



# PROSA STRATEGY

Parks | Recreation | Open Space | Access

ENDORSED BY THE PARK AUTHORITY BOARD SEPTEMBER 2023

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# INTRODUCTION



## ENSURING EVERYONE HAS ACCESS TO A HIGH QUALITY PARK

As the stewards of 420 park sites and over 23,800 acres of parkland, the Fairfax County Park Authority is proud to foster healthy lifestyles to over 1.17 million people who live in the county, as well as those who do business, visit, and recreate here. Parks, open space, and recreation provide a profoundly positive impact on our lives.

The world has shifted in the past few years, as has the field of parks and recreation. Outdoor recreation has really changed since the COVID-19 pandemic, with more people than ever seeking the physiological and psychological benefits of parks and trails. Additionally, parks have not been immune from the continued effects of systemic and institutional racism, which have contributed to inequalities in the geographic distribution, quality, and maintenance of park spaces in our community. In 2016, the Park Authority adopted the One Fairfax Policy, Fairfax County's joint racial and social equity policy. Through PROSA and other initiatives, we're working to deliver park and recreation services to help achieve racial and social equity across our community.

Our commitment to fostering healthy lifestyles for everyone in Fairfax County is core to the Park Authority's mission. Everyone in Fairfax County should have access to a high quality park within a 10-minute walk from their home. However, not everyone enjoys the same quality parks as others in the county. The vision of the PROSA Strategy is straightforward—it's to ensure that the dominant sociodemographic indicators of an area do not pre-determine the quality and quantity of parks in a community. Overall, this strategy will help the Park Authority provide an equitable and accessible world class park system.

The PROSA Strategy will guide us to provide a stronger balance of park experiences countywide while enhancing park access, park equity, and habitat connectivity among our parks. This data-driven approach will help us plan improvements to our park system to truly enrich the quality of life for all members of the Fairfax County community.

See you in the parks!

Jai Cole  
Executive Director



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# OVERVIEW

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- » Purpose
- » About Fairfax County
- » About the Fairfax County Park Authority



Bolivian concert at Ossian Hall Park.

## OVERVIEW

Vibrant and inclusive parks and recreation systems make great communities. They improve community health, bolster our economy, and are incredible public spaces for residents to play, enjoy, learn, and recreate in. Parks and recreation are ever evolving. Today's best practices focus on improving the quality of life for everyone so that all residents have access to high quality outdoor spaces.

## PURPOSE

The Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Access (PROSA) Strategy is a data-driven approach that will help achieve equitable park access throughout the county. This parks and open space system strategy was developed through a multiyear planning process, building on the Great Parks, Great Communities Parks & Recreation System Master Plan, the Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2019-2023, One Fairfax, Fairfax Countywide Strategic Plan and public input. More specifically, the Park Authority's Strategic Plan guided the Park Authority to 1) develop and implement a sub-county area approach to county park planning and capital projects that considers resource protection, service

level delivery, equity, recreation and community needs, and 2) develop an overall open space strategy to comprehensively look at open space, equitable access, connectivity of environmental corridors and cultural resource preservation.

The PROSA Strategy will provide a framework for equitable access to the Fairfax County park system. Specifically, the PROSA Strategy will provide a countywide roadmap for improved park access, a balance of recreational experiences, bolster habitat connectivity, and prioritize recreation needs and projects with an equity lens to meet the diverse needs of Fairfax County residents. Aligned with the Fairfax County Park Authority's (FCPA) mission, values, and vision, the PROSA Strategy will:

- Improve 10 minute walk access to FCPA parks.
- Enhance access to complete park experiences.
- Enrich habitat connectivity between environmental corridors.
- Analyze and prioritize recreation needs and projects with an equity lens.

Furthermore, the PROSA Strategy is a data-driven approach to guide park investments so that all communities have access to a quality park, no matter where you live in Fairfax County. These broad strategies are intended to be a high-level approach to identify and prioritize areas for park investments and improvements. A deeper dive by park site will take place for site specific improvements as well as a context-sensitive analysis. While the PROSA Strategy focuses on Park Authority owned and managed parks, consideration will be given to how other public park providers, such as schools, adjacent jurisdictions, private providers, and local, state, and federal parks help meet public needs for open space and recreation. The PROSA Strategy provides a path forward for improved walkable access to parks, access to a balance of recreational experiences, and habitat connectivity countywide, prioritizing projects and park investments with an equity lens.

## FAIRFAX COUNTY

Fairfax County, located in Northern Virginia within the Washington D.C. metro area, has a diverse population of approximately 1.17 million people. More than 50% of the population identifies as Asian, two or more races, African American or another race, making it a majority-minority county. In addition, roughly 17% of the population is Hispanic. The population of Fairfax County is multicultural. In fact, 39.8% of residents speak a language other than English at home. The county is comprised of a mix of urban and suburban development, which contributes to the richness of its park system. Parks and open spaces play a crucial role in promoting the well-being of residents as well as natural and cultural resources, providing opportunities for outdoor recreation, social interaction, and a connection to nature. As the county continues to grow and evolve, it is essential to ensure that all residents have access to these valuable parks and open spaces.

## FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY

On December 6, 1950, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors created the Fairfax County Park Authority. The Park Authority was authorized to

## PARKS IN FAIRFAX COUNTY

Parks connect the Fairfax County community by facilitating a wide range of programmed events and by providing quality recreation experiences.

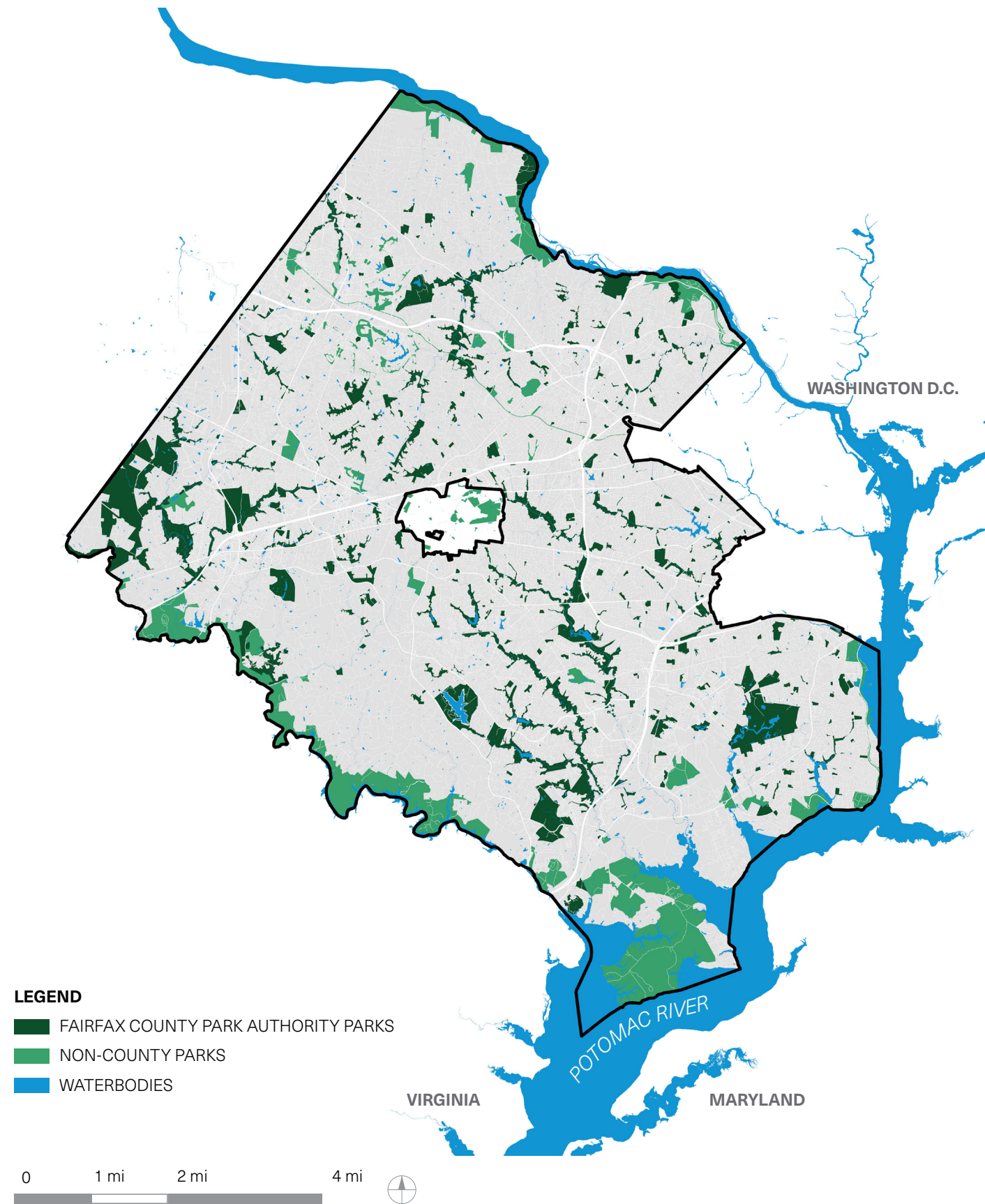
make decisions concerning land acquisition, park development and operations in Fairfax County, Virginia. The Park Authority's mission is to enrich the quality of life for all members of the community through an enduring park system that provides a healthy environment, preserves natural and cultural heritage, offers inspiring recreational experiences, and promotes healthy lifestyles. As the largest landowner in the county, the Park Authority manages more than 23,850 acres of land spread across 420 park sites. The Park Authority offers a wide array of park amenities including over 350 playgrounds, 342 miles of trails, 400 courts, 260 fields, 8 golf courses, swimming pools, recreation centers, nature centers, lakefront parks, as well as natural, historical, and cultural sites and resources.



Anglers at Lake Fairfax Park.

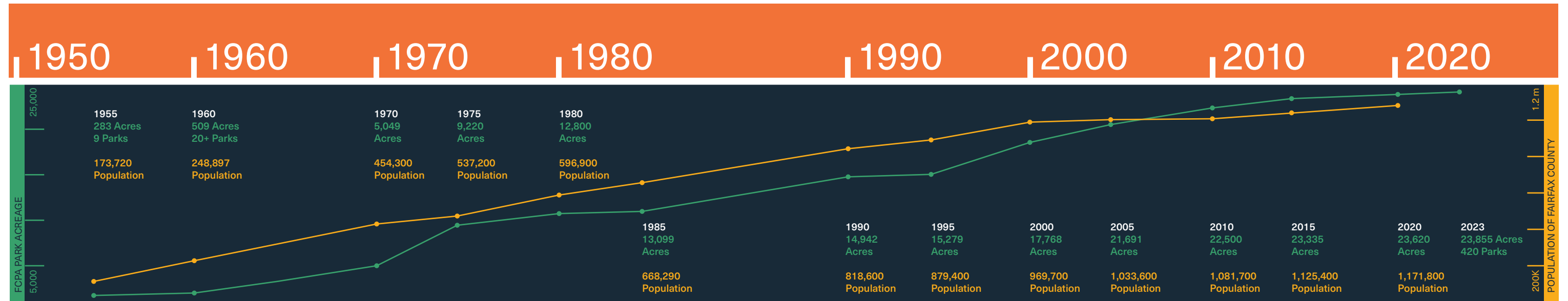


Figure 1: Publicly owned parks in Fairfax County



Families playing at the Monticello Park playground.

# MAJOR EVENTS IN FCPA HISTORY



**1950** The Fairfax County Park Authority was created by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors on December 6, 1950. The Park Authorities Act, passed by the Virginia General Assembly in 1950, allowed the creation of park authorities.

**1951** LeRoy Eakin, Sr. donated 14 acres to the Park Authority in one of the earliest land acquisitions, which later became part of present-day Eakin Community Park.

**1952** A 16-acre tract of land became the Park Authority's first land purchase. It later became part of Great Falls Park.

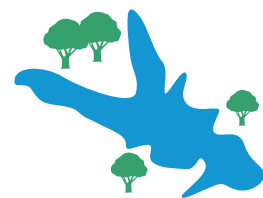


Great Falls Park acquired.

**1959** The first bond referendum gave the Park Authority \$4.8 million for land acquisition. Board member Ellamae Doyle, who served from 1958 to 1974, said the bond was the single most important factor in setting the direction and tone of the Park Authority and for preservation of land in Fairfax County. The bond provided for the acquisition of 75 neighborhood and community parks and approximately 20 acres of stream valley land.

**1961** When plans to build an airport in the Burke Lake area were abandoned, the federal government transferred the land to the Park Authority. The project at the time created the largest outdoor recreation area in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

**1965** The Park Authority purchased the Springfield Reservoir and surrounding land (242.74 acres) from the federal government under the Federal Land to Park Program. The site would become Lake Accotink Park.



Burke Lake area transferred.

**1966** The second bond for \$15 million was framed by closely following community recommendations presented at public hearings. Strong demand for park facilities and the importance of acquiring land that was quickly disappearing throughout Fairfax resulted in 75% of the funds being reserved for land acquisition and 25% for development.

**1968** The Park Authority Board adopted the Stream Valley Park Plan.

**1971** The Park Authority was deeded the 640-acre Ellanor C. Lawrence Park that included Cabell's Mill.

**1971** Fairfax County voters passed a third bond referendum for parks, this time a \$28 million package. For the first time, land acquisition was not the top priority of a bond. 51% of the bond was designated for development with the other 49% set for land acquisition.

**1975** Through the Legacy of Parks Program, 1,261 acres of land was acquired by the Park Authority that eventually became Huntley Meadows Park. When it was acquired, Huntley Meadows was the largest park in the Fairfax County Park Authority system, conserving both wetlands and diverse wildlife.

**1977** The Wakefield REC Center, renamed the Audrey Moore Rec Center in 2004, was the first public indoor recreation center in Fairfax County. At the time, few recreation centers in the nation were run by public agencies, and the scale of Wakefield might have made it the first of its kind. Park and recreation organizations throughout the country took notice, and it paved the way for other similar recreation complexes throughout the county.



Four new REC Centers.

**1983** The Fairfax County Park Authority receives its first Gold Medal Award by the National Recreation and Park Association for excellence in the field of park and recreation management.

**1988** The sixth park bond, a \$77 million package, was passed by county voters.

**1988** Four new Rec Centers opened to the public (George Washington, Oak Marr, Spring Hill and South Run) and joined four existing county recreation centers. They were built in response to booming use and high regard for Park Authority development projects.

**1994** The Park Authority created its first comprehensive plan.

**1997** The Water Mine opened at Lake Fairfax Park.

**1999** The Cross County Trail project was developed, which would eventually bring together 40 miles of trail across Fairfax County. Proposed in 1995, all sections were connected and opened in 2006.



Cross County Trail developed.

**2000** The first dog park opened at Blake Lane Park. Ten more dog parks were created by the Park Authority through 2019.



Fairfax County's first dog park.

**2004** The first agency-wide Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP) was adopted by the Park Authority Board to help achieve the resource preservation mission of the Fairfax County Park Authority.

**2006** Official opening of Clemyjontri Park. The park includes a playground that allows children of all abilities to enjoy park and playground environments side-by-side.

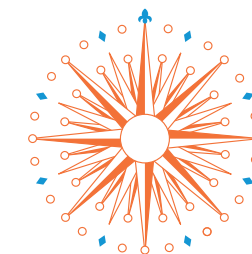
**2006** The Cultural Resource Management Plan (CRMP) was adopted by the Park Authority Board to address cultural resource issues and strategies. The plan identified 48 issues in 11 topic areas concerning management and protection of cultural resources.

**2008** The Park Authority became a fully accredited park agency by the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA).

**2014** The Park Authority Board adopted a new Natural Resource Management Plan. The plan provided direction to incorporate natural resource management in all Park Authority functions.

**2015** The Park Authority celebrated 65 years of service to the Fairfax County community.

**2019** The Park Authority wins fourth Gold Medal Award by the National Recreation and Park Association.



FCPA's Fourth National Gold Medal Award from the National Recreation and Park Association.

**2020** Voters approved the 14th park bond referendum for \$112 million that included \$100 million for the Fairfax County Park Authority and \$12 million for NOVA Parks.

## WHAT'S NEXT FOR FCPA?







# 10-MINUTE WALK ACCESS TO PARKS

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## IN THIS CHAPTER

- » 10-Minute Walk Vision
- » How do We Measure the 10-Minute Walk?
- » How do We Get There?



Park visitors at Green Spring Gardens.

### 10-MINUTE WALK VISION

Parks, open spaces, and trails offer innumerable benefits to Fairfax County residents, visitors, and businesses. They improve neighborhood health, our local economy, and are community hubs so that everyone can enjoy the benefits of the outdoors. Parks promote regular exercise, reduce the risk of chronic health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and obesity, and improve mental health by mitigating the effects of stress, anxiety, and depression by offering a place for relaxation and mindfulness.

Having a park within a 10-minute (½ mile) walk from home encourages greater physical activity and fosters healthier lifestyles. Reflecting nationwide best practices, walkable park access is an important factor in measuring how parks are serving the community. To provide equitable park access to everyone in Fairfax County, all residents should have safe access to a park within a 10-minute walk from their home.

Walkable park access is a quality of life standard and best practice across the United States. The 10-minute walk campaign is a nationwide effort led by over 300 communities, championed by the Trust for Public Land, National Recreation and Park Association, and the Urban Land Institute, to promote and ensure that everyone is within a 10-minute walk to a quality park from their home. Several Park Authority and county plans identify as

a strategic objective increasing walkable access to park entrances, facility entrances, or trailheads so that residents have no more than a 10-minute walk to nature and recreational experiences, including the Park Authority's Great Parks, Great Communities Parks & Recreation System Master Plan, the Park Authority's Strategic Plan, and the Fairfax Countywide Strategic Plan.

### HOW DO WE MEASURE THE 10-MINUTE WALK?

The Park Authority has historically considered the proximity of residents to parkland as an important measurement of how well it is serving the community. Proximity, as shown in *Figure 2*, looks at park access as a straight line, or “as the crow flies”, from the edge of the park to a given distance (e.g., ½ mile). The 2016 Needs Assessment proximity analysis indicated that 90% of Fairfax County's population lived within a ½ mile radius of parkland. However, GIS technology using public park entrance data and pedestrian infrastructure provides a snapshot of physical walking distance to a park.

The Park Authority is measuring access to public park entrances. Currently, approximately 52% of residents have access to a Park Authority park within a 10-minute walk from their home, while roughly 48% of residents do not as shown in *Figure 3* on page 20. Park entrance data was developed

## PROXIMITY VS. ACCESS

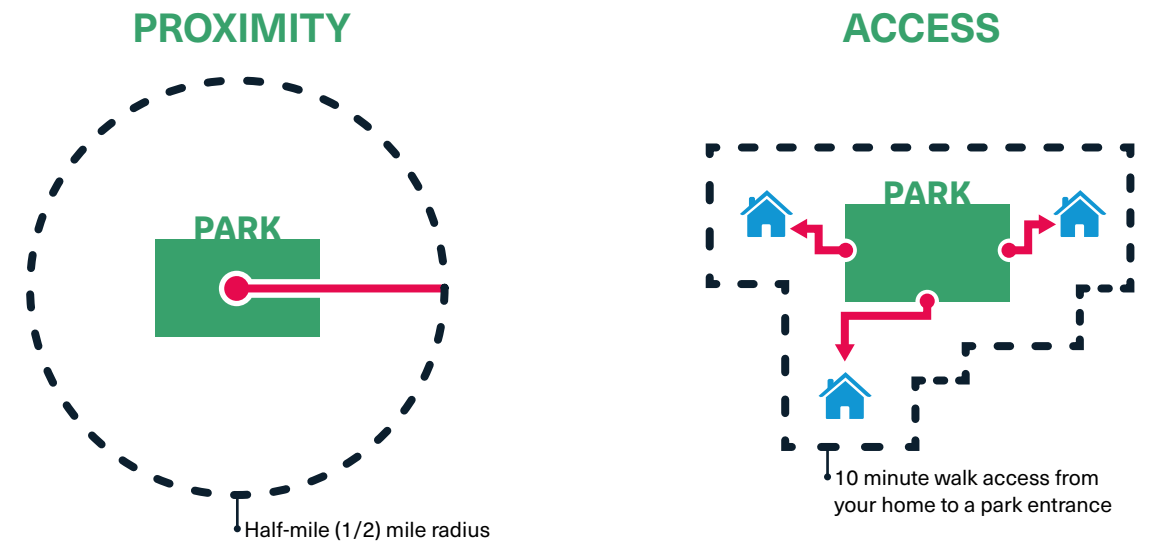
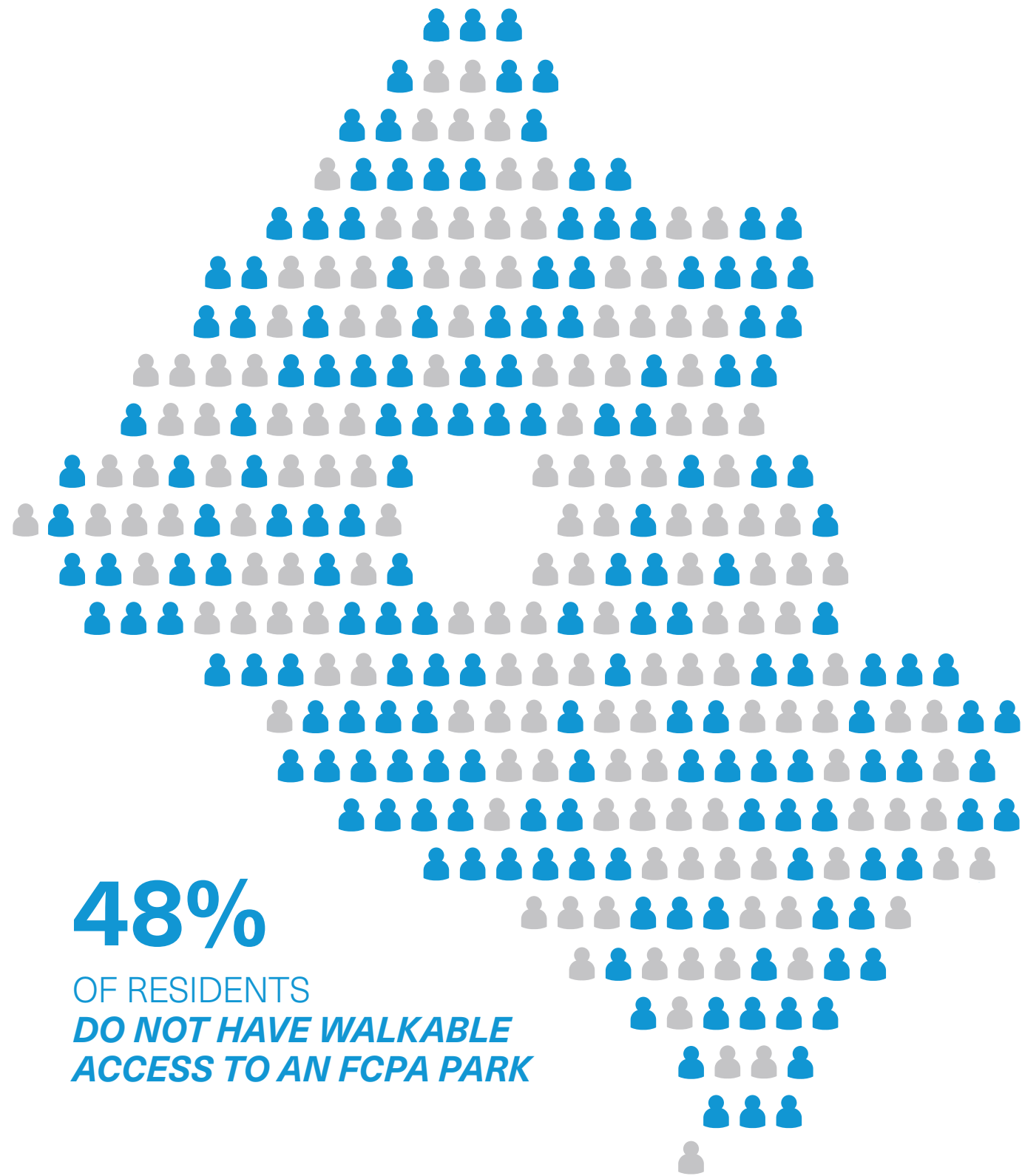


Figure 2: Proximity vs. Access

Most county residents live near parkland, but far fewer have walkable access to a park. Roughly 90% of residents live within a ½ mile radius of a park while approximately 52% of residents live within a 10-minute walk to a park entrance. Walkable access, as shown in the figure above, is a key indicator of how well and equitably the Park Authority serves the community.



Park visitors at Green Spring Gardens.



**Figure 3:** Walkable Park Access in Fairfax County



Hikers enjoying the trails.



Hikers enjoying a walk around Burke Lake.

to comprehensively understand the types of public access points at Park Authority parks. The park entrance data used in this analysis include existing entry points that were specifically developed to access or cross through parkland and are maintained by the Park Authority or another public entity. Informal, community, and social trails are not included in this analysis as they are not authorized or maintained by the Park Authority. The park entrance data indicates whether entrances are for public access or maintenance access at each park.

Additionally, today's technology shows the existing street network, including sidewalks and crosswalks, to further understand whether walkable access is

achievable. The street network data was obtained from Esri. Utilizing the public park entrance data, the area that can be reached within a half mile or 10-minute walking distance within the street network surrounding each park entrance is then mapped and the number of residents within the walking network is calculated. This approach provides a snapshot of the current state of walkable access to Park Authority parks. Park access will be further evaluated at the site level to include public parks owned and managed by other park providers, such as school fields, privately-owned but publicly accessible parks, and other local, regional, state, and federal government parks. While the Park Authority does not have park entrance data for non-Park Authority park sites, these other public park providers will be taken into account when analyzing gaps.

There are a variety of physical barriers that hinder walk access to parks. Physical barriers include large roadways and highways with limited or no pedestrian crossings, an absence of sidewalks and crosswalks, street networks with limited connection points, or natural features like a stream or forested area. Identifying where gaps exist is the first step to providing 10-minute walk access to parks, followed by assessing the types of physical barriers that prevent such access. Opportunities to remove physical barriers and improve park access range from adding a trailhead or a new park entrance where feasible, to partnering with an agency to add a crosswalk, or acquiring parkland infrastructure.

### **PARK ACCESS WITHOUT DRIVING**

Residents within a 10 minute walk of a park experience multiple health benefits and an improved quality of life. This vision promotes safe and equitable routes for all Fairfax County residents between parks and their homes.

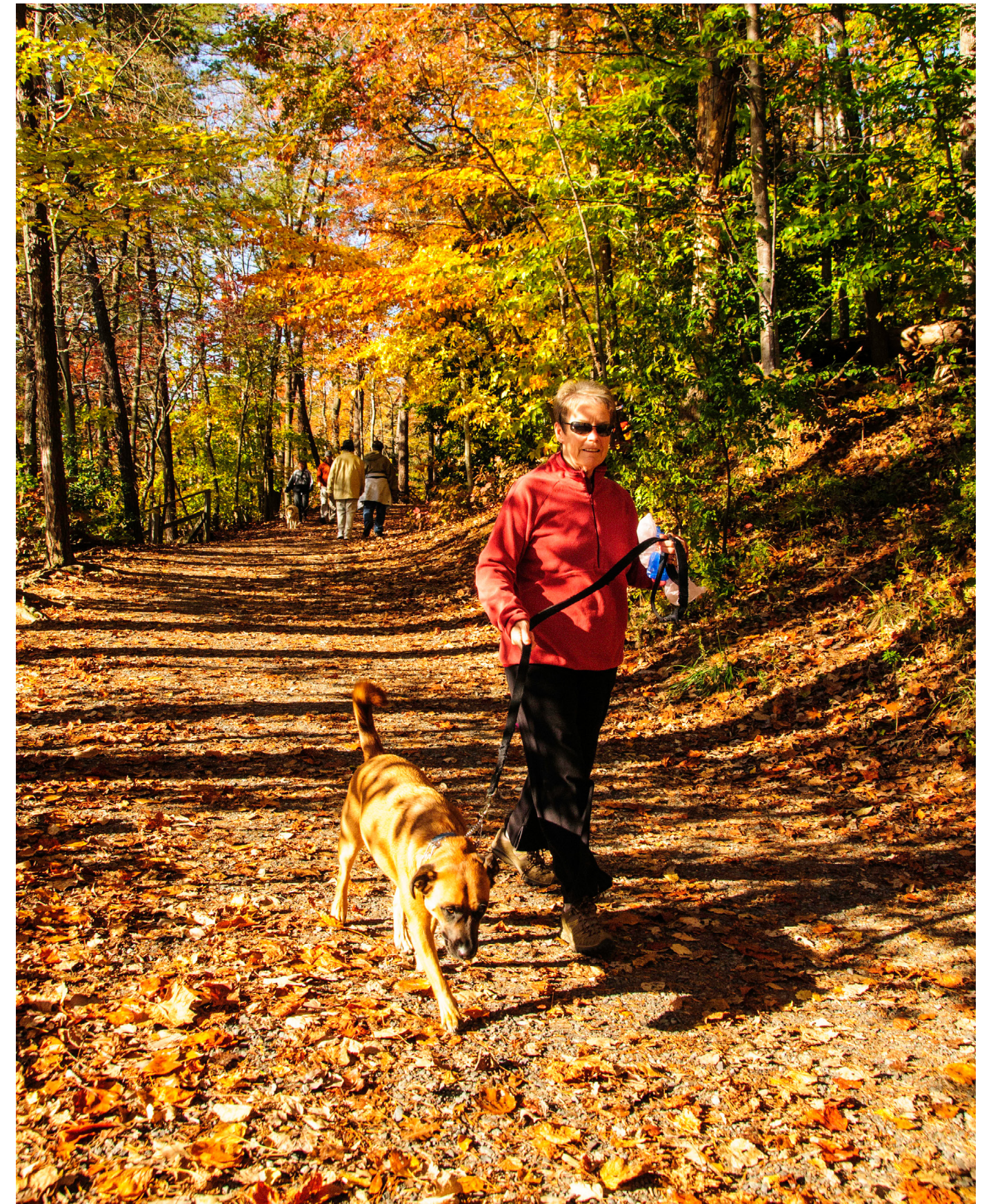
## HOW DO WE GET THERE?

Access to parks within a 10 minute walk from home is an essential component of a healthy community and fosters active lifestyles. Improving 10 minute walk access to parks ensures that parks and green spaces are equitably located, and serve all residents, so that everyone receives the same benefits from parks. While understanding the distribution of park access is the first step to closing the walk gap, improving walk access to parks for all is a long-term goal and steps will be taken to get there incrementally. The following actions are intended to prioritize areas where residents do not have walkable access to a park within 10 minutes from their home:

- Enhance access to existing parks and trails by adding park entrances and trailheads where feasible.
- Infill/develop existing parkland with no park entrances or amenities.
- Collaborate with partners to remove physical barriers to safely access parks, such as adding sidewalks, crosswalks, stream crossings, or other infrastructure.
- Work hand-in-hand with the private sector to improve 10 minute walk access to privately-owned, publicly accessible park spaces.
- Collaborate with other public park providers to improve park access.
- Focus on acquiring parkland in areas that do not have access to a park.



Enjoying a walk along Chessie's Trail.



Park visitors walking on a trail.



# COMPLETE PARK ACCESS

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## IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Complete Park Access Vision
- » What is Complete Park Access?
- » How do We Get There?



Families enjoying the playground at Clemyjontri Park.

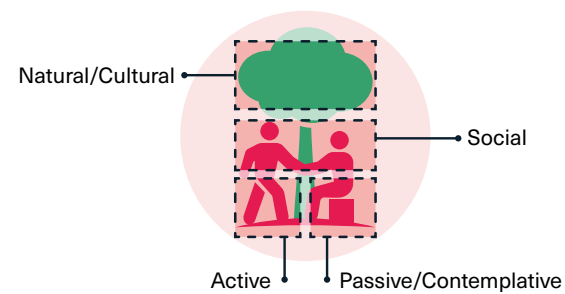
## COMPLETE PARK ACCESS VISION

Access to a variety of recreational experiences is crucial for promoting healthy lifestyles. From socializing with friends, family, and others, to finding a serene spot to relax or playing a pick-up game, parks offer a multitude of recreation and activities for everyone to enjoy. However, park access is not only focused on getting to a park within a 10-minute walk from home, but it is also about the recreation experiences you can access and enjoy once you get there. Parks should have something for everyone with a balance of amenities and opportunities to allow users to recreate in different ways. Complete park access looks at the types of activities within parks to provide a balance of recreational experiences

within a community. In order to provide a balance of recreational experiences countywide, all residents should have access to a variety of recreational experiences within a 10-minute walk or 5-minute drive from their home.

## WHAT IS COMPLETE PARK ACCESS?

The goal of complete park access is to provide a balance of recreational experiences to all residents. Complete park access examines the following major types of recreation to ensure that residents have access to a variety of experiences: active recreation, passive or contemplative recreation, social recreation, and natural/cultural recreation, as shown on the opposite page.



## DIVERSE PARK EXPERIENCES

Amenities inform the experience and types of recreation which occur in parks. Providing diverse amenities encourages park use by a broad range of residents. Parks within the community should offer a balance of recreational experiences.



Basketball game at the park.



Community gardening at Boyd A. and Charlotte M. Hogge Park.

## TYPES OF RECREATION



**Active recreation** experiences encourage physical activity and play, such as using sport courts, fields, playgrounds, trails, and fitness equipment. These spaces promote regular exercise, contributing to improved physical and mental health, increased energy levels, and a reduction in the risk of chronic health conditions. Additionally, active recreation spaces

and amenities provide opportunities for skill development, team-building, and personal growth, fostering a sense of achievement and enjoyment. Examples of active recreation include playing sports or a pick-up game, running, walking, bicycling, swimming, or other outdoor or indoor exercise.



**Social recreation** such as enjoying picnic areas, community gardening, or going to an event, facilitates community interactions and connections. These spaces encourage people to gather, engage in shared activities, and foster relationships with family, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances. Social recreation can also contribute to

intergenerational and cross-cultural experiences, promoting a more inclusive, vibrant, and resilient community. Examples of social recreation include enjoying picnics and barbecuing, meeting with others, and attending a festival, event, concert, or outdoor movie.



**Passive/contemplative recreation** park recreation experiences offer a place for relaxation, reflection, and mindfulness. Park amenities for this type of recreation experience include outdoor seating areas, walking paths, trails, and gardens. These tranquil environments allow individuals to reduce stress and improve personal well-being. By providing

opportunities for introspection and relaxation, passive/contemplative recreation can enhance emotional resilience and promote a greater sense of inner peace and balance. Examples of passive/contemplative recreation include sitting on a bench or on the grass, meditation, gardening, reading a book, or using trails.



**Natural/cultural recreation** experiences provide opportunities to connect with the outdoors and nature, as well as present-day and historical heritage, such as enjoying nature trails or visiting historical and cultural landmarks. These experiences cultivate an appreciation of our natural environment and foster environmental stewardship, as well as educate and instill a sense of pride in our history and culture.

By preserving and showcasing these unique features, natural and cultural recreation experiences contribute to a greater understanding of local identity and a shared sense of place. Examples of natural/cultural recreation include enjoying nature, wildlife, observing plants and animals, using trails, visiting cultural/historical or archeological sites, learning about local history, or experiencing other values, customs, or practices.

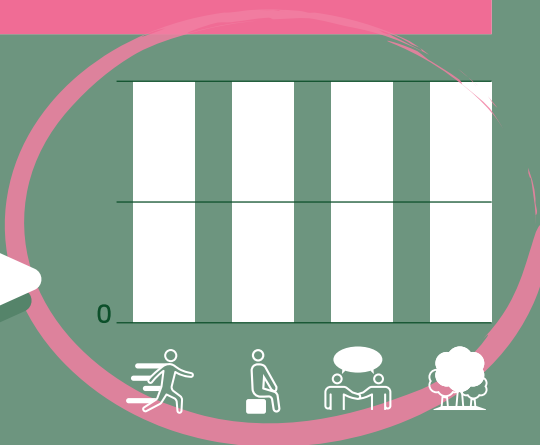
# Park Experience Score

Score the park based on the following:		TYPES OF RECREATION			
		ACTIVE	CONTEMPLATIVE/ PASSIVE	SOCIAL	NATURAL/ CULTURAL
1	Sport Courts and Practice Fields				
2	Rectangle Fields				
3	Diamond Fields				
4	Playgrounds and Play Features				
5	Picnic Facilities				
6	Trails				
7	Dog Parks				
8	Community Gardens				
9	Amphitheaters				
10	Historic Structures				
11	Natural Resources				
12	Outdoor Fitness and Recreation				
13	Water Recreation				
<b>TOTAL</b>					

AMENITY

- 0=No Amenity
- 1=Secondary Experience
- 2=Primary Experience with a Less Than Full Size Amenity
- 3=Primary Experience with a Full Size Amenity

## SCORING



**Figure 4:** Park Experience Score Template (Opposite Page)

PROSA uses a metric, called the park experience score, to provide a high-level perspective of different recreational experiences at parks. Local, District, and Countywide Parks will be assessed by the park experience score to ensure that all residents have access to a variety of recreational experiences within a 10 minute walk or 5 minute drive from their home, meaning that each park may not have all of these experiences but that residents will be able to access these experiences in one or more parks. While District and Countywide Parks with larger acreage and regional amenities should offer all four recreational experience types, Local Parks serving neighborhoods may provide for fewer recreation types. Consequently, not all parks will have each of the four types of recreational experiences due to a variety of factors such as park size, park classification, location of natural and cultural resources, and existing park and recreation facilities. A holistic look at other nearby public park providers will be taken into account during site analysis.

The park experience score will provide a snapshot of the balance of active, passive/contemplative, social, and natural/cultural recreation at park sites. The park experience score in *Figure 4* contains common park facilities and assesses them based on primary and secondary benefits by recreation type. These scores provide a snapshot of core recreational experiences at each park and it will be a living metric to make data-driven decisions for park needs and investment. The park experience score methodology will be updated as new information and data become available to reflect the balance of complete park experiences most accurately. Continue to the next page to see experience score as shown in *Figure 5*.

## HOW DO WE GET THERE?

Complete park access will provide a balance of recreational experiences so that everyone has access to high quality parks. Providing diverse opportunities for active and passive activities, social engagement, and natural/cultural experiences will transform parks to become more inclusive for all residents. Additionally, access to a variety of recreational

## PARK EXPERIENCE SCORE

A park experience score is a way to systematically assess each park and determine the most typical recreation experience at each park. The score can be used to ensure diverse recreation opportunities, make decisions on park needs, and inform strategic future investment.

experiences is vital for fostering a healthy community and active lifestyles. The following actions are intended to prioritize the development of complete parks:

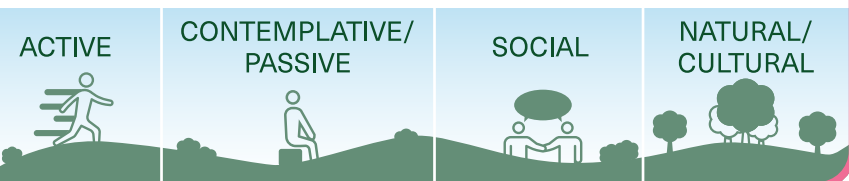
- Infill/develop parks with limited recreational experiences to enhance access to other types of recreation.
- Create whole park development so that parks with no existing recreational experiences will provide access to a variety of activities.
- Collaborate with the private sector to provide a balance of active recreation, passive/contemplative recreation, social recreation, and natural/cultural recreation at privately-owned, publicly accessible park spaces.
- Work with other public park providers to improve park experience access.
- Acquire parkland based on size and community needs with specific recreation experiences in mind.



# Park Experience Score

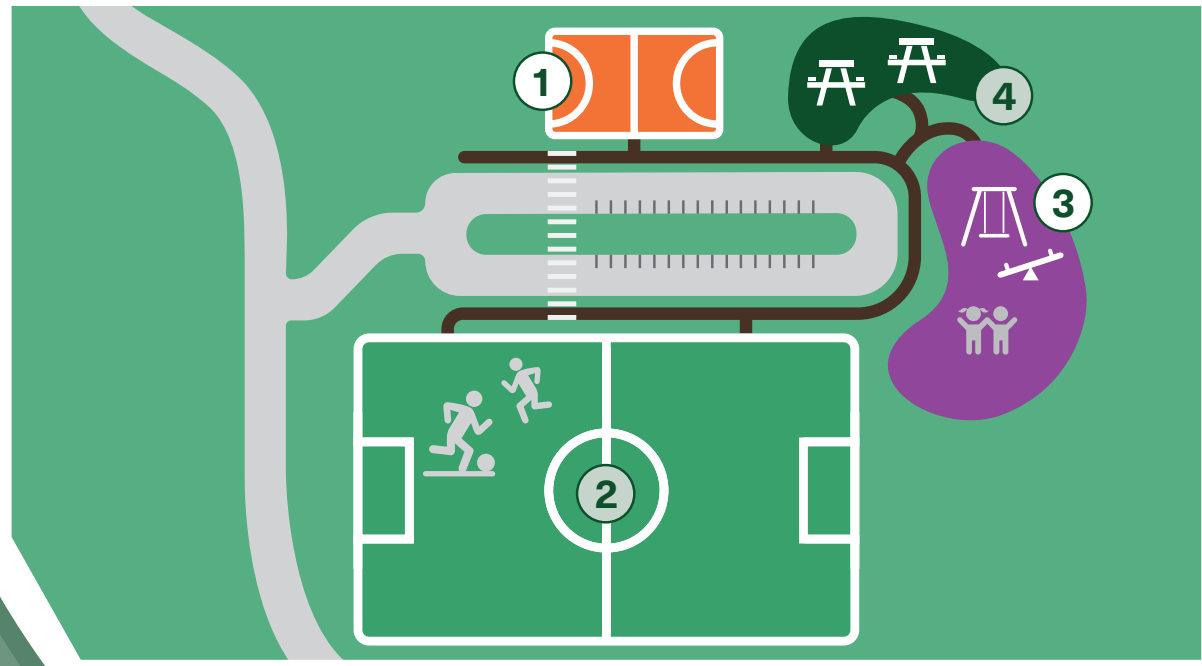
Score the park based on the following:

## TYPES OF RECREATION



	ACTIVE	CONTEMPLATIVE/ PASSIVE	SOCIAL	NATURAL/ CULTURAL
1 Sport Courts and Practice Fields	3	-	1	-
2 Rectangle Fields	3	-	1	-
3 Playgrounds and Play Features	3	-	1	-
4 Picnic Facilities	-	1	3	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>

AMENITY



- 0=No Amenity
- 1=Secondary Experience
- 2=Primary Experience with a Less Than Full Size Amenity
- 3=Primary Experience with a Full Size Amenity

### SCORING

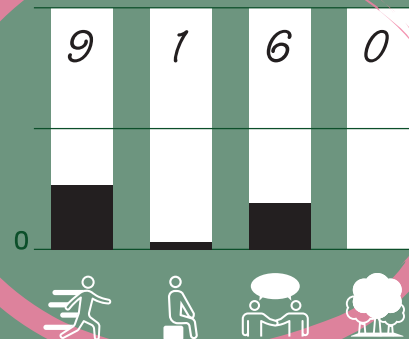


Figure 5: Park Experience Score Example (Opposite Page)



Bicyclists riding along the trail enjoying the outdoors.



Family hiking through a snowy forest.



# HABITAT CONNECTIVITY

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## IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Habitat Connectivity Vision
- » How do We Assess Habitat Connectivity?
- » How do We Get There?



Fox among the wildflowers.

### HABITAT CONNECTIVITY VISION

Natural resources play an essential role in providing critical environmental and ecosystem services, as well as offering a high quality of life for residents in Fairfax County. As the county's largest landowner with over 23,850 acres across 420 parks, the Park Authority has a tremendous responsibility preserving Fairfax County's rich natural resources. Preserving and maintaining high-quality natural areas and habitat connectivity is essential for maintaining biodiversity and ecological health. Habitat connectivity is the degree to which the landscape facilitates or impedes ecological processes and animal movement through the preservation of contiguous, undeveloped habitat. A functional network of connected habitats is essential to the continued existence of diverse species and natural communities. Fairfax County is home to a variety of unique habitats. Looking at a cross section of the county, *Figure 6* provides a graphic representation of the three physiographic provinces in Fairfax County, and the richness of habitats within each area. A detailed ecological transect can be found in Appendix E.

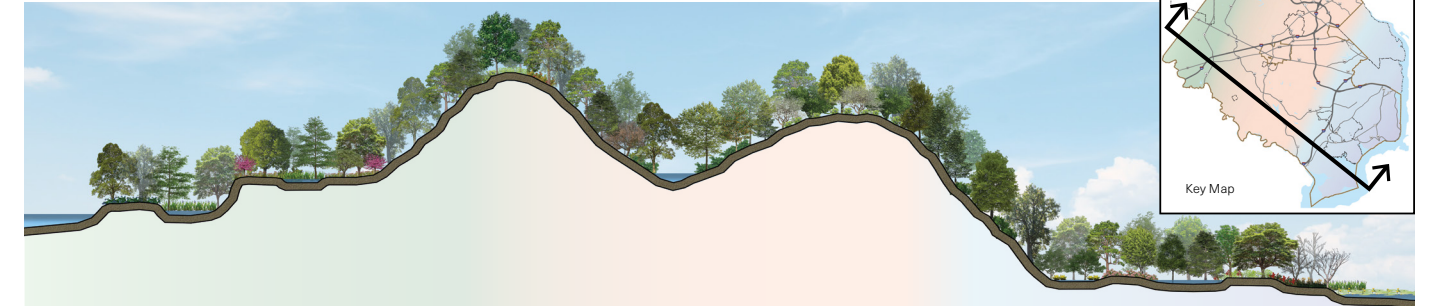
This strategy focuses on preserving and enhancing our natural heritage for the present and future. Improving habitat connectivity is a critical strategy for addressing habitat loss and fragmentation, a top threat to biodiversity. The need for improved connectivity between habitats is growing as

natural communities continue to be fragmented, degraded, and lost to development. Without habitat connectivity, processes like nutrient flow, gene flow, seasonal migration, pollination, and predator-prey relationships are significantly impeded or cannot occur. This natural resources component of the PROSA Strategy assesses tree canopy and habitat quality at parks. It is a critical strategy to improve the health of essential habitats for wildlife and plants providing a healthy natural environment through an enduring park system.



Volunteers removing invasive plants.

### HABITAT CONNECTIVITY WITHIN PHYSIOGRAPHIC PROVINCES OF FAIRFAX COUNTY



#### MESOZOIC BASIN

Characterized by low-relief, this region was formed within a rift valley and is underlain by sedimentary and mafic rock. Upland depression swamps and sluggish streams are common due to the relatively flat terrain.

#### HABITATS

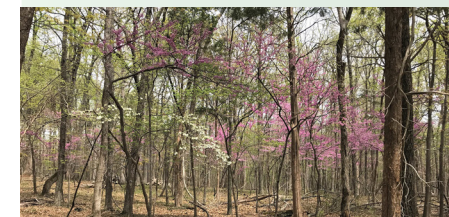
- Piedmont / Central Appalachian Rich Floodplain Forest
- Piedmont / Central Appalachian Floodplain Swamp
- Piedmont Upland Depression Swamp
- Northern Hardpan Basic Oak – Hickory Forest



Rich Floodplain Forest.



Upland Depression Swamp.

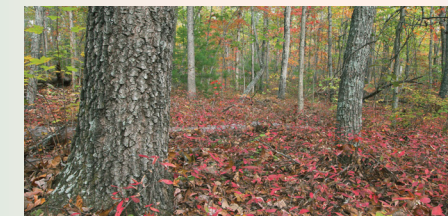


Hardpan Basic Oak - Hickory Forest.

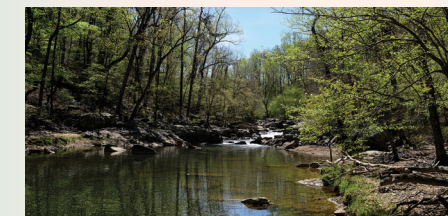
#### PIEDMONT

Characterized by low, rolling hills, much of the region in Fairfax County is underlain by igneous or metamorphic rock. Upland forests dominate with wetlands largely restricted to the floodplains of streams and rivers.

- Piedmont / Central Appalachian Mixed Oak / Heath Forest
- Northern Piedmont Small – Stream Floodplain Forest
- Piedmont Acidic Oak – Hickory Forest
- Northern Coastal Plain / Piedmont Mesic Mixed Hardwood Forest



Mixed Oak / Heath Forest.



Small Stream Floodplain Forest.



Mesic Mixed Hardwood Forest.

#### COASTAL PLAIN

This region is characterized by low-relief and terraces which stair-step down to the Potomac River. It is underlain by young sedimentary rock. Seepage swamps and depression swamps occur within upland forests which eventually give way to tidal wetlands along the Potomac.

- Coastal Plain / Outer Piedmont Acidic Seepage Swamp
- Coastal Plain Depression Swamp
- Coastal Plain Mixed Oak/Heath Forest
- Freshwater Tidal Swamp
- Freshwater Tidal Marsh



Acidic Seepage Swamps.



Freshwater Tidal Swamp.



Freshwater Tidal Marsh.

**Figure 6:** Habitat Connectivity within Physiographic Provinces

## HOW DO WE ASSESS HABITAT CONNECTIVITY?

Two primary metrics, tree canopy and overall habitat health, allow the Park Authority to take a closer look at forested areas and provide a high-level habitat connectivity assessment within parks. The habitat connectivity assessment does not include meadows, wetlands, or other types of habitats at this time. As data becomes available, these other habitats will be included in the assessment. With these two metrics at hand, the Park Authority can identify forested areas that are most in need of conservation and habitat restoration, which in turn will improve habitat connectivity across the county.

Tree canopy, including the shade from a tree's leaves and branches, provides an array of environmental and human health benefits. Such benefits include air pollution mitigation, reduced stormwater runoff, and shade for communities which cools air temperatures and mitigates the urban heat island effect. Trees also absorb and store carbon dioxide, help to build and rebuild soil, and improve wildlife habitat among many other benefits. A great portion of the county's forested lands are in public park ownership, and the county's tree canopy policy and tree preservation ordinance have stewardship implications for trees

on Park Authority land. Analyzing the existing natural shade within parks will help identify target areas to expand tree canopy. This strategy will in turn improve environmental and ecosystem benefits, as well as health and quality of life benefits for communities. In addition, enhancing tree canopy will help mitigate the urban heat island effect in areas in the county where heat is likely to be more intense.

Habitat health is looked at through the lens of invasive plant species present within forested areas of parkland. Analyzing and understanding the presence of invasive species can help locate and identify the greatest threats to existing native plant species and communities, and prioritize sites for invasive plant control. This effort in turn supports healthy ecosystems and habitat connectivity. The presence of invasive plant species serves as an interim tool to support the habitat connectivity analysis. A countywide, site-specific, and field-verified inventory of all habitat types throughout the park system is currently underway by Park Authority ecologists. Once this multi-year project is complete, the highly robust field-verified inventory will serve as the foundation for the habitat health analysis.

## HOW DO WE GET THERE?

By analyzing habitat health within parks, the Park Authority can identify areas that have a high need for protection, conservation, and restoration, and prioritize accordingly in alignment with the Park Authority's Natural Resource Management Plan and the other PROSA strategies. Ensuring that all communities have access to thriving natural spaces contributes to a more equitable distribution of park and environmental benefits, and helps to preserve local flora and fauna for future generations. The following actions are intended to prioritize areas with limited habitat connectivity:

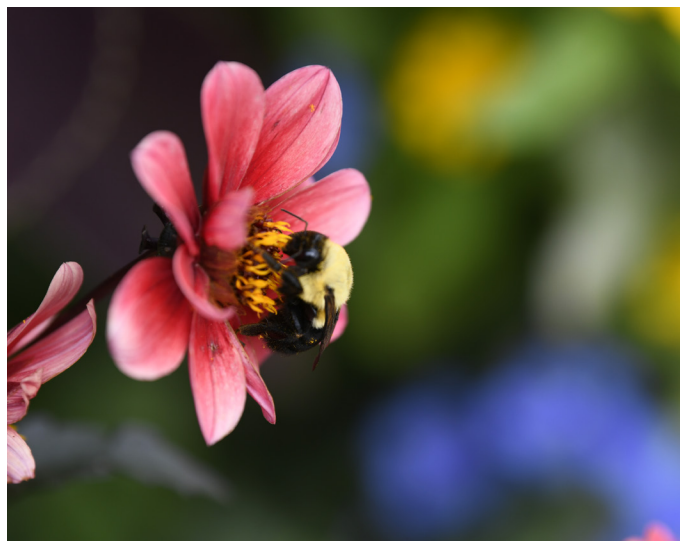
- Plant trees during park development and construction projects to bolster areas with lower tree canopy. Tree plantings would not replace meadows and other environmentally sensitive areas.
- Identify existing park sites where habitat health could be improved and prioritize based on the presence of invasive species, and any other site-specific factors in concert with the Park Authority's Natural Resource Management Plan.
- Consider opportunities to improve habitat connectivity within the county when acquiring parkland.



Tree canopy at Lake Accotink Park.

## WHAT SPECIES CALL YOUR PARK HOME?

By facilitating a connected network of habitat corridors, Fairfax County parks create ease of access for critters and community members. A more biodiverse environment creates thriving habitat communities. What creatures have you noticed in your local parks?



Bee on a flower.



Great blue heron.



Long Branch Stream Valley Park.



# EQUITY LENS

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## IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Equity Vision
- » What is the Park Authority's Equity Lens?
- » How do We Get There?



A family enjoying Hogge Park.

## EQUITY VISION

Fairfax County embraces its growing and diverse population, recognizing it as a tremendous asset, but also acknowledges that racial and social inequities still exist. While Fairfax County is a great place to live, work, play, and learn, persistent disparities predictable by race, neighborhood of residence and other social categories endure in outcomes related to employment, housing, health and more. Disparities in outcomes are in part the result of long-standing inequitable policies, systems, and practices created and maintained by government. In 2016, the Park Authority Board adopted the One Fairfax Policy, Fairfax County’s joint racial and social equity policy,

declaring that all residents deserve an equitable opportunity to success, regardless of their race, color, nationality, sex, sexual orientation, religion, disability, income or where they live. The One Fairfax policy and vision informs all other policies and applies to all publicly delivered services in Fairfax County. This policy is a critical step towards achieving racial and social equity in Fairfax County.

Integrating the One Fairfax policy in parks and recreation is essential for a more inclusive, equitable, and thriving community. Through the park lens, One Fairfax ensures that all community members have equitable access to high quality parks, trails, open spaces, and recreation. Equity recognizes that each

### ONE FAIRFAX VULNERABILITY INDEX INDICATORS

Indicator	Description
Low Income Occupations	Population in occupations making 2/3 or less of the median income
Limited English-Speaking Ability	Percentage of population 5 years or older who speak English less than “Well”
Low Educational Attainment	Percentage of the population 25 years and older who lack a Bachelor’s degree
Median Household Income	Median Household Income
Households without a Vehicle	Percentage of households without a vehicle
Population without Health Insurance	Percentage of population without health insurance coverage
Homeownership	Percentage of households that are homeowners
Severely Cost-burdened Renter	Percentage of households paying more than 50% of their gross income on rent

Figure 7: One Fairfax Vulnerability Index Indicators

person has different circumstances and allocates the resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome. To get there, the Park Authority will take into account racial and social equity and population density when prioritizing park and recreation needs and projects in order to diminish racial and social inequities within our community. These two data-driven approaches will help provide the greatest impact to park and recreation needs in Fairfax County. By prioritizing park and recreation needs with an equity lens, the Park Authority can create a more inclusive, vibrant, and healthy community for everyone to enjoy.

## WHAT IS THE PARK AUTHORITY’S EQUITY LENS?

The Park Authority’s equity lens is a composite of the Park Authority Racial Equity Index (PAREI) and population density, which is the number of community members served within a geographical area. This approach allows for the prioritization of park and recreation needs to be based on data informed decisions. More specifically, the PAREI is comprised of the eight indicators from the One Fairfax Vulnerability Index (VI) and populations of people of color as illustrated in *Figures 7 and 8*.

These nine indicators are geographically arranged by U.S. Census Block Groups. The numeric value of the PAREI ranges from Very Low, to Low, Average, High, and Very High categories. Very Low areas represent the least vulnerable residents and Very High areas represent the most vulnerable residents. Opportunity Areas are identified as the High and Very High areas. Opportunity Areas represent residents that are socioeconomically vulnerable or have average socioeconomics and high concentrations of populations of people of color. Furthermore, the number of people served will be considered in conjunction with Opportunity Areas as the Park

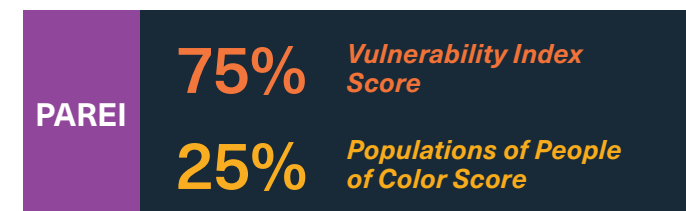


Figure 8: Park Authority Racial Equity Index



A family spending their leisure time at the park.

Authority’s equity lens in order to provide the greatest impact to residents.

## HOW DO WE GET THERE?

By committing to intentionally consider equity in the prioritization of park and recreation needs, the Park Authority can ensure parks enrich the quality of life for all members of the community. The PROSA equity lens uses a data-driven approach to help guide equitable service delivery and resource allocation. Recognizing opportunity areas, in combination with the number of community members served, will help the Park Authority identify where there may be gaps in the equal provision of park and recreation services and/or where park needs may be greater. The Park Authority can help to address historical racial and social inequities by prioritizing access to parks and park experiences with an equity lens so that all residents have access to high quality parks, programs, and services. The following actions are intended to inform the prioritization of park and recreation needs:

- Use the Park Authority Racial Equity Index to understand where the greatest park needs are countywide, focusing on Opportunity Areas.
- In conjunction with the Park Authority Racial Equity Index, take into consideration population density to better understand the number of community members served within a geographical area.



# IMPLEMENTATION

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## IN THIS CHAPTER

- » How the Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Access (PROSA) Strategy Will Happen

## HOW IT WILL HAPPEN

Fairfax County strives to increase the quality of its parks, equitable park access, and diverse park experiences by using data-driven processes implemented through active investment and policy updates.



Participants in National Trails Day at Lake Accotink.



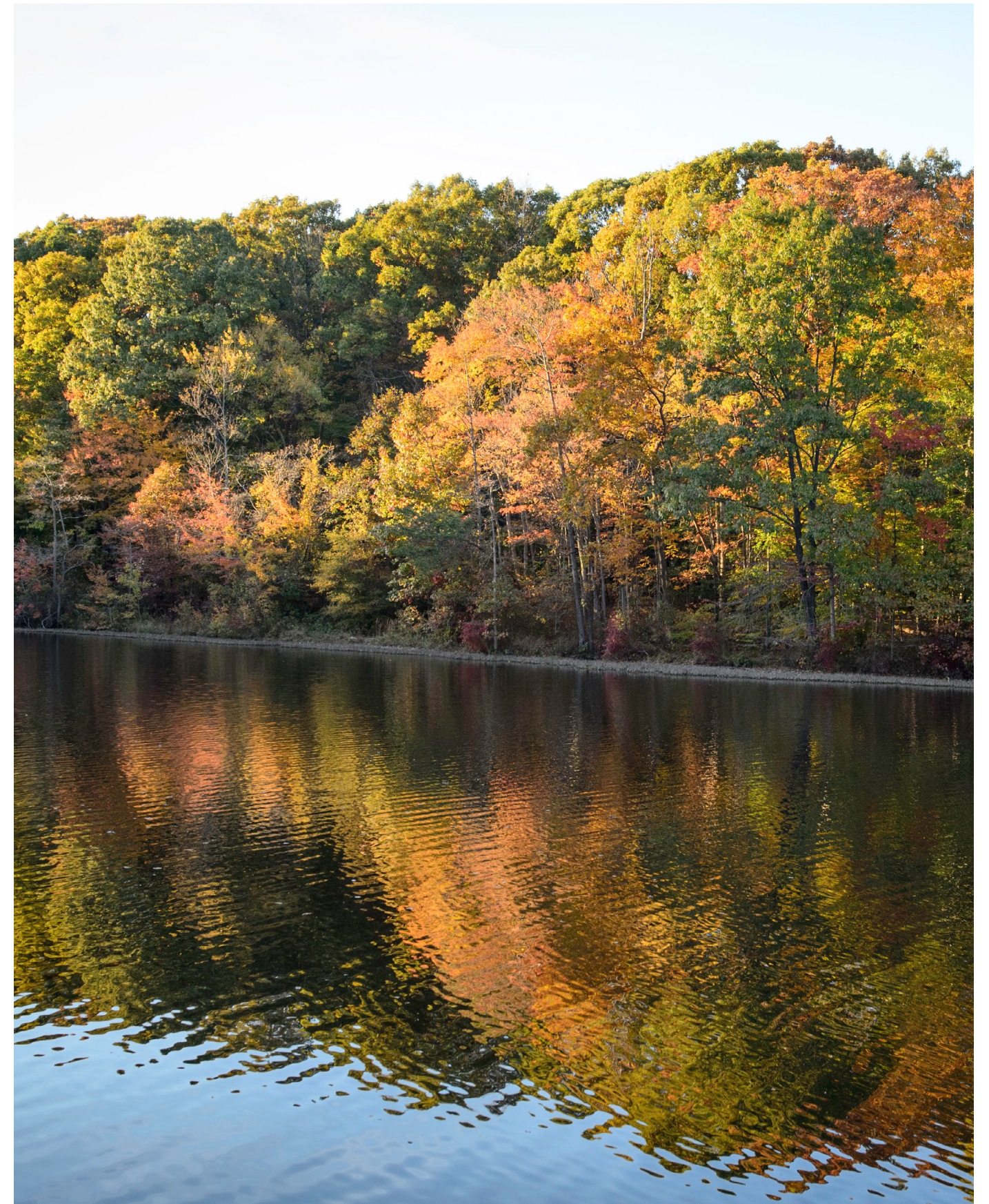
Millers house opening ceremony.

## PROSA IN ACTION

The PROSA Strategy is a data-driven, guiding document developed to help inform the decision-making process for all park and recreation projects, investments, and capital improvements. Closing the 10-minute walk gap, improving complete park access, enhancing habitat connectivity, and prioritizing park and recreation needs and projects with an equity lens will help Fairfax County continue to have a great park system for everyone today and for future generations. Additional context sensitive site analysis will be conducted when looking at park sites to take into account other public park providers, school fields, and similar factors. Each strategy has been developed as part of an inspirational and flexible roadmap. In order to stand the test of time, regular review and changes to actions for implementation will be required. There is no defined timeframe for completion of these strategies.

Effective implementation is critical to achieving equitable park access across the county. Building on the research, data, and analysis, the overall PROSA strategies are intended to be a decision-making approach and policy guide for the planning, design, development, and maintenance of Park Authority parks. Implementation will be ongoing and will support the Park Authority in identifying future action to continue improving the quality of life and experiences of parks and recreation. The PROSA strategies will inform and work in coordination with other policies and practices. Likewise, the PROSA Strategy is intended to be the basis for future Comprehensive Plan policies and an update to the park classification system.

While the PROSA Strategy is intended to tell us where park investments should be prioritized, the upcoming Needs Assessment will guide the Park Authority as to where park amenities and facilities should be located. The next Needs Assessment will include a comprehensive equity analysis as to what park amenities and facilities will best serve the community in coordination with the PROSA strategies. These long-term, system-wide objectives are intended to be reviewed in coordination with the Park Authority's Strategic Plan.



Burke Lake in autumn.



# APPENDIX



## COMMUNITY INVENTORY OF PARKLAND AND RECREATION FACILITIES

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### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Parkland and Recreation Facilities Inventory
- » The Park Classification System
- » List of Existing Park Authority parks



Youth enjoying a skate park at sunset.

## COMMUNITY INVENTORY OF PARKLAND AND RECREATION FACILITIES

The Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) has 420 parks on more than 23,850 acres of land. Welcoming over 15 million visitors within the last year, the FCPA park system is the primary public mechanism in Fairfax County for the preservation of environmentally sensitive land and resources, areas of historic significance and the provision of a variety of recreational facilities and services. *Figure*

9 below, and *Figure 10* on the next page, depict the number of parks by classification and acreage. The Park Authority maintains an inventory of parkland and recreation facilities provided by the agency and those provided by schools and other public providers.

The Park Classification System is a general framework intended to guide open space and public facilities planning, and also to assist in the development of public and private land management plans, by grouping parks according to certain common typical characteristics.

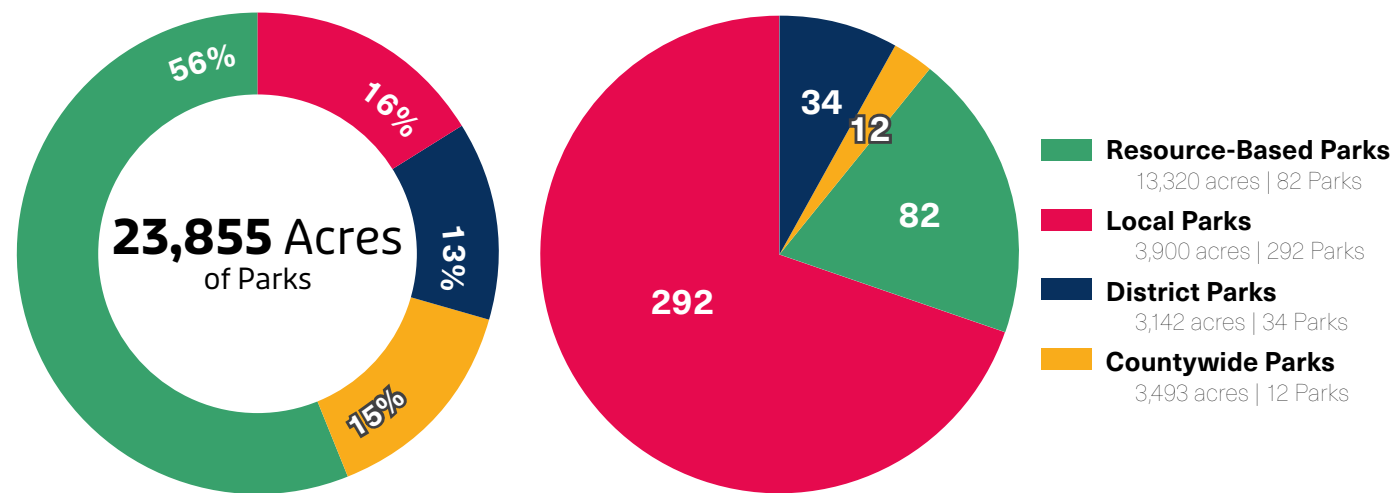


Figure 9: Parks by Park Classification

The Park Classification System outlines the primary purpose, location and access, character and extent of development for the following park classifications below. This Park Classification System is augmented by state and federal park areas within Fairfax County boundaries. Additional information is provided in the Parks and Recreation Element of The Comprehensive Plan of Fairfax County, Virginia.

**LOCAL PARKS** include parks that serve neighborhoods and mixed use centers in suburban and urban areas of the county. Local parks primarily offer a variety of active or passive recreation opportunities, or a combination of both, in close proximity to county residents and employment centers. In suburban settings, park size will typically be at least 2.5 acres and less than 50 acres, but some local parks may range up to 75 acres. In urban areas, park size is typically less than 5 acres and often less than 1/2 acre.

**DISTRICT PARKS** include larger parks that serve larger geographic areas of the county and provide a variety of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities and park experiences. Portions of these parks may be designated for natural and/or cultural resource protection. Size is typically 50 to 150 acres.

**COUNTYWIDE PARKS** include larger parks that serve the county and provides a variety of larger-scale indoor or outdoor recreation facilities, or both, and facilities that are unique within the county. Areas designated for natural and/or cultural resource protection may also be included within these parks. Park size is typically 150 acres or more.

**RESOURCE-BASED PARKS** include parks that primarily preserve, protect, and interpret natural and/or cultural resources. Portions of these parks may be designated for recreation purposes. The location for Resource-based Parks is determined by the location of the specific resources. Size and access can take many forms depending on the setting and type of resources.

## RECREATIONAL AMENITIES INVENTORY



356 playgrounds & play equipment



11 dog parks



2 skate parks



342 miles of trails



128 picnic facilities



3 lakefront parks



Over 180 free live summer concert performances



8 amphitheaters



3+ million artifacts



721 garden plots



5 nature and visitor centers



Operates 10 farmers markets across Fairfax County



412 sport courts



146 diamond fields



8 golf courses



119 rectangle fields



9 indoor Rec Centers with swimming pools, fitness rooms, gyms and class spaces



Over 16,800 programs throughout the year

Figure 10: Recreational Amenities Inventory

## LIST OF EXISTING PARK AUTHORITY PARKS

Park Name	Park Classification	Park Name	Park Classification	Park Name	Park Classification	Park Name	Park Classification
1 Accotink Stream Valley	Resource Based	33 Brookfield	Local	68 Collingwood	Local	99 Fair Ridge	Local
2 Alabama Drive	Local	34 Broyhill	Local	69 Colvin Run Mill	Resource Based	100 Fair Woods	Local
3 Alfred Odrick Homesite	Resource Based	35 Broyhill Crest	Local	70 Colvin Run Stream Valley	Resource Based	101 Fairfax Hills	Local
4 Amberleigh	Local	36 Bruin	Local	71 Confederate Fortifications Historic Site	Resource Based	102 Fairfax Park	Local
5 Americana	Local	37 Bryn Mawr	Local	72 Country Club View	Local	103 Fairfax Villa	Resource Based
6 Annandale	District	38 Brzezinski	Local	73 Creighton Square	Local	104 Falstaff	Local
7 Armistead	Resource Based	39 Bucknell Manor	Local	74 Crooked Creek	Local	105 Farrington	Local
8 Arrowbrook	Local	40 Bull Neck Stream Valley	Resource Based	75 Crossroads Interim	Local	106 Fisher	Local
9 Arrowhead	Local	41 Burgundy	Local	76 Cub Run Rec Center	Countywide	107 Fitzhugh	Local
10 Ashford East	Local	42 Burke Lake	Countywide	77 Cub Run Stream Valley	Resource Based	108 Flag Run	Resource Based
11 Ashgrove Historic Site	Resource Based	43 Burke Ridge	Local	78 Cunningham	Local	109 Flatlick Run Stream Valley	Resource Based
12 Ashlawn	Local	44 Burke Station	Local	79 Dead Run Stream Valley	Resource Based	110 Flatlick Shop	Local
13 Azalea	Local	45 Bush Hill	Local	80 Deerlick	Local	111 Folly Lick Stream Valley	Resource Based
14 Backlick	Local	46 Byron Avenue	Local	81 Devonshire	Local	112 Fort Hunt	Local
15 Backlick Run	Resource Based	47 Camelot School Site	Local	82 Difficult Run Stream Valley	Resource Based	113 Fort Willard Historic Site	Resource Based
16 Backlick Stream Valley	Resource Based	48 Canterbury Woods	Local	83 Dixie Hill	Local	114 Fox Hunters	Local
17 Baileys	Local	49 Cardinal Forest	Local	84 Dogue Creek Stream Valley	Resource Based	115 Fox Valley	Local
18 Barcroft Knolls	Local	50 Carl Sandburg School Site	Local	85 Dolley Madison Estates	Local	116 Foxstone	Local
19 Baron Cameron	District	51 Carney	Local	86 Dowden Terrace	Local	117 Foxvale	Local
20 Bel Air	Local	52 Carrleigh Parkway	Local	87 Dranesville Tavern	Resource Based	118 Franconia	Countywide
21 Belle Haven	Local	53 Centre Ridge	Local	88 Dulles Corner	Local	119 Franconia Forest	Local
22 Belvedere	Local	54 Centre Ridge North	Local	89 Dulles Station Community	Local	120 Franklin Farm	Local
23 Beulah	Local	55 Chalet Woods	Local	90 Dunn Loring	Local	121 Franklin Glen	Local
24 Blake Lane	Local	56 Chandon	Local	91 Eakin (Mantua Section)	Local	122 Franklin Oaks	Local
25 Borge Street	Local	57 Chantilly	Local	92 Eakin Community	Local	123 Franklin Woods	Local
26 Boyd A. and Charlotte M. Hogge	Local	58 Chantilly Library Site	Local	93 East Blake Lane	Local	124 Fred Crabtree	District
27 Braddock	District	59 Chapel Acres	Local	94 Edsall	Local	125 Freedom Hill	Resource Based
28 Bren Mar	Local	60 Chapel Road	Local	95 Elklick Preserve	Resource Based	126 Frog Branch Stream Valley	Resource Based
29 Brentwood	Local	61 Cherry Run	Local	96 Ellanor C. Lawrence	Resource Based	127 Frying Pan Farm	Countywide
30 Briarcliff	Local	62 Churchill Road	Local	97 Eudora	Local	128 Frying Pan Stream Valley	Resource Based
31 Briarwood	Local	63 Clark House at Barcroft Mews	Resource Based	98 Fair Oaks	Local	129 Gabrielson Gardens	Resource Based
32 Brimstone	Local	64 Clarke's Landing	Local				
		65 Clarks Crossing	District				
		66 Clemyjontri	Countywide				
		67 Clermont	Local				

Figure 11: List of Existing Park Authority Parks

Park Name	Park Classification	
130	Garnchayne	Local
131	George Mason	Local
132	George Washington	District
133	Gilbert S. McCutcheon	Local
134	Glasgow	Local
135	Glen Hills	Local
136	Grand Hamptons	Local
137	Great Falls Grange	Local
138	Great Falls Nike	District
139	Green Spring Gardens	Countywide
140	Greenbriar	District
141	Greenbriar Commons	Local
142	Greendale Golf Course	District
143	Greenfield	Local
144	Greentree Village	Local
145	Greenway Heights	Local
146	Griffith	Local
147	Grist Mill	District
148	Grove Point	District
149	Groveton Heights	Local
150	Halifax Point District	Resource Based
151	Hartland Green	Local
152	Haycock-Longfellow	Local
153	Hayfield	Local
154	Heritage Hill	Local
155	Heritage Resource	Resource Based
156	Herzell Woods	Local
157	Heywood Glen	Local
158	Hickory Forest	Resource Based
159	Hidden Pond	Resource Based
160	Hideaway	Local
161	Historic Centreville	Resource Based
162	Historic Huntley	Resource Based

Park Name	Park Classification	
163	Holladay Field	Local
164	Hollin Hall	Local
165	Hollin Meadows	Local
166	Holly Knoll	Local
167	Hollywood Road	Local
168	Holmes Run Stream Valley	Resource Based
169	Hooes Road	Local
170	Horsepen Run Stream Valley	Resource Based
171	Howrey Field	Local
172	Hunter Mill Property	Local
173	Hunter Village	Local
174	Huntington	Local
175	Huntley Meadows	Resource Based
176	Huntsman	Local
177	Hybla Valley	Local
178	Idylwood	Local
179	Indian Run Stream Valley	Resource Based
180	Island Creek	Resource Based
181	Jefferson District	District
182	Jefferson Manor	Local
183	Jefferson Village	Local
184	John Byers	Local
185	John C. & Margaret K. White Horticultural	Resource Based
186	John Mastenbrook - Greenway Downs	Local
187	Johnny Moore Stream Valley	Resource Based
188	Joseph F. Barnes Battery	Resource Based
189	Justice	Local
190	Kemper	Local
191	Ken Lawrence	Local
192	Kendale Woods	Local
193	Kent Gardens	Local

Park Name	Park Classification	
194	Kent Gardens Greenway Stream Valley	Resource Based
195	Kings Park	Local
196	Kingstowne	Local
197	Kirby	Local
198	Kirk	Local
199	Lahey Lost Valley	Resource Based
200	Lake Accotink	Countywide
201	Lake Braddock	Local
202	Lake Fairfax	Countywide
203	Lake Mercer	Local
204	Lakeside	Local
205	Lane's Mill	Resource Based
206	Langley Fork	District
207	Langley Oaks	Resource Based
208	Larchmont	Local
209	Larry Graves	Local
210	Laurel Hill	Countywide
211	Lawyers Road	Local
212	Lee Landing	Local
213	Leewood	Local
214	Lemon Road	Local
215	Lenclair	Local
216	Levelle W. Dupell	Local
217	Lewinsville	District
218	Lewis High	Local
219	Lexington Estates	Local
220	Lillian Carey	Local
221	Lincolnia	Local
222	Linway Terrace	Local
223	Lisle	Local
224	Little Difficult Run Stream Valley	Resource Based
225	Little Hunting Creek	Resource Based

Park Name	Park Classification	
226	Little Pimmit Run Stream Valley	Resource Based
227	Lockmeade	Local
228	Loftridge	Local
229	Loisdale	Local
230	Long Branch Falls	Local
231	Long Branch Stream Valley	Resource Based
232	Longfellow School Site	Local
233	Lorton	Local
234	Lower Potomac	Local
235	Luria	Local
236	Lynbrook	Local
237	Manassas Gap Railroad	Resource Based
238	Manchester Lakes	Local
239	Marie Butler Leven Preserve	Resource Based
240	Mark Twain	Local
241	Martin Luther King Jr.	District
242	Mason District	District
243	Mason Neck West	District
244	Masonville	Local
245	McLean Central	Local
246	McLean Hamlet	Local
247	McLean Hunt Estates	Local
248	McLean Knolls	Local
249	McNaughton Fields	Local
250	Merrifield	Local
251	Merrybrook Run Stream Valley	Resource Based
252	Middle Run Stream Valley	Resource Based
253	Middleridge	Local
254	Military Railroad	Resource Based
255	Monch Farm	Local
256	Monticello	Local
257	Monticello Woods	Local

Park Name	Park Classification
258 Mosby Woods	Local
259 Mount Air Historic Site	Resource Based
260 Mount Eagle	Local
261 Mount Royal	Local
262 Mount Vernon District	Countywide
263 Mount Vernon Manor	Local
264 Mount Vernon Woods	Local
265 Mount Zephyr	Local
266 Mountain Road District	District
267 Muddy Hole Farm	Local
268 Mulberry Hill	Local
269 Munson Hill	Local
270 Navy Vale	Local
271 Newington Commons	Local
272 Newington Heights	District
273 North Hill	Local
274 North Springfield	Local
275 Nottoway	District
276 Oak Hill	Local
277 Oak Marr	District
278 Oakborough Square	Local
279 Oakton Community	Local
280 Olander and Margaret Banks	Local
281 Old Centreville Road	Local
282 Old Colchester Park and Preserve	Resource Based
283 Old Courthouse Spring Branch Stream Valley	Resource Based
284 Old Mount Vernon School Site	Local
285 Olde Forge	Local
286 Olney	Local
287 Orange Hunt Estates	Local
288 Ossian Hall	Local
289 Ox Hill Battlefield	Resource Based
290 Park at Tysons II	Local
291 Parklawn	Local

Park Name	Park Classification
292 Patriot	District
293 Patriot Park North	Local
294 Paul Springs Stream Valley	Resource Based
295 Peterson Lane	Local
296 Pimmit Barn	Local
297 Pimmit Hills	Local
298 Pimmit Run Stream Valley	Resource Based
299 Pimmit View	Local
300 Pine Ridge	Local
301 Pine Spring	Local
302 Pinecrest Golf Course	District
303 Piney Branch Stream Valley	Resource Based
304 Pleasant Hill	Local
305 Poburn Woods	Local
306 Poe Terrace	Local
307 Pohick Estates	Local
308 Pohick Stream Valley	Resource Based
309 Pole Road	Local
310 Popes Head	District
311 Popes Head Stream Valley	Resource Based
312 Poplar Ford	Resource Based
313 Poplar Tree	District
314 Potomac Hills	Local
315 Providence Rec Center	District
316 Quantum Field	Local
317 Rabbit Branch	Resource Based
318 Raglan Road	Local
319 Random Hills	Resource Based
320 Red Fox Forest	Local
321 Reston North	Local
322 Richard W. Jones	District
323 Ridgeview	Local

Park Name	Park Classification
324 Riverbend	Resource Based
325 Rock Hill District	District
326 Rocky Run Stream Valley	Resource Based
327 Rolling Forest	Local
328 Rolling Valley West	Local
329 Rolling Woods Estates	Local
330 Rollingwood	Local
331 Rose Lane	Local
332 Roundtree	Local
333 Royal Lake	Local
334 Royal Ridge	Local
335 Ruckstuhl	Local
336 Rutherford	Local
337 Sally Ormsby	Resource Based
338 Salona	Local
339 Sandy Run Stream Valley	Resource Based
340 Saratoga	Local
341 Saucy Branch	Resource Based
342 Scotts Run Nature Preserve	Resource Based
343 Scotts Run Stream Valley	Resource Based
344 Shaker Woods	Local
345 Shannon Station	Local
346 Silas Burke	Local
347 Silverbrook	Local
348 Skyline	Local
349 Sleepy Hollow	Local
350 Smokewood	Local
351 South Kings Forest	Local
352 South Lakes Drive	Local
353 South Railroad Street	Local
354 South Run District	District
355 South Run Stream Valley	Resource Based

Park Name	Park Classification
356 Southgate	Local
357 Spring Hill	District
358 Spring Lane	Local
359 Springfield Forest	Local
360 Springvale	Local
361 Stanton	Local
362 Stephen Foster School Site (Walt Whitman)	Local
363 Stone Crossing	Local
364 Stoneybrooke	Local
365 Stratford Landing	Local
366 Stratton Woods	District
367 Stringfellow	Local
368 Stuart Road	Local
369 Sugarland Run Stream Valley	Resource Based
370 Sully Highlands	District
371 Sully Historic Site	Resource Based
372 Summers Cemetery	Resource Based
373 Surrey Square	Local
374 Symphony Hills	Local
375 Tamarack	Local
376 Tara Village	Local
377 Tattersall	Local
378 The Turner Farm	Countywide
379 The Wakefield Chapel	Resource Based
380 Timberly	Local
381 Tollbrook Ridge	Local
382 Towers	Local
383 Trailside	Local
384 Turkeycock Run Stream Valley	Resource Based
385 Twin Lakes Golf Course	District
386 Twinbrook Road	Local
387 Tyler	Local
388 Tysons Pimmit	Local

Park Name	Park Classification
389 Tysons Woods	Local
390 University	Local
391 Valley Crest	Local
392 Vernon Heights	Local
393 Villa D'Este	Local
394 Villa Lee	Local
395 Virginia Hills School Site	Local
396 Wakefield	Countywide
397 Wakefield Chapel	Local
398 Waples Mill Meadow	Resource Based
399 Washington Mill	Local
400 Waverly	Local
401 Wayland Street	Local
402 West Springfield	Local
403 West Springfield Village	Local
404 Westfields School Site	District
405 Westgate	Local

Park Name	Park Classification
406 Westgrove	Local
407 White Oaks	Local
408 Wickford	Local
409 Wilburdale	Local
410 Willow Pond	Local
411 Willow Woods	Local
412 Wilton Woods School Site	Local
413 Windermere	Local
414 Winterset Varsity	Local
415 Wolf Trails	Local
416 Wolftrap Stream Valley	Resource Based
417 Woodburn School Site	Local
418 Woodglen Lake	Resource Based
419 Woodlawn	Local
420 Woodley Hills	Local



Owls at Cub Run Rec Center.



# APPENDIX



## RECREATION TRENDS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

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### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » 2016 Needs Assessment Recreation and Leisure Trends Analysis
- » 2016 Needs Assessment Summary

## RECREATION TRENDS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

The Fairfax County Park Authority regularly analyzes national recreation and leisure trends and local demographic and recreation trends, and assesses park facilities and needs to identify existing and projected gaps in service. Park and recreation needs are assessed through a comprehensive needs assessment, reviews of existing and emerging trends, and emerging and best practices in the park and recreation industry. Together, these assessments support the Park Authority's capital improvement framework and park investments.

The Park Authority conducts a comprehensive needs assessment to identify existing and projected gaps in service and determine land, facility, and service priorities on a 10-year cycle. The Parks Count! 2016 Needs Assessment is the Park Authority's current needs assessment study at the time of publishing the PROSA Strategy. Both demographic and recreation activity trend analysis were included as a part of the 2016 Needs Assessment study. The Needs Assessment's strategies represent actions for the Park Authority to provide its share of needed facilities and parkland through 2025.

Between needs assessments, the Park Authority conducts regular reviews of local demographic trends, national recreation trends, and emerging and



Batting practice at Braddock Park.

best practices in the park and recreation industry. Changes in demographic trends typically occur gradually, so these assessments are prepared every five years. National recreation trends are sometimes more volatile, so these are monitored and reported every two years. Moreover, the Park Authority conducts special studies such as the 2017 Unmanned Aircraft Systems in Fairfax County Parks study, 2020 Dog Park Study Report, and the 2021 Pickleball in Fairfax County study to stay apprised of specific community trends and needs. In addition, the Park Authority surveys class participants on their experience.

Local and national demographic and recreation trends help support the Park Authority's goals to improve access, meet changing recreation needs and promote a healthy lifestyle. The PROSA Strategy will inform the next needs assessment.

### 2016 NEEDS ASSESSMENT RECREATION AND LEISURE TRENDS ANALYSIS

Information released by Sports & Fitness Industry Association's 2015 Study of Sports, Fitness, and Leisure Participation reveals that the most popular sport and recreational activities include fitness walking, running/jogging, treadmill, free weights, and road bicycling. These activities appeal to a range of ages, can be done in most environments, are enjoyed regardless of level of skill, and have minimal economic barriers to entry. These activities also have appeal because of the social aspect. For example, although fitness activities are mainly self-directed, people enjoy walking and biking with other individuals because it can offer a degree of camaraderie. Fitness walking has remained the most popular activity of the past decade by a large margin, in terms of total participants. Walking participation during the latest year data was available (2014), reported over 112 million Americans had walked for fitness at least once.

From a traditional team sport standpoint, basketball ranks highest among all sports, with approximately 23 million people reportedly participating in 2014. Team sports that have experienced significant growth in participation are rugby, lacrosse, field hockey, ice

hockey, roller hockey, and gymnastics - all of which have experienced double digit growth over the last five years. In the past year, the estimated number of "inactives" in America has increased 3%, from 80.2 million in 2013 to 82.7 million in 2014. According to the Physical Activity Council, an "inactive" is defined as an individual that does not take part in any "active" sport. Although inactivity was up in 2014, the 209 million "actives" seem to be participating more often and in multiple activities. The national trends study is summarized in greater detail in Appendix A of the 2016 Needs Assessment report.

findings, and recommended facility investments that provides the foundation for 10 years of fiscal and strategic planning. Additionally, the 2016 Needs Assessment recommended retaining 12 of the core facility level of service standards adopted in 2004 as shown in *Figure 12*. Additionally, *Figure 13* on the following page summarizes the highest priority needs rated by Fairfax County residents. These key park elements are intended to meet countywide service level standards through 2025.

## 2016 NEEDS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

The Parks Count! 2016 Needs Assessment was developed from a comprehensive process to determine the community's park and recreation needs. This assessment recommended various service standards and a phased Capital Improvement Plan to meet those needs. The result was an extensive needs assessment process, research

### 2016 NEEDS ASSESSMENT SERVICE LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

Park System Element	Fairfax County Park Authority 2016 Needs Assessment Recommended Service Level Standards
Local Parks	5.00 acres per 1,000
Playground	1.00 site per 2,800
Outdoor Sport Courts (basketball/tennis)	1.00 court per 2,100
Skate Parks, Neighborhood	1.00 site per 50,000
Dog Parks, Neighborhood	1.00 site per 86,000
District & Countywide Parks	13.00 acres per 1,000
Indoor Gyms	0.25 SF per person
Diamond, Baseball 60 ft Fields (Youth)	1.00 site per 7,200
Diamond, Baseball 90 ft Fields (Youth, Adult)	1.00 field per 24,000
Diamond, Softball 60 ft Fields (Youth)	1.00 field per 8,800
Diamond, Softball 65 ft Fields (Adult)	1.00 field per 22,000
Rectangle Fields (All)	1.00 field per 2,700

Figure 12: 2016 Needs Assessment Service Level Recommendations



**HIGHEST PRIORITY NEEDS RATING OF FAIRFAX COUNTY RESIDENTS**

**PARK, PLAY AREAS, GARDENS, TRAILS, EQUESTRIAN OR HISTORIC PARKS OR FACILITIES NEEDS ANALYSIS**



Paved walking/biking trails	Smaller neighborhood parks
Small community parks	Lakefront parks and marinas
Unpaved walking/biking trails	Picnic shelters/areas
Public gardens	Nature centers
Large regional parks	

**INDOOR OR OUTDOOR FACILITIES NEEDS ANALYSIS**



Swimming pools	Water parks and spraygrounds
Exercise and fitness facilities	Soccer/football/lacrosse/field hockey/rugby fields
Gyms (basketball, volleyball, etc.)	Tennis courts
	Basketball/multi-use courts

**PROGRAMS & SERVICES FOR AGES UNDER 18**

Swim – Learn to swim lessons	Summer day camps
Biking, hiking, walking	Boating, fishing, camping
Special events, concerts	Exercise/fitness

**PROGRAMS & SERVICES FOR AGES 18 – 49**

Biking, hiking, walking	Special events, concerts
Exercise/fitness	Boating, fishing, camping

**PROGRAMS & SERVICES FOR AGES 50 & OLDER**

Biking, hiking, walking	Special events, concerts
Exercise/fitness	



**Figure 13:** Summary of the highest priority needs rated by Fairfax County residents



A family enjoying the playground at Martin Luther King, Jr. Park.

# APPENDIX



## LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS SUMMARY

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### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Level of Service Standards Summary

## LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS SUMMARY

Having appropriate service level standards is just the starting point for ensuring adequate provision of parkland and facilities. The Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) adopted level of service standards for core facilities based on the 2016 Needs Assessment as shown in *Figure 12*. Development of service level standards was based on public inventory, resident demand measured from survey results, comparison of multi-jurisdictional national benchmarks, FCPA and benchmark community service level comparisons, consultant considerations, and facility use statistics.

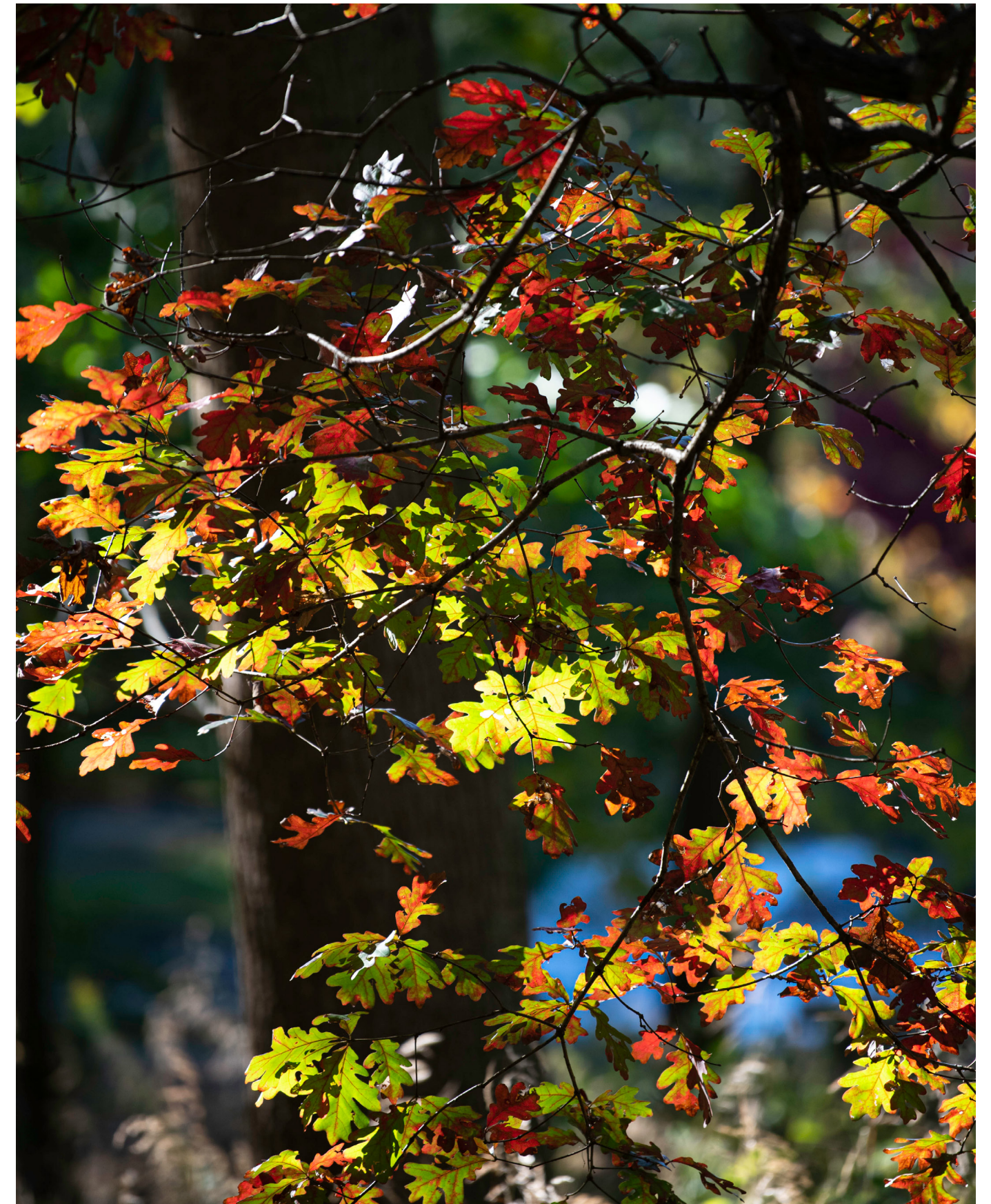
Additionally, the Park Authority adopted walk access level of service standards as part of the Great Parks, Great Communities Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2019 – 2023. One of the strategic objectives identifies to increase walkable access (¼-mile or 5-minute walk in urban areas and ½-mile or 10-minute walk countywide) by County residents to park or facility entrances, or trailheads to connect people to nature and recreational experiences.

Furthermore, urbanization of this traditionally suburban county has also required the Park Authority to develop a supplemental set of standards more applicable to the high density areas with an urban park environment. The Urban Parks Framework, adopted by the Park Authority Board in 2009 and incorporated into the county's Comprehensive Plan in 2013, is used to plan for and develop parks in Fairfax County's urbanizing areas.

### 2016 NEEDS ASSESSMENT SERVICE LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

Park System Element	Fairfax County Park Authority 2016 Needs Assessment Recommended Service Level Standards
Local Parks	5.00 acres per 1,000
Playground	1.00 site per 2,800
Outdoor Sport Courts (basketball/tennis)	1.00 court per 2,100
Skate Parks, Neighborhood	1.00 site per 50,000
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Rectangle Fields (All)	1.00 field per 2,700

**Figure 12:** 2016 Needs Assessment Service Level Recommendations



Close up of leaves beginning to change to fall colors.

# APPENDIX



## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

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### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Public Engagement Summary



Glowing sunset over a lake in Fairfax County.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

The Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Access (PROSA) Strategy's public engagement took place in two main phases. The first phase focused on understanding community values on park access and recreational experiences. It launched on October 25 and closed on December 11, 2022. The second phase of public outreach took place from July 7 to August 6, 2023, and focused on the Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Access draft summary report.

In total, the public engagement included 18 in-person neighborhood events across the county, two community surveys, four virtual community workshops, and three focus groups. Additionally, there were information releases and social media promotions. Outreach throughout the project included public meetings and presentations to several groups including the Annual Federation of Friends Meeting; the Board of Supervisors Health and Human Services Committee; the Trails, Sidewalks, and Bikeways Committee; the Athletic Council; and the Environmental Quality Advisory Council. The Park Authority Board received regular updates and presentations on the project. Furthermore, internal agency engagement included outreach and presentations at the Park Authority's Trailblazers event and agencywide supervisors' meetings.

Over 700 people participated in the first phase of public engagement. This phase prioritized understanding what types of park experiences residents value, park access, and what barriers, physical or otherwise, prevent residents from accessing and enjoying FCPA parks. A community survey, two public workshops, and participation in nine outreach events throughout the county took place during this time.

Additional outreach included an interview with the County Conversation podcast, an advertisement in the ParkTakes magazine, and email updates to project subscribers. The community survey, project flyers, and Communications Toolkit were available in the four most spoken languages in Fairfax County (English, Spanish, Korean, and Vietnamese). Additionally, the virtual workshops offered interpretation, and the project website highlighted Google translate capabilities.

The main takeaways from the first phase of public engagement include: participants regularly visit parks, people identified the need to improve walk and bike access to parks, improvements to the sidewalk network should be made to improve access to parks, and participants are looking for and value a variety of park experiences in parks.

Three focus groups were conducted between the main public engagement phases to capture diverse voices in the community. Like the first phase of

public engagement, the focus group discussion topics centered on understanding what types of park experiences residents value, park access, and what barriers, physical or otherwise, prevent residents from accessing and enjoying FCPA parks. The focus groups were coordinated in conjunction with Neighborhood and Community Services partners.

Reoccurring themes from the focus groups' input included the importance of social recreation and connecting with nature, the importance of parks to families who live in multi-family units as valuable outdoor space to run and play, safety being a barrier to park access, the need for improvements to sidewalks and trails to create access to parks, and a more equitable spread of the locations for events and concerts.

The second phase of public engagement reached over 600 people. The structure of the outreach reflected the first phase with a community survey, two virtual workshops, and outreach at nine community events. Public input focused on the draft report summary, as well as its strategies and actions. In addition, the project flyers and communications toolkit were available to download on the project website to help spread the word on the project. An interview on the project with the Fairfax County Consumer Connection Facebook Live Program provided additional community outreach. This phase of outreach also included presentations on the PROSA Strategy to various County boards, authorities, commissions, and groups, such as the Board of Supervisors Health and Human Services Committee, Athletic Council, Environmental Quality Advisory Council, HEAL Team, and the Trails, Sidewalks, and Bikeways Committee.

The community survey, project flyers, and communications toolkit were available in the five most spoken languages in Fairfax County (English, Spanish, Arabic, Korean, and Vietnamese). New demographic information on the most spoken languages in the county emerged between the public engagement phases and the latest information was incorporated in the outreach strategy. Again, the virtual workshops offered interpretation services, and the project website highlighted Google translate capabilities.

The major themes from the over 2,300 comments received during the second phase of public engagement include: the importance of PROSA's equity lens, support for improving access the parks for everyone especially in communities that don't have access to parks, support for improved access to parks by bike, the importance of families spending time outdoors to maintain and improve their mental and physical health, and the importance of removing invasive plants to improve habitats and park/trail access.



Outreach at Cathy Hudgins Community Center.



Outreach at a Farmers Market.

# APPENDIX



## ECOLOGICAL TRANSECT

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### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Ecological Transect Diagram



Deer at Hidden Pond Park.

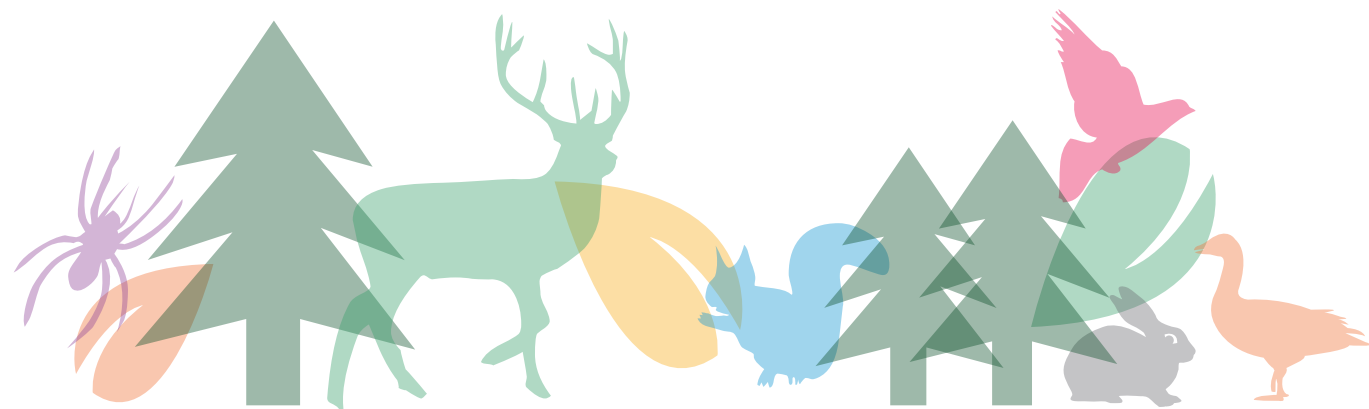
### ECOLOGICAL TRANSECT

The Fairfax County Ecological Transect shown in *Figure 14* on page 78 is a conceptual, graphic representation of the natural landscape from one end of the county to the other. Providing ecological context, it is a representation of common habitats and natural communities characteristic of each physiographic province.

The ecological transect captures historical habitats native to Fairfax County. Natural communities are often closely associated with abiotic site conditions such as soil type, slope, aspect, hydrology, etc. Additionally, land use history and broader biological processes can influence the development of a

natural community at any particular site. Natural communities that are recovering from significant disturbance or maintained through regular human intervention may be considered successional or modified communities. For example, prairies and meadows are not historically a habitat found in Fairfax County. They exist today as a result of land development activities and extensive agricultural practices.

The plants shown are native plant species common and prominent in those habitats. Many of the animals transcend multiple habitats across Fairfax County and are not necessarily confined to any one specific habitat.



Butterfly at Hidden Pond Park.

# FAIRFAX COUNTY ECOLOGICAL TRANSECT

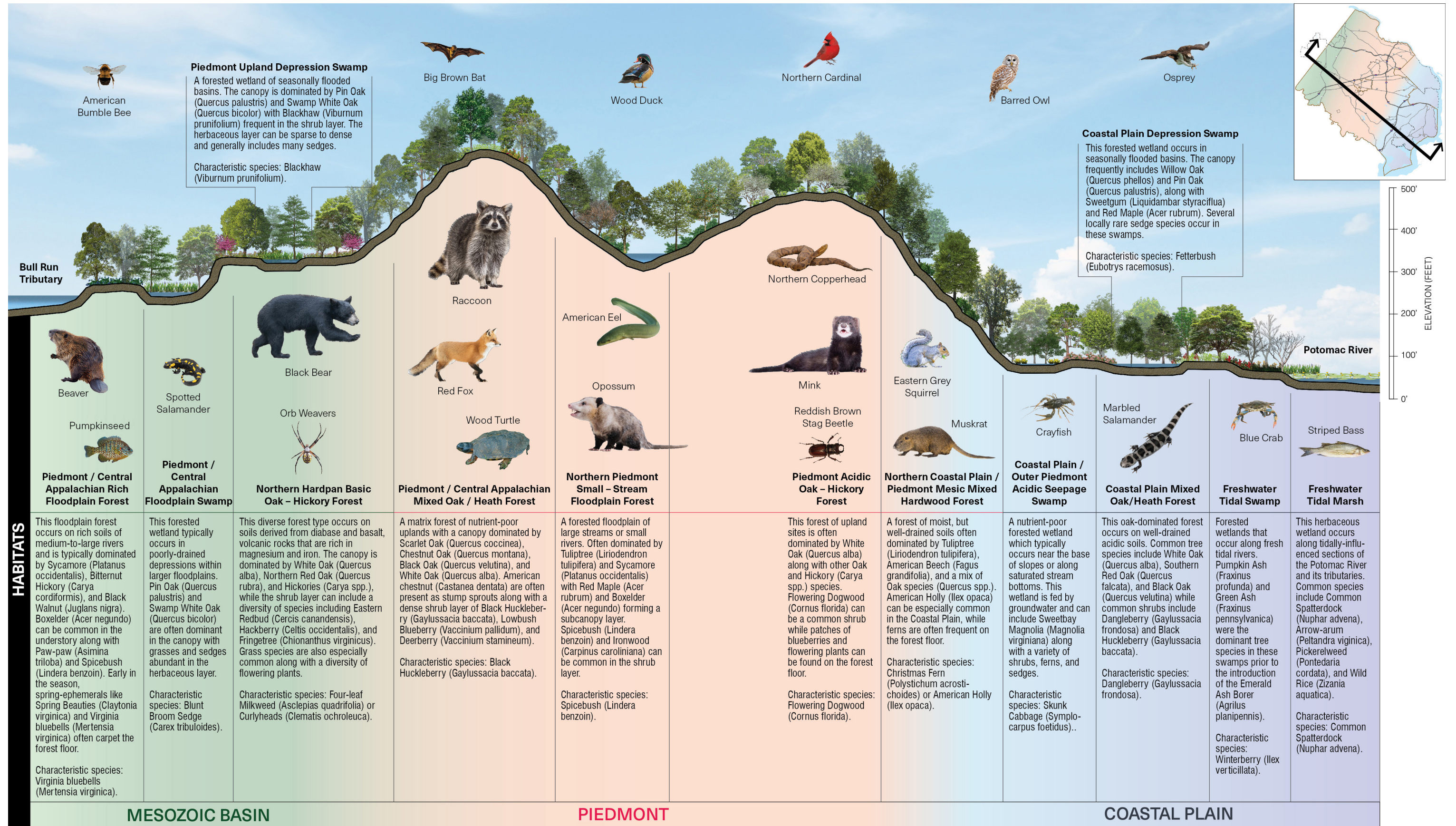


Figure 14: Fairfax County Ecological Transect



# APPENDIX



## KEY TERMS

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### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » A List of Key Terms



Fall turning to winter.

**Active recreation:** experiences that encourage physical activity and play, such as using sport courts, fields, playgrounds, trails, and fitness equipment.

**Complete park access:** the ability of residents to get to parks where they can experience a variety of recreational experiences within a 10-minute walk or 5-minute drive from their home.

**Density:** the concentration of individuals within a geographical area.

**Environmental corridor:** significant or core habitat areas and green infrastructure that connect through a network of natural landscapes that allow for the movement of wildlife, plants, and watersheds.

**Equity:** the commitment to promote fairness and justice in the formation of public policy that results in all residents – regardless of age, race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, marital status, disability, socio-economic status or neighborhood of residence or other characteristics – having opportunity to fully participate in the region’s economic vitality, contribute to its readiness for the future, and connect to its assets and resources.

**Fairfax County Park Authority parks:** all Park Authority owned and leased park sites.

**Gene flow:** any movement of a species, and/or the genetic material they carry, from one population to another.

**Habitat connectivity:** degree to which the landscape facilitates or impedes ecological processes and animal movement through the preservation of contiguous, undeveloped habitat.

**Habitat quality:** degree to which the essential habitats of wildlife and plants are present and healthy.

**Invasive plants:** generally, non-native species that cause ecological or economic harm.

**Natural community:** an assemblage of co-existing, interacting species that are associated with a particular range of site conditions. They typically recur with some regularity across the landscape and have in most cases developed or recovered from impacts without substantial disturbance from humans.

**Natural/Cultural recreation:** experiences that provide opportunities to connect with the outdoors and nature, as well as present-day and historical heritage, such as enjoying nature trails or wildlife habitats, or visiting historical and cultural landmarks.

**Nutrient flow:** movement of nutrients, substance that provides nourishment essential for growth and maintenance of life, from one location to another.

**One Fairfax:** a joint racial and social equity policy adopted by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, School Board, and the Park Authority Board. It commits the county, schools, and Park Authority to

intentionally consider equity when making policies or delivering programs and services.

**One Fairfax Vulnerability Index:** a composite of the following indicators from the American Community Survey 2016 – 2020 data: low-income occupations, limited English-speaking ability, low educational attainment, median household income, households without a vehicle, population without health insurance, homeownership, severely cost-burdened renters. The index produces an overall score used to highlight disparities within a geographic area.

**Opportunity Areas:** high and very high Park Authority Racial Equity Index block groups, which represent residents that are socioeconomically vulnerable or have average socioeconomics and high concentrations of people of color.

**Park Authority Racial Equity Index (PAREI):** a composite score derived from the One Fairfax Vulnerability Index and Population of Color that is used by the Park Authority for equity analyses to ensure that all residents regardless of race and/or socio-demographics have access to high quality parks, programs, and services.

**Park experience score:** an assessment of the major recreational experiences at each park. The score can be used to ensure diverse recreation opportunities, make decisions on park needs, and inform strategic investment.

**Passive/Contemplative recreation:** experiences that offer a place for relaxation, reflection, and mindfulness. Park amenities for this type of recreation experience include outdoor seating areas, walking paths, trails, and gardens.

**Physiographic provinces:** geographic regions defined by landforms and features distinct to the surrounding area. Virginia has five major physiographic provinces: Coastal Plain, Piedmont (includes Mesozoic Basin), Blue Ridge, Valley and Ridge, and Appalachian Plateaus. The three distinct regions found in Fairfax County are the Coastal Plain, the Piedmont, and the Mesozoic Basin, which is a subset to the Piedmont physiographic province.

**Racial equity:** the absence of institutional and structural barriers experienced by people, based on race or color that impede opportunities and results.

**Social equity:** the absence of institutional and structural barriers experienced by people, based on other societal factors such as age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, marital status, disability, socio-economic status, and/or neighborhood of residence, that impede opportunities and results.

**Social recreation:** experiences that encourage people to gather, engage in shared activities, and foster relationships with family, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances, such as enjoying picnic areas, community gardening, or going to an event. They facilitate community interactions and connections.

**Ten-minute walk:** 10 minute (½ mile) walk to a public entrance of a Park Authority park.

**Tree canopy:** a measurement of the total area that is shaded by mature trees. It includes the layers of leaves, branches and tree stems that cover the ground when viewed from above.



Bird at the park.



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