

### 3. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Community facilities and services support the health, safety, and welfare of Worcester County residents and visitors. This chapter seeks to guide facility and service establishment and programming in future years to ensure that the County is served as efficiently as possible.

#### Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives have been identified to provide, maintain and improve the availability of community facilities and resources in Worcester County. These goals seek to align with the State's Sustainable Growth Planning Principles.

1. Work with the State of Maryland to plan for future needs as the County grows, including emergency services, schools, and community facilities.
2. Partner with Worcester County Public Schools for essential services and schools with sufficient services demanded by the County's communities.
3. Look for opportunities to preserve and enhance the small-town character of the County through an increase in community and cultural activities.
4. Provide adequate public services, including health, safety, social, recreational, and waste disposal services to facilitate the County's desired amount and pattern of growth.

#### Government

The State of Maryland allows three different government structures that counties may adopt: Code Home Rule, Commissioner, and Charter. Worcester County is a Code Home Rule County. The County follows the following structure:

**Structure of Government** - Commissioners determine structure through local enactments.

**Public Local Laws** - Commissioners can enact, amend, or repeal local laws on a wide array of matters. Most powers granted Charter counties are also granted to Code counties. The General Assembly may still enact public local laws covering an entire class of Code counties, but not for one single Code county.

**Bonding Authority** - Commissioners authorize. No statutory maximum, but the General Assembly may establish a limit. Subject to local referendum if petitioned by 10% of voters.

**Taxes (Caps, Credits)** - General Assembly authorization required.

**Impact Fees** - Commissioners may establish.

**Civil Infractions/Fines** - Commissioners may enact subject to limitations.

**Commissioner/Council Members** - Determined through enactment of public local laws.

**Police and Corrections Departments** - The Corrections Department may be enacted by local Commissioners. Local Police Departments are approved by the General Assembly.

#### *Government Structure*

Worcester County is governed by a Board of County Commissioners elected from seven districts. Commissioners are elected by voters during the general election that's held every four years.

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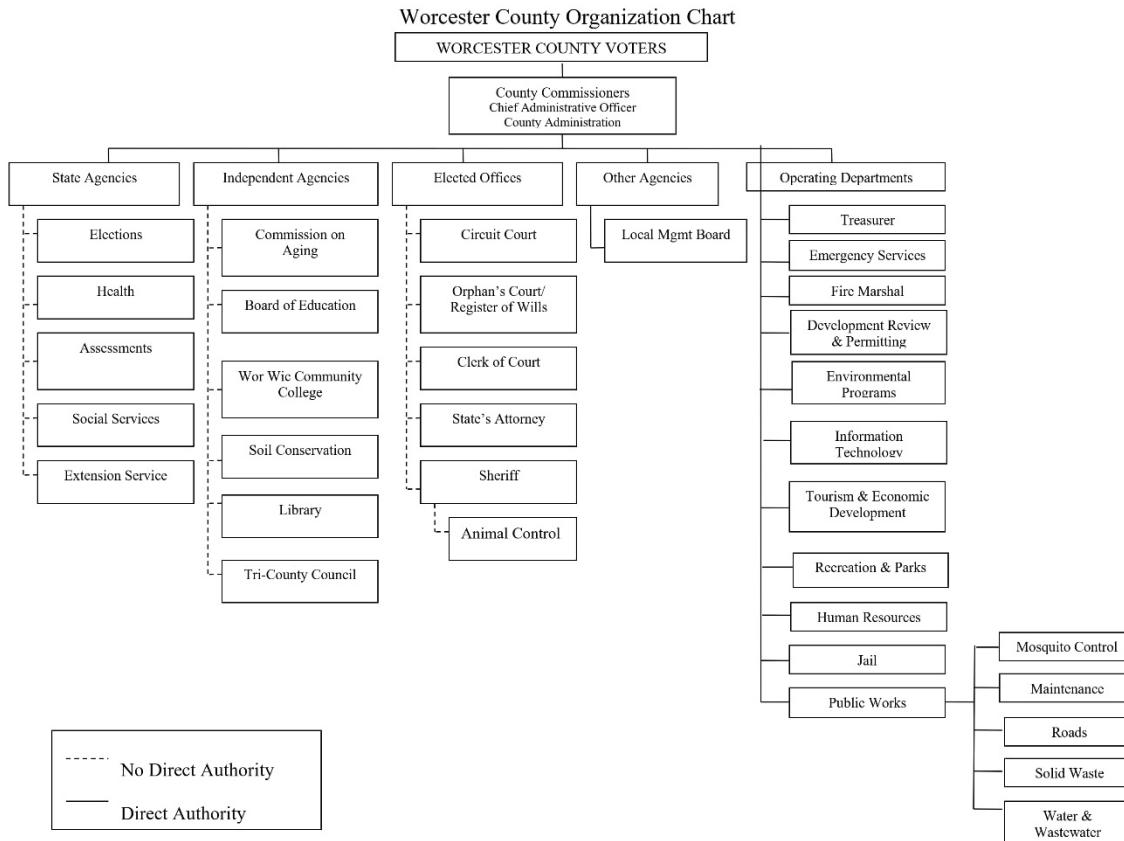
#### *Departments*

The County has the following local Government Departments:

- Administration
- Animal Control
- Board of Elections
- Boards and Committees
- Development Review & Permitting
- Economic Development
- Emergency Services
- Environmental Programs
- Fire Marshal's Office
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Jail
- Public Works
- Recreation and Parks
- Sheriff's Office
- State's Attorney
- Tourism
- Treasurer's Office

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Figure 3-1: County Organization Chart



#### Public Safety

A variety of police protection and emergency services are provided by County, State, and municipal agencies and volunteer organizations. This section provides key information for these services.

**Map 3-1, Public Safety Facilities**, shows the locations of the facilities listed below.

#### Law Enforcement

Worcester County is committed to continuing to provide a safe environment for its residents. The Sheriff's office, located in Snow Hill, provides judicial, field and investigative services and supports the Worcester County School District through their School Resource Division.

#### Office of the Fire Marshal

The Worcester County Fire Marshal's Office is responsible for investigating all fires in the County where arson is suspected, the fire is undetermined by the Fire Department, and/or an injury or death has occurred. The Worcester County Fire Marshal's Office is the local enforcing agency for three municipalities and the County, including all provisions of the Maryland and Worcester County laws

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insofar as such powers and duties relate to fires, fire prevention, fire protection, fire inspections, fire investigations and explosive incidents.

The County Fire Marshal's Office is active in fire prevention, designing programs in fire education that are geared towards all ages of County citizens. The Worcester County Fire Marshal's Office is also responsible for the response and mitigation of all bio terrorism incidents in Worcester County.

The County Fire Marshal, Chief Deputy Fire Marshal, Deputy Fire Marshals, and Fire Investigators/Inspectors have the authority to enforce and perform the duties required under COMAR 29.06.01 (Maryland State Fire Prevention Code) and Code of Public Local Laws for Worcester County PS 1-201 & PS 1-401 (Worcester County Fire Prevention Code).

The County Fire Marshal's are deputized by the Maryland State Fire Marshal under the Annotated Code of Maryland, Public Safety Article 6, §6-304 and have the authority of Title 6, §6-305, §6-307, §6,309, §6-310, §6-312, §6-317, §6,318, §6-319 and §6-320 and the authority of a police officer when investigating fire related crimes under the Code of Public Local Laws for Worcester County PS 1-301(d), (\*\*) the Annotated Code of Maryland, Public Safety Article, Title 3, Subtitle 1, § 3-101, & Title 3, Subtitle 2, § 3-201, Criminal Procedures Article, Title 2, Subtitle 2 § 2-208.4 and the Criminal Law Article, Title 4, Subtitle 2, § 4-201

Fire Departments located within the County include:

- Snow Hill Fire Department
- Berlin Fire Company
- Stockton Volunteer Fire Company
- Girdletree Volunteer Fire Company
- Pocomoke City Volunteer Fire Company
- Showell Volunteer Fire Department
- Newark Volunteer Fire Department
- Bishopville Volunteer Fire Department
- Ocean City Volunteer Fire Company
- Ocean Pines Fire Department

Map 3-1: Public Safety Facilities





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### Parks and Recreation

Parks and recreation are critical to the quality of life in the County. Natural resources, open space, and recreational facilities add to the community's quality of life and make a positive contribution to the County's sustainability.

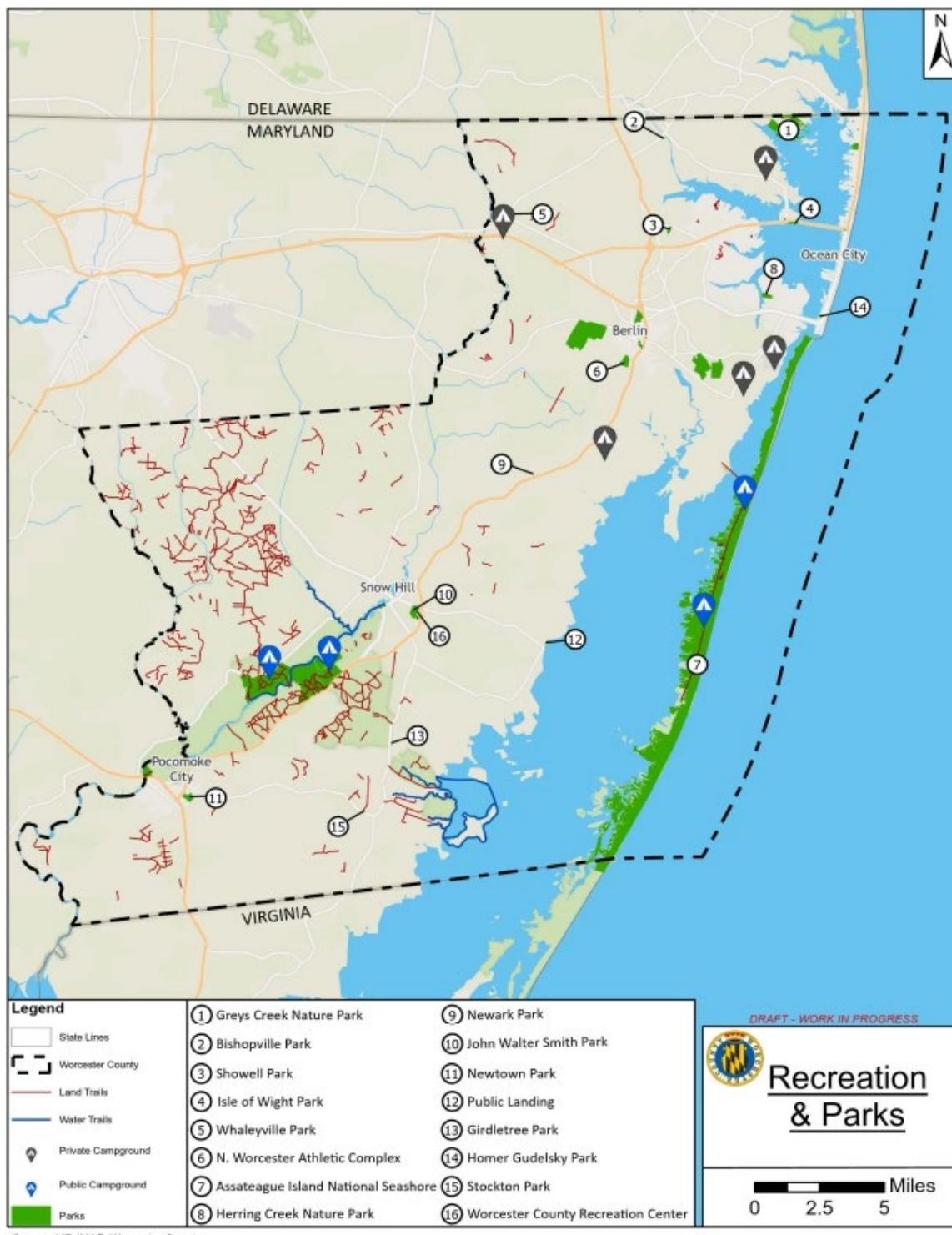
In 2023, the County approved a Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP), a five-year plan that identifies the location and recreational opportunities available across the County, how these parks and facilities are used, the proximity of these parks to the County's population, as well as the need for additional parks and facilities and where these facilities could be located to fill any gaps. The LPPRP serves as the basis for the County's participation in the State's Program Open Space (POS) program.

In addition to the Parks and Recreational facilities identified in this Plan, the LPPRP identifies other open space, parks and recreational facilities that are not owned by the County but contribute to the inventory of parks, open space and recreational facilities that County residents may use. The LPPRP is incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan by reference as a functional plan that provides more information and guidance to County officials about these facilities.

The County has numerous park and recreation facilities for the public to utilize. These facilities offer a variety of amenities and serve various areas of the County and its shore. The County will continue to maintain these facilities as well as identify needs and opportunities to update or expand the facilities as needed. **Map 3-2, Parks & Recreation** shows the locations of some of the main facilities listed below.

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Map 3-2: Parks & Recreation



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Table 3-1: Recreation & Parks

Park Name	Location	Acreage	Designation
<b>Assateague Island National Seashore</b>	6850 Gatehouse Rd, Berlin, MD 00152	8,476*	Nature/Beach
<b>Bishopville Park</b>	10602 Bishopville Rd, Bishopville, MD 21813	5.02	Neighborhood
<b>Girdletree Park</b>	5901 Boxiron Rd, Girdletree, MD 21829	3	Neighborhood
<b>Greys Creek Nature Park</b>	13240 Rollie Rd E, Bishopville, MD 21813	574	Nature
<b>Herring Creek Nature Park</b>	12500 Nature Park Dr, Ocean City, MD 21842	43.55	Nature
<b>Homer Gudelsky Park</b>	13055 Old Bridge Rd, Ocean City, MD 21842	0.97	Nature
<b>Isle of Wight Park</b>	13070 St Martins Neck Rd, Bishopville, MD 21813	12	Nature
<b>John Walter Smith Park</b>	6030 Public Landing Rd, Snow Hill, MD 21863	80	Regional
<b>Newark Park</b>	8332 Newark Rd, Newark, MD 21841	4.2	Neighborhood
<b>Newtown Park</b>	2001 Groton Rd, Pocomoke City, MD 21851	58	Regional
<b>Northern Worcester Athletic Complex</b>	9906 Buckingham Ln, Berlin, MD 21811	76	Regional
<b>Public Landing</b>	8303 Public Landing Rd, Snow Hill, MD 21863	8.7*	Beach
<b>Showell Park</b>	11281 Racetrack Rd, Berlin, MD 21811	21	Regional
<b>Stockton Park</b>	5520 Hursley Rd, Stockton, MD 21864	4	Neighborhood
<b>Whaleyville Park</b>	11723 Sheppards Crossing Rd, Whaleyville, MD 21872	1	Neighborhood
<b>Worcester County Recreation Center</b>	6030 Public Landing Rd, Snow Hill, MD 21863	1	Multipurpose Fitness Center

Source: Worcester County Park GIS layer; \* denotes that acreage values are calculated from this source using GIS analysis.

#### *Assateague Island National Seashore*

Assateague Island National Seashore is a 37-mile-long island along the Atlantic coast of Maryland and Virginia. Activities available to visitors include beaches, swimming, surfing, wildlife viewing, birding, crabbing, fishing and kayaking. Annually, the seashore hosts more than a million visitors.

Assateague Island includes both state and federal park lands and is not managed by Worcester County, although it serves as a recreational asset for County residents and functions as a major recreational asset drawing visitors from throughout the region, as well as nationally.

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#### *Bishopville Park*

Bishopville Park is a 5-acre neighborhood park located just outside of the community of Bishopville. Amenities include a grassy open area that can be used for both informal activities and organized recreation functions, a playground, and free Wi-Fi.

#### *Girdletree Park*

Girdletree Park is a neighborhood park in the Village of Girdletree (30 miles southwest of Ocean City). This 3-acre park includes a playground with two adjoining sections and a pavilion with grills and picnic tables.

#### *Greys Creek Nature Park*

Greys Creek Nature Park is a 574-acre nature area located at the northeast tip of Worcester County and offers views of Assawoman Bay, Ocean City, and Fenwick Island, Delaware. The property conserves the natural habitat and contains upland coastal forest, non-tidal wetlands, and tidal saltwater wetlands. The park is currently not open to the public.

#### *Herring Creek Nature Park*

Herring Creek Nature Park is a 44-acre park located in western Ocean City. The park features a pavilion that is available for picnics and gatherings, as well as walking/jogging paths and bird watching stations.

#### *Homer Gudelsky Park*

Homer Gudelsky Park is located at the end of Maryland 707 in western Ocean City. This location offers access to Sinepuxent Bay and provides shore access for fishing.

#### *Isle of Wight Park*

Isle of Wight Park is a 12-acre nature park located south of Maryland 90 in Bishopville. Offered amenities include a canoe and kayak launch site, two piers, and picnic tables.

#### *John Walter Smith Park*

John Walter Smith Park is an 80-acre park that's located on Public Landing Road in Snow Hill. The park includes pavilions, a frisbee golf course, trails, courts, and an athletic field. This location is also where Worcester County Department of Recreation and Parks programming and maintenance operations are located.

#### *Newark Park*

Newark Neighborhood Park is a 4-acre park located in the community of Newark, between the towns of Snow Hill and Berlin. The park offers a pavilion, playground, and volleyball pit.

#### *Newton Park*

Newtown Park is a 58-acre park located in Pocomoke, serving as an athletic complex for the southern end of the County. Amenities include sport fields, a pavilion, a walking and biking trail, a fishing pond, and a playground.

#### *Northern Worcester Athletic Complex*

The Northern Worcester Athletic Complex is a 76-acre park in Berlin. Amenities include sport fields, a pavilion, walking trails, and a playground.

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#### *Public Landing*

Public Landing is located at the end of Public Landing Wharf Road in Snow Hill. The park offers a beach area, a pier to go crabbing or fishing, and 30 boat slips that are leased yearly through the Worcester County Recreation and Parks Department.

#### *Showell Park*

Showell Park is a 21-acre park located in Showell. This park hosts the County's softball leagues and serves as an overflow facility during large softball tournaments. Showell Park offers two playgrounds, one for two- to five-year-olds and one for five- to 12-year-olds. Pavilions, a walking trail, and courts are also available.

#### *Stockton Neighborhood Park*

Stockton Park is a 4-acre neighborhood park located along Maryland 366, about nine miles east of Maryland 113. The park offers a pavilion equipped with picnic tables and a barbecue grill. The park also has a playground unit, benches, and a baseball/softball backstop for the community to use.

#### *Whaleyville Park*

Whaleyville Park is located near the intersection of Maryland 610 and Shepperd's Crossing Road in Whaleyville. The park includes a playground and picnic tables under a shaded area for the community to use.

#### *Worcester County Recreation Center*

The Worcester County Recreation Center is in Snow Hill. The facility includes a climate-controlled 47,000 square-foot multi-purpose fitness arena, along with the offices of the Recreation and Parks staff. The center includes a 520-seat arena, a four-lane track, courts, meeting spaces, a childcare room, and a fitness room.

### Educational Facilities

The purpose of reviewing educational facilities within the comprehensive plan is not to supersede the role of the Worcester County Public Schools (WCPS) in planning for school facilities, but rather to highlight the need to coordinate school facilities planning with the comprehensive plan, and account for school planning in the County's open space and recreation planning, planning for broadband access, and the implications of school sites on transportation planning.

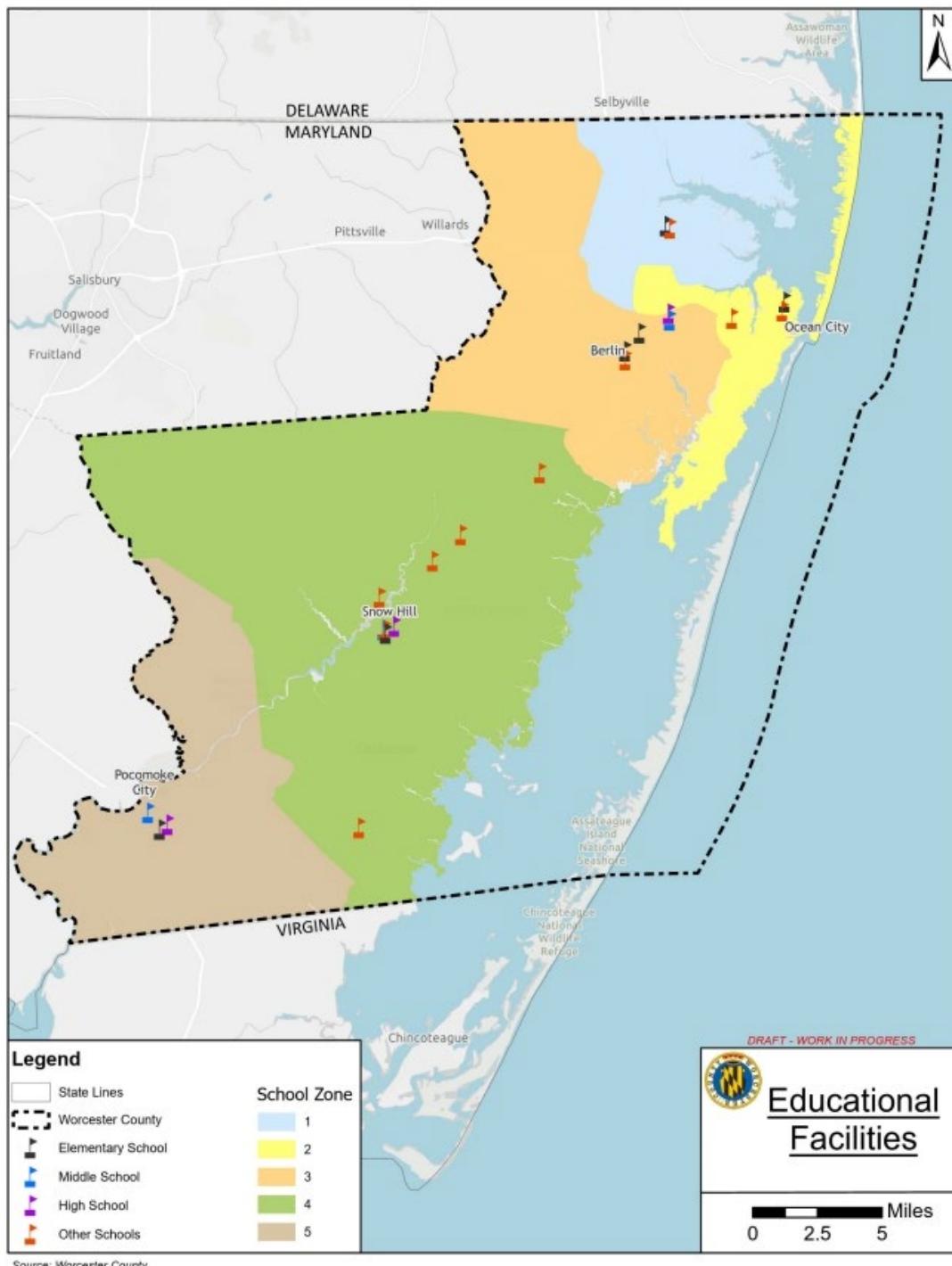
The type and quality of educational opportunities are directly linked to the economic vitality of a community. Building new school facilities within a new or established community benefits from forethought, and considerations of the student experience and surrounding built environment. Site selection requires careful consideration of the existing land uses, street capacity, and public services such as water availability, wastewater treatment capacity, emergency services, and library facilities.

Worcester County Public Schools enroll approximately 6,800 students, between Pre-K and twelfth grade, in the 14 schools. WCPS, like the other Local Education Agencies (LEAs) across Maryland, plan for capital facilities through their annual Educational Facilities Master Plans (EFMP). These plans are submitted to the Worcester County Department of Development Review and Permitting, as well as to the Maryland Department of Planning, to review for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.

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**Map 3-3, Educational Facilities**, shows the locations of the schools listed below.

**Map 3-3: Educational Facilities**



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#### *Elementary Schools*

**Buckingham Elementary School:** located in Berlin; serves grades Pre-K through 4 and currently houses approximately 530 students.

**Ocean City Elementary School:** located in West Ocean City; serves grades Pre-K through fourth grade and enrolls approximately 530 students.

**Showell Elementary School:** located between Showell and Ocean Pines, opened in 2020; serves grades Pre-K through fourth and enrolls approximately 620 students.

**Pocomoke Elementary School:** located in Pocomoke; serves grades Pre-K through fourth and enrolls approximately 460 students.

**Snow Hill Elementary School:** located in Snow Hill; serves grades Pre-K through third and enrolls approximately 380 students.

**Berlin Intermediate School:** located in Berlin; serves fifth and sixth grades; and enrolls approximately 625 students. Feeder schools to Berlin Intermediate include Buckingham, Ocean City, and Showell Elementary Schools.

#### *Middle Schools*

**Pocomoke Middle School:** located in Pocomoke City; serves fourth through eighth grades and enrolls approximately 455 students.

**Snow Hill Middle School:** located in Snow Hill; serves grades fourth through eighth grades and enrolls approximately 400 students.

**Stephen Decatur Middle School:** located in Berlin; serves seventh and eighth grades and enrolls approximately 700 students.

#### *High Schools*

**Pocomoke High School:** located in Pocomoke; enrolls approximately 355 students.

**Snow Hill High School:** located in Snow Hill; enrolls approximately 360 students.

**Stephen Decatur High School:** located in Ocean City; is the largest of Worcester County's three high schools; enrolls 1,400 students.

#### *Other Facilities*

**Cedar Chapel Special School:** located in Snow Hill; Cedar Chapel Special School serves students with special needs, ages 3 through 21. Currently the school serves 50 students.

**The Nest Early Learning Center:** located in Newark; opened in 2023 with five teachers, as well as a dozen high school students serving as apprentices. The building serves children ages 2 through 4.

**Worcester Technical High School:** located in Newark.

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### Library Facilities

Public libraries provide free access to information and resources to support literacy and learning. The Worcester County Library system includes five library branches in Berlin, Ocean City, Ocean Pines, Pocomoke, and Snow Hill.

In addition to collections of books, CDs, and DVDs, patrons can check out internet hot spots, laptops, and specialty learning kits. Each branch provides access to computers and printing services. All branches have local history sections, and the Snow Hill branch houses the Worcester Room containing special collections and genealogy resources. A "Books by Mail" program helps those unable to leave their homes due to a temporary or permanent disability. The Library also operates the "Pop-Up Library," a mobile outreach vehicle.

Programs are offered for all ages and range from story times that support kindergarten readiness to personal enrichment classes. Job seekers can use the library to search and apply for employment opportunities. Libraries also support digital literacy with one-on-one assistance and have taken on a greater technological role through the provision of eBooks, databases, and remote access to library materials.

Libraries serve as community gathering places and provide space for studying, small group gatherings, and as a meeting place for community organizations. This is an important service, particularly in rural areas.

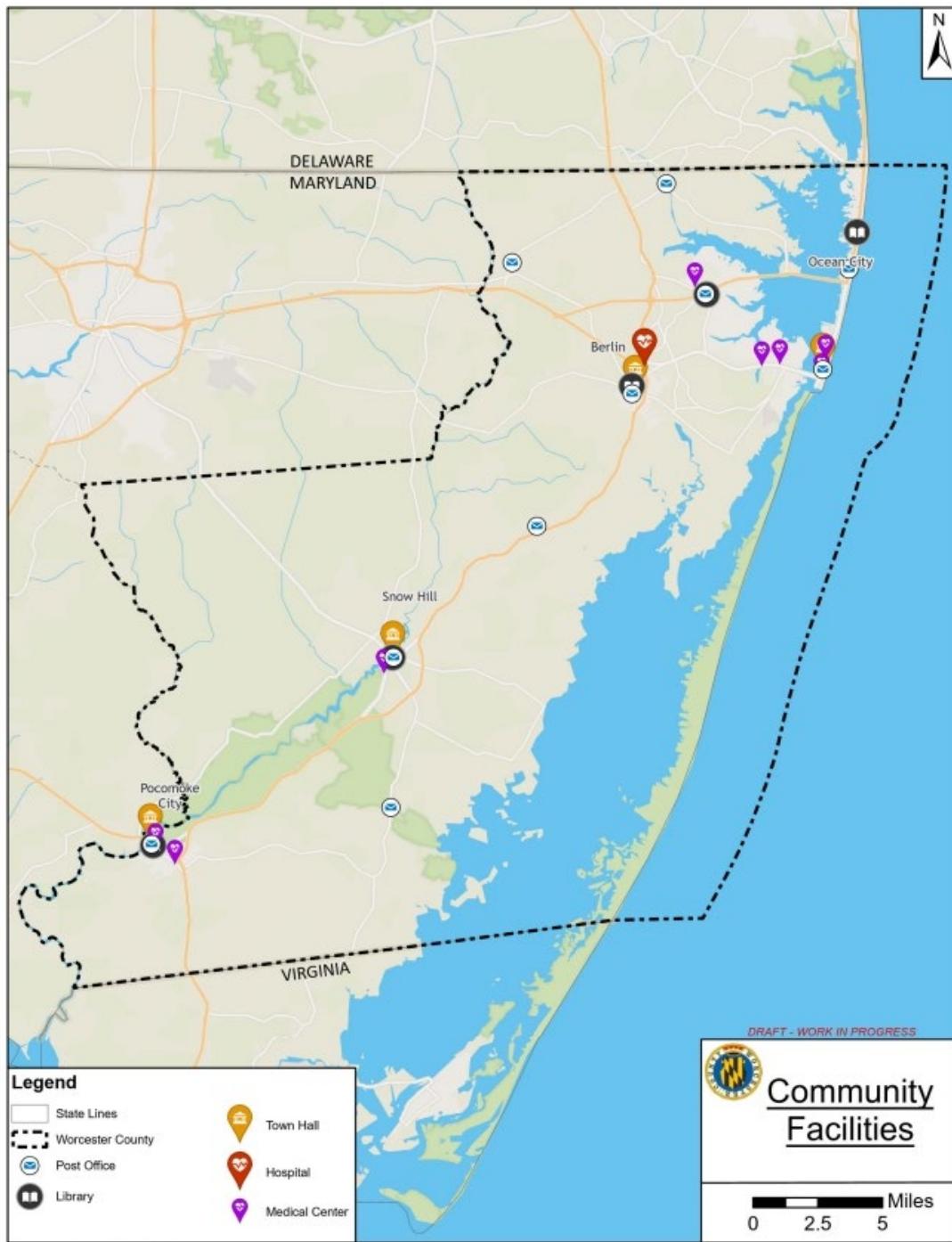
The Library Board of Trustees advise the Library Director, approve budgets, adopt policies, and ensure the library meets the needs of the community through its collection, services, and programs. Trustees are comprised of seven members of the public from various parts of the County. Public libraries are a resource that must be supported to encourage vibrant and sustainable communities.

### Health Services

There are many dental, medical, physical therapy, and mental health practitioners within the County to serve the community. There are some medical centers and urgent care clinics within the County but the main health care facility is Atlantic General Hospital, located in Berlin. The location of this hospital can be found on [Map 3-4, Community Facilities](#).

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Map 3-4: Community Facilities



Source: MD iMAP, Worcester County