting **recreation and environmental education**.
- This effort will showcase equitable, nature-based climate adaptation while **promoting sustainability and community engagement**.

## Parkland Dedication Ordinance

- House Bill 1321 passed through the Maryland General Assembly to grant Charles County enabling legislation for the creation of a **Parkland Dedication Ordinance**. This ordinance would require property developers to pay a fee to be used instead of dedicating land (i.e., "fee-in-lieu"), or a combination of dedication or construction of recreational facilities.

# Finance & Administration

## Fiscal Year 24 Department Budget



- Department budget **increased by 18%** from FY23 to FY24.
  - General fund increased by 15%, Recreation increased by 11%, and Grants increased by 678%
- Added **eight full time positions** in 2024.

## Registration

- Expanded **automation within Registration Office** to include online billings for field reservations, pavilion rentals, online food truck reservations.

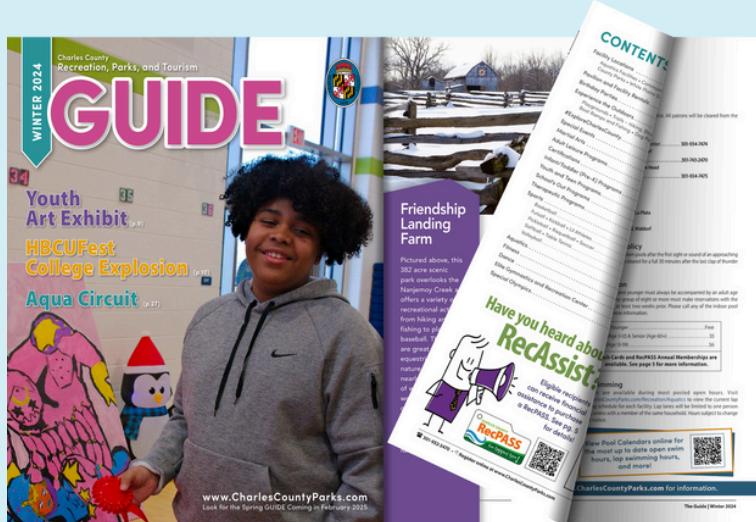
MyRec Metrics	FY23 (2022-2023)	FY24 (2023-2024)	+/- %
Total Registrations	24,508	23,290	-4.9%
First Time Registrations	4,758	3,960	-16.8%
Total Transactions	\$2,293,160.94	\$2,383,716.03	+16.2%

89.3% of MyRec registrations were by residents; 10.7% by non-residents (FY24)

# Finance & Administration

## Outreach and Media

- Quarterly GUIDE Publication
- **Award Winning** Charles County Visitors Guide - Tourism
- Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Pinterest, and LinkedIn presence
- Email marketing via Constant Contact
- Charles County Government - Media Services collaborations
  - Your Charles County and other video segments



	FY23 (2022-2023)	FY24 (2023-2024)	+/- %
Parks & Rec Email Open Rate	46.60%	47.51%	+1.9%
Tourism Consumer Email Open Rate	35.43%	37.15%	+4.8%
Hospitality Industry Email Open Rate	36.30%	39.55%	+8.9%
Total Social Media Audience	41,096	50,022	+21.7%

# Recreation

- Offers diverse recreational experiences for residents of all ages, including fitness, arts, enrichment classes, special events, county-wide sports programs, and summer camps.
- Manages 19 recreation facilities, operates Rec Xpress mobile recreation in county parks, and administers the RecAssist scholarship program, facilitating access to recreational activities for eligible recipients.



	<b>FY23 (2022-2023)</b>	<b>FY24 (2023-2024)</b>	<b>+/- %</b>
Programs Offered	1,948	2,088	+7.2%
Program Attendance	21,248	21,444	+0.9%
Program Revenue	\$1,812,856.91	\$2,106,654.42	+16.2%

## Program Development

- **Friday Teen Hangouts**
  - Expanded 1st Friday Teen Program (launched in September 2023) operations to a weekly occurrence.
  - Program offered for FREE to teens ages 13-17 at Billingsley, Davis, Smallwood, Somers, and Stoddert Community Centers, and the Waldorf Senior & Recreational Center.
- **Trade Skills Career Expo**
  - Held at Laural Springs Regional Park in November 2024.
  - 82 registered participants
  - Collaborative event between Recreation and Parks divisions, Department of Public Works, and Department of Human Resources.
- **Intergenerational Programs**
  - Waldorf Senior & Recreational Center facilitated 13 intergenerational programs for grandparents/children which provided various arts and crafts, story times, and general recreational programs that fostered community and bonding.
- **Cultural Awareness Events**
  - Events included Flashlight Easter Egg Hunt, Swimming with Santa, Fall Festival at Bensville Park, Therapeutic Holiday Dance and Social, Santa's Hotline, National Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration, and Winter Holiday Market.

# Recreation

## Notable Accomplishments

- **2024 Summer Camps**

- 42 different summer camps offered
- 4,605 registered campers

- **RecAssist**

- \$75,000 funds awarded - maximum allotment

- **Calm Cove Sensory Space**

- Grand re-opening held in February 2024 at Elite Gymnastics & Recreation Center with 59 attendees.
- 328 paid drop-ins; \$1,652 in revenue

- **RecXpress**

- Completed 164 outreach in events in 2024

- **Sports**

- Indoor Sports Registrations: 6,927 (4,589 male/2,068 female; 6,249 residents/ 678 non-residents)
- Outdoor Sports Registrations: 2,865 (1,658 male/1,089 female; 2,167 residents/698 non-residents)



# Parks & Grounds

- Manages diverse outdoor recreation opportunities across 4,194 acres of parkland, 50 miles of trails, and 84 athletic fields.
- Oversees snow removal at 30 CCG sites, Capital Improvement projects, and issues 335 permits for over 5,000 scheduled games among 50 different local organizations.

## 2024 By the Numbers



Mallows Bay Park Vehicle Count: **20,812**



White Plains Golf Course Rounds of Golf: **23,190**



Gilbert Run Park Pavilion Rentals: **400**

## Notable Accomplishments

- Secured **\$5 million in federal grant funding** from NOAA to support the pre-construction and design phase of the future Mallows Bay Heritage Center.
- Turkey Hill Park's **bocce ball courts** opened for public use.
- **ADA-accessible paving projects** were completed at White Plains and Laurel Springs Parks
- A new **maintenance building** was completed at Friendship Farm Park.
- Stethem Park's office/concession building received a **new roof**.
- White Plains Golf Course's **maintenance building** was upgraded with three new commercial garage doors.
- **Electric and internet services** were installed at Mallows Bay Park.

## Bensenville Multi-Purpose Field

- Construction commenced on **synthetic multi-purpose turf field** in August 2024 and was completed in October 2024.
  - Musco LED field lights - November 2024
  - Outside perimeter paving - December 2024
- The field is striped to accommodate **five different sports**:
  - Football
  - Regulation Soccer
  - U-10 Soccer
  - Boys Lacrosse
  - Girls Lacrosse



# Tourism

- Staff supports and partners with the hospitality industry sector to protect, preserve, and promote Charles County as a unique travel destination in Maryland.
- Manages Maryland Tourism Advertisement Grant funding and the Community Grant program.



## Charles County MARYLAND

Legends, Lore and Room to Explore

## Special Events

- **Restaurant Week 2024** (30 participating locations)
  - Hosted new social media competition to engage the public and advertise for restaurants.
- **The Classic Carb Show** - 4,500 attendees (LY 3,900)
  - Held in collaboration with The Shops of Waldorf Center Classic Car Show with DMV Rods & Classic Car Club.
- **Black Business Month** - Recognizes and celebrates Black-owned businesses and entrepreneurs across the county.
- **Food Truck Week and Fare** - A week that promotes the unique cuisines of locally-owned and operated food trucks.
- Hosted **six fishing tournaments** at Smallwood State Park (1,329 anglers).



## Accolades

- Received **Maximizing Opportunities Award** at Maryland Tourism Travel Summit for collaborative BruMate (insulated cooler retailer) campaign.
  - This initiative aligned the marketing resources of the department, BruMate and Ace Hardware stores.
- **State Tourism Grant Award** for FY25: \$109,470 (LY: \$41,923).
  - The grant award increase is attributed to an increase in local investment and positive overall growth in the tax codes deemed attributable to tourism by the Comptroller of Maryland.
- Awarded **\$38,000 to nonprofit organizations** in a competitive grant process to support tourism product development.
  - 2024 grant recipients include McConchie One-Room School, Maryland Veterans Museum, Working Out Wonders, Charles County Art Alliance, Friends of Chapmans State Park, St. Mary Catholic Church Newport and Mattawoman Creek Art Center.

# Tourism

## Notable Accomplishments

- Launched **Explore Charles County** YouTube series
  - Monthly episodes showcase hospitality-focused businesses, initiatives, and attractions.
  - Series was one of the highest-performing on the CCG YouTube channel.
- Attended **American Bus Association Marketplace** and **Pennsylvania Bus Marketplace** to recruit and increase motorcoach business in the county.
- Expanded definition of hotel in county code to include **short-term rental operations**.
- Created the first department **Adult Coloring & Activity Book** featuring county parks, recreation activities and facilities, and tourism assets and attractions.
- Launched **Good Morning Washington ABC7 segments** for Dr. Mudd House, Town of La Plata, Copper Compass Distilling Co., and Gilbert Run Park.
- Partnered with Economic Development to launch a countywide gift card program called "**With Love From Charles.**"
- Hosted **Fox 5 DC Zip Trip** live segment at White Plains Regional Park to highlight tourism businesses, attractions, and the local community.
- Sponsored **community events**: Charles County Pride, Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission Buy Local Challenge, TrioFest, St. Charles Running Festival, Independence Day Fireworks at Regency Furniture Stadium.
- Established Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreement with **Southern Maryland National Heritage Area**.
- Established Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for **Tourism Community Grant**.

