

Mapping Criteria for the Howard County Draft Green Infrastructure Network

The basic building blocks of a green infrastructure network are hubs and corridors, and large areas of interior forest and wetlands are an essential component of the hub and corridor network. Interior forest is generally defined as forest found at least 300 feet from the forest edge. Forest interior habitat is a higher quality forest habitat, because it is generally more isolated, with a closed canopy that creates moist, shaded growing conditions, with fewer invasive species. Forest interior habitat is a more rare forest environment, because development has fragmented our remaining forest into smaller forest patches.



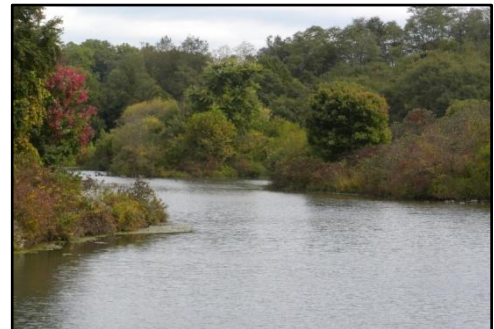
The following presents the mapping criteria for the interior forests, wetlands, and protected lands included in the hubs and corridors of the Howard County draft Green Infrastructure Network. Interagency and public comment will help guide the selection of the mapping criteria for the final network.

Hubs

Three tiers of hubs were mapped. Each tier builds on the previous tier and includes smaller, but still significant areas of habitat and protected lands.

- Tier One or Basic Hubs are the most conservative and include only interior forests of 75 acres or larger with a 300-foot buffer; wetlands of 50 acres or larger with a 100-foot buffer; and County and State parkland and open space that contains at least one of these Tier One resources (for example, interior forests of 75 acres or larger).

The Tier One system contains 34 hubs and approximately 17,840 acres or 11% of the County. This system includes hubs found in the State system – the Patuxent River and Patapsco State Parks, the Patuxent reservoirs, the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area, David Force Park and the Gorman Natural Resource Area – and also adds hubs for Savage Park, Benson Branch Park and Centennial Lake. Approximately 86% of this system is protected in parkland and open space.



- Tier Two or Expanded Hubs are more expansive than Tier One and include interior forests of 50 acres or larger with a 300-foot buffer; wetlands of 25 acres or larger with a 100-foot buffer; and County parkland and open space that contains at least one of these Tier Two resources.

The Tier Two system contains 51 hubs and approximately 20,456 acres or 13% of the County. This system adds hubs to the Tier One system along Cattail Creek, and the Middle and Little Patuxent Rivers, including hubs for West Friendship Park, Lake Elkhorn and Lake Kittamaqundi. Approximately 80% of this system is protected in parkland and open space.

- Tier Three or Enhanced Hubs are the most expansive. While not creating new hubs, the Tier Three system adds adjacent forest, parkland, and open space to the Tier One and Two hub systems.

The Tier Three system contains 51 hubs and approximately 22,251 acres or 14% of the County. Approximately 75% of this system is protected in parkland and open space.

Corridors

Two corridor widths of 300 and 500 feet were mapped. Corridors generally follow rivers and streams with extensions to include adjacent floodplain, wetlands, parkland and open space. Ideally, corridors should provide connections along the best ecological or natural route, and have habitat similar to the connecting hubs (for example, forested corridors should be used to connect forested hubs). Since corridors are a pathway for species migration, movement, and breeding between populations, corridors should connect to another corridor or hub, and not dead end. To save time in mapping the draft network, the corridors were mapped based on the Tier Two Hub system only.



There are 52 corridor connections in the draft network. Corridors generally follow rivers and streams. Upland corridor connections across watershed boundaries were difficult to find, because upland areas between watersheds are often prime locations for roads and related development. Fourteen of the corridors are mapped as potential connections, due to problematic street crossings, the proximity of nearby development and/or concerns about the best path to take when crossing agricultural land. To save time in mapping, most potential corridors only had a 300-foot version mapped, so the 500-foot corridor system is not completely mapped. The 300-foot

corridor system contains approximately 5,050 acres or 3.1% of the County. Only 32% of this system is protected in parkland and open space.