



GREAT PARKS, GREAT COMMUNITIES

Strategic Plan

Fiscal Years 2019 - 2023

Implementing the 2017 Parks and Recreation System Master Plan

APPENDIX



FINAL JUNE 2018

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Summary of Public Comments

Public Comment Summary

The draft plan was released to the public on April 26, 2018. This included formal notification through a press release, as well as direct email notifications to stakeholders including:

- Board of Supervisors
- Leadership of other county agencies and community partners
- Friends groups
- Athletic Council
- Individuals who previously signed up for the master plan email list

Community input was solicited and comments were received through the project website and email to Parkmail. The Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling also submitted a formal comment letter.

The public comment period closed on May 25, 2018.

Comment Overview

Overall, the public comments reinforced the findings from the 2016 Parks Count! Needs Assessment and 2017 Master Plan guiding principles, goals and recommendations. These comprehensive planning efforts laid the groundwork for the draft strategic plan to meet community priorities.

Community input emphasized topics including: support for natural resources and habitat protection, bicycle access to parks, and support for volunteers.

Other comments focused on the importance of fiscal sustainability, inclusion and equity in the park system, and the importance of parks as critical infrastructure for the health and well being of the community and economic competitiveness.

Some public comments were related to operations, rather than the strategic plan. These included concerns about equestrian use of parks. The Park Authority is exploring ways to address these concerns as part of operations.



Comment Overview

Highlights from the public comments are listed below:

Support for Volunteers

- Importance for aspects of master plan and strategic plan implementation
- Opportunity to replicate successes of volunteer activities and Park Volunteer Teams
- Scalable with support of funding, outreach and awareness capabilities

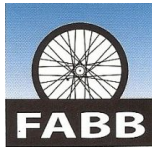
Bicycle Access to Parks

- Health, equity and environmental benefits of bicycling
- Establish an access standard similar to walkability
- Safety and maintenance concerns
- Commuter use and improved mobility
- Connect w/ entire system (FCDOT, etc.)

Natural Resources and Habitat Protection

- Land acquisition as a tool for improving natural resources and achieving a well-rounded park system, not just preserving “open space”
- Expansion of biodiversity, ecosystem services, restoration efforts
- Importance of passive recreation areas near streams
- Potential for private financial donations for projects of high ecological value
- Cultivation of stewardship
- Integrate natural resources and recreation in the park system to be complementary, mutually-supportive

PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY



**FAIRFAX ALLIANCE FOR
BETTER BICYCLING**

FABB
P. O. Box 3752
Reston, VA 20195
www.fabb-bikes.org

May 11, 2018

To: [Samantha Hudson](#):

The Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling, (FABB), is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization with 3,000 members promoting safe and better bicycling in Fairfax County. Thank you for requesting comments on the [Fairfax County Park Authority Draft FY19-23 Strategic Plan](#). We are greatly encouraged to see the park authority has included the Master Plan Goal, "Improve access and opportunities for healthy and active lifestyles".

The recent Park Authority needs assessments have shown how important trails are and the popularity of bicycling as active outdoor recreation. Residents have said they want improved connections to parks, not just through improved trails, but also through additional and better maintained bicycle facilities.

Unfortunately, there is no mention of bicycling in the draft strategic plan. Our concern can be easily eliminated by adding "and bikeable " whenever walkable is mentioned. FABB encourages the Park Authority to add a strategic objective to increase bikeable access to park facilities and provide the associated metric similar to the walkable access objective already included. As an example, the Fairfax County Bicycle Map suggests it would take 12 minutes to bike 2 miles. Many residents own bicycles and would use them to access parks and for short trips if it were safer to do so. Better park bicycle facilities will help achieve a healthy and active lifestyle for county residents from ages 8 to 80.

As the Park Authority moves forward in developing the steps to implement the strategic objectives, FABB recommends:

- Better trail maintenance and enhancements of Park Authority trails;

- Improving the visibility and safety of trail bollards to comply with established safety standards;
- Implementing trail connections in county parks as previously included in the October 2014 Fairfax County Master Bicycle Plan; and
- Use the recently adopted Bicycle Parking Guidelines, in consultation with Bicycle Program Staff, when purchasing and placing bike racks of park property.

FABB fully supports the action step calling on the Park Authority Board and the Board of Supervisors to pass resolutions, establish policies, and secure budgets to dedicate resources in meeting the national walkability standards. Expanding the action step to include bicycling will also be helpful in implementing the Counties Bicycle Master Plan.

In 2017, the League of American Bicyclists designated Fairfax County as a Bronze Level Bicycle Friendly Community. Implementing the above recommendations would serve to expand that success, greatly enhance bicycling in the parks and continue growing Fairfax County into an even more bicycle-friendly community.

Sincerely,



[Jeffrey Anderson](#)
President - Board of Directors

CC:
FABB Board of Directors
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
Fairfax County Park Authority Board

Board Action Item for Strategic Plan Approval

PLACEHOLDER PENDING PAB APPROVAL.





Parks & Recreation System Master Plan



Great Parks, Great Communities for Today and the Future



As we look to the future of Fairfax County, we see parks and recreational opportunities as more important than ever. Despite challenges with our economic recovery, the Fairfax County Park Authority has continued to meet the community's growing needs at a high, nationally-recognized standard of excellence.

Over the next 10 years, we will continue this track record of success as one of the nation's premier park and recreation systems. We created the Great Parks, Great Communities Parks and Recreation System Master Plan to help us do just this.

As our "guiding star," the master plan presents a framework and related policies and goals to chart the course for all agency initiatives, plans, and programs over the next several years. It is the culmination of nearly three years of ongoing engagement with community members, park stakeholders, user groups, staff and partners.

Our commitment to meeting community needs and quality public service is at the core of this plan, which is why our first step was to learn what residents want by completing the Parks Count! Needs Assessment in spring 2016. Over the past year, the park board and our staff have worked tirelessly to prepare a plan that delivers on what we learned.

The master plan includes seven guiding principles and six goals approved by the Park Authority Board that will focus our funding and resources on the highest community priorities. Moving forward, the plan will become an integral part of day-to-day business through our partnerships, programming, capital improvements, communications, and stewardship activities.

I hope you find it inspiring, and I look forward to seeing you in the parks!

Warmest Regards,

William G. Bouie, Chairman

2017 Park Authority Board Members

- + William G. Bouie, Chairman, Hunter Mill District
- + Mary Cortina*, Vice Chair, At-large
- + Michael Thompson, Jr., Secretary, Springfield District
- + Linwood Gorham, Treasurer, Mount Vernon District
- + Walter Alcorn, At-large
- + Cynthia Jacobs Carter, Lee District
- + Maggie Godbold, Sully District
- + Tim Hackman, Dranesville District
- + Faisal Kahn, At-large
- + Ronald Kendall*, Mason District
- + Ken Quincy, Providence District
- + Kiel Stone*, Braddock District
- + Frank S. Vajda*, Mason District
- + Anthony J. Vellucci*, Braddock District

*Asterisk indicates the member served a partial year.

For 67 years, the Fairfax County Park Authority Board has provided oversight of the parks and recreation system by setting policy, establishing priorities, and directing the effective and efficient use of funds.

The 12-member board is appointed by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and retains fiduciary responsibility for the agency. The board includes one representative from each of the nine magisterial districts, plus three at-large members.



The Park Authority strives to ensure the right parks, programs and amenities are in the right places to serve the right community needs and protect the right resources.

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- C. Needs Analysis Summary
- D. Community Inventory
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- F. Map of the Park System
- G. Board Action Item for Master Plan Approval

Supplemental Technical Information in the 2016 Parks Count! Needs Assessment

- Recreation and Leisure Trends Analysis
- Level of Service Standards
- Description of Related Plans
- Park Types & Program Listing
- Capital Improvement Program Framework



Overview

Importance and Value of Parks and Recreation

Great parks and recreation systems lead to great communities, and are part of what makes Fairfax County and its diverse community thrive.

Encompassing over 23,000 acres of park land and open space with an average annual visitation rate of +17.5 million, the park system is integral to sustaining the quality of life that has attracted so many residents and visitors to live, work, shop, and play in Fairfax County.

As Fairfax County grows and adapts to dynamic community needs, the park system will be an enduring source of value. This value stems from far-reaching and wide-ranging benefits.

Natural Capital & Environment

Parks and open space networks conserve natural resources and wildlife habitat, protect air and water quality, and preserve the environment for current and future generations.

Lifelong Community Well-Being

All residents, regardless of age, gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, or ability, have access to parks, which bring people together, connect people to each other and nature, and foster community identity.

Importance of High Quality Parks to Quality of Life:

93%

of residents think high-quality parks, trails, recreation facilities and services are important or extremely important to the quality of life in Fairfax County.

Source: 2016 Parks Count! Needs Assessment

Value & Benefits of Parks and Recreation

Economic Value

Parks enhance property values and play a key role in attracting home buyers, employers, and workers to invest in communities.

Beauty and Wonder

Gardens, rolling meadows, green trees, meandering and healthy streams, and lake vistas, make Fairfax County unique and memorable.

Health & Lifestyle

Physical activity helps people maintain good health and people exercise more when they have access to parks and trails.

Cultural Heritage

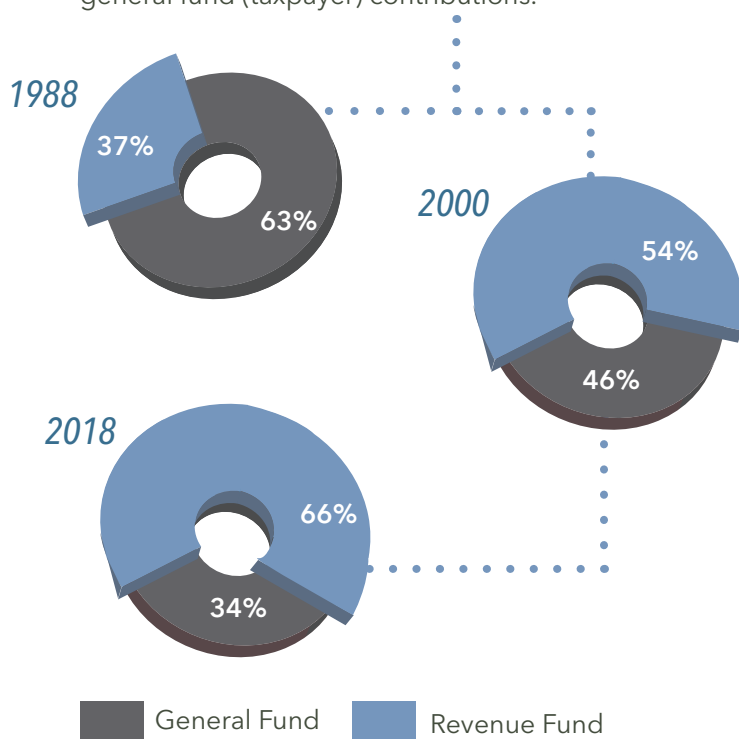
By protecting and preserving cultural resources, parks play an increasingly important role in securing, sharing, and enriching the heritage of the local community.

DID YOU KNOW?

Most parks are **free** for the public to use and are enjoyed by about 90% of the County's +1.1 million residents. However, the park system operating costs are supported by less than one penny of every tax dollar.



Funding to sustain operation of the park system comes from two primary sources. As illustrated below, over time the reliance on revenues from fees and services has significantly outpaced general fund (taxpayer) contributions.



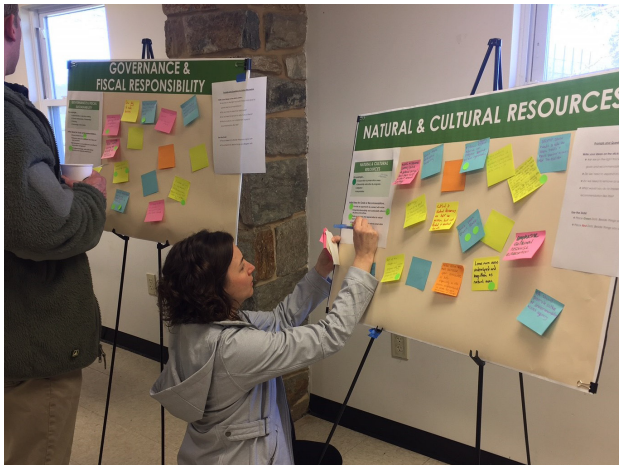
Why Have a Parks and Recreation System Master Plan?

A long-range park and recreation system master plan helps the agency and public better understand the elements and assets of the system. The process and plan offer several benefits, including those listed below.

- Align programs, planning, and initiatives
- Provide a road map for system maintenance, reinvestment and expansion
- Articulate a defensible rationale for decision-making
- Enable strategic resource allocation (e.g. budgeting and staffing)
- Strengthen and foster strong partnerships
- Ensure safe and welcoming parks
- Provide an updated recreation facility mix
- Improve connectivity and access to nature
- Target programming and facility construction to meet gaps and needs
- Ensure long-term financial sustainability

A Community-Driven Plan

The needs voiced by residents, park users, and community partners form the foundation of the master plan and are essential to this long-range plan for the park system. The multi-year planning process began with the extensive engagement, analysis and findings of the Parks Count! Needs Assessment. Public comments on the draft master plan underscored these findings and the focus of the plan.



Community input on the draft master plan reinforced the direction set by the Parks Count! Needs Assessment findings.

Public comments emphasized topics including: trail system maintenance and development, healthy and active lifestyles for all, ecosystem services and ecological integrity.

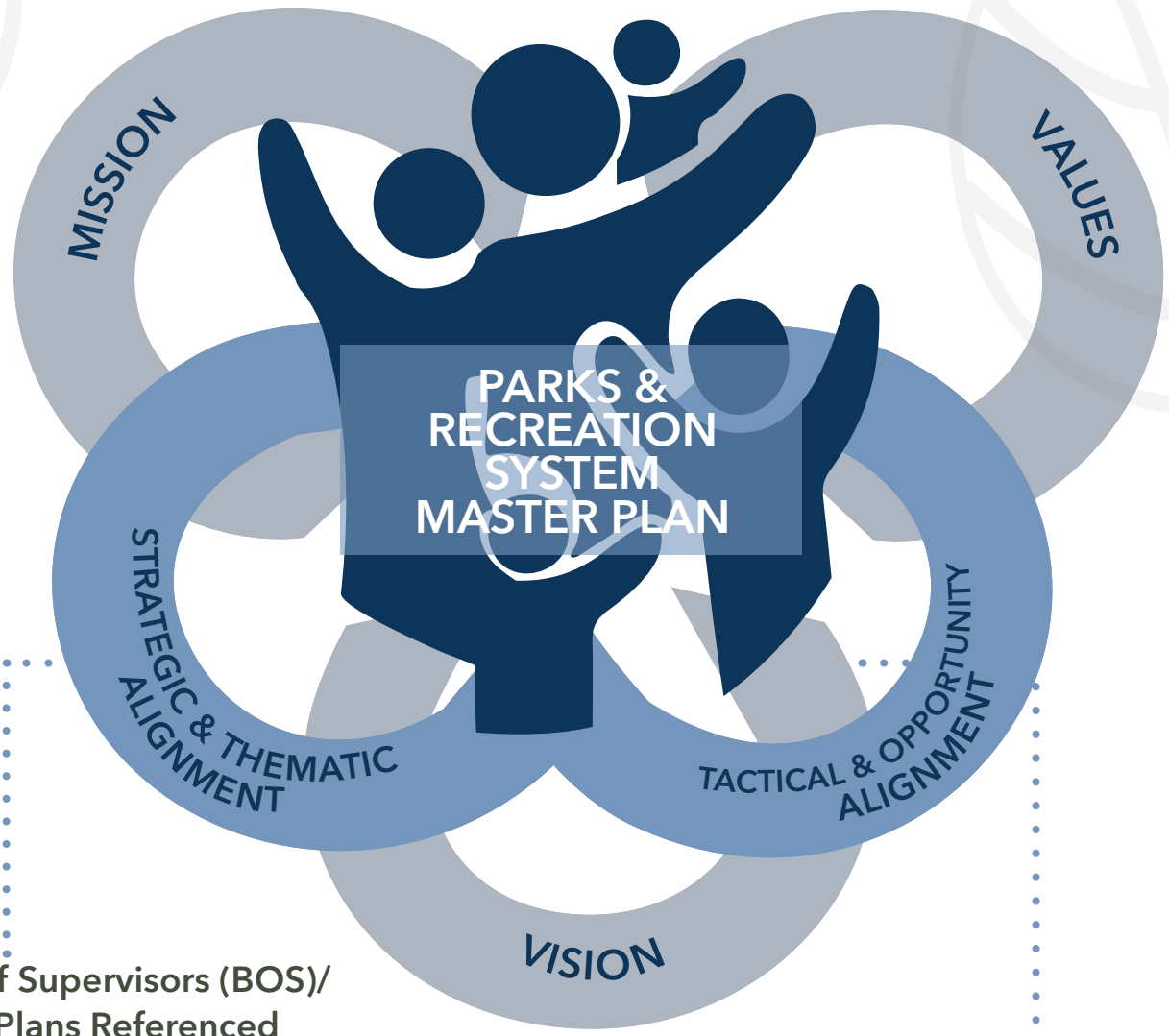
Robust stakeholder engagement is a hallmark of the Park Authority planning process.

The community input that guides this master plan included scores of stakeholder interviews, focus groups, public meetings, online engagement, a statistically valid community survey, staff open houses, meetings with partners and community groups, and agency leadership discussions.

Through the Parks Count! Needs Assessment online crowdsourcing alone, 700+ users shared 300 comments on 60 different topics.

Planning Process Overview





Board of Supervisors (BOS)/ County Plans Referenced for Alignment

- + BOS Vision & Priorities
- + BOS Environmental Vision
- + BOS Economic Success Strategic Plan
- + Community Health Improvement Plan
- + Comprehensive Plan
- + Fairfax First
- + Human Services Needs Assessment
- + One Fairfax
- + Tree Action Plan
- + 50+ Plan

Park Authority Plans Utilized in Alignment

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan
- Asset Management Plan/Total Cost of Ownership
- Capital Improvement Plan
- Cultural Resources Management Plan
- Division Operations Plans
- Energy Management Plan
- Financial Management Plan
- Natural Resources Management Plan
- Parks Count! Needs Assessment
- Park-Specific Master Plans
- Park Authority Policy Manual
- Recreation Programming Plan
- Strategic Plan
- Trail Development Strategy Plan



Alignment of agency planning, programs and initiatives is critical for the long-term sustainability of the park system. The master plan aligns the broader strategic direction of the Park Authority with county priorities.

Needs and Trends

Changing Development Trends

Planned redevelopment of strategic growth centers is leading to more urbanization in designated areas of the county.

The greatest concentrations of future population growth will occur in these growth centers. Growth centers are designated in historically commercial areas with few or no parks.

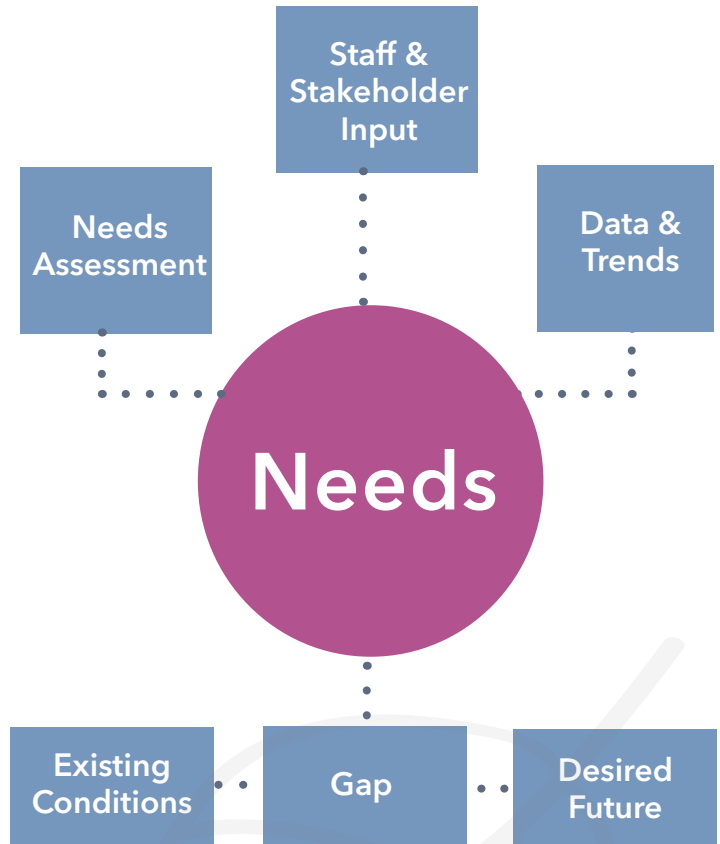
The introduction of mixed-use development with a significant residential component creates a need for new parks and recreation.

Changing Climate Trends

Warmer temperatures and worsening air quality are among the impacts of climate change that all park users experience.

Changes in the climate have significant effects on the natural and built environments, as well as the local economy. Parks are essential to helping the community adapt and address climate change.

In order to keep pace with the demands of a growing and changing population, the Park Authority must consider how the dynamic nature of trends, lifestyles and activities will affect facility and programming needs.



Needs help to identify the gap between today's park system and the park system desired in the future.

References and additional information about the needs and trends considered in the planning process can be found in the Master Plan Appendix and 2016 Parks Count! Needs Assessment.

Changing Demographic Trends



Strength of diversity.

Nearly 40% of county residents five years and older speak a language other than English at home, and nearly 32% are foreign born.

Implications for Parks and Recreation include

- accommodate family gatherings and cluster activities to support multi-generational events
- need for culturally appropriate programs and spaces, and multi-purpose fields (including soccer and cricket among others)



More interest in aging actively.

By 2025, over 26% of Fairfax County's population will be 55 years of age or older.

Implications for Parks and Recreation include

- more 50+ recreation, mid-day programs, and volunteer opportunities

Changing Health Trends



Increase in preventative care, lifestyle changes to improve physical and mental health.

Increase in sedentary lifestyles, more overweight people. Doctors are prescribing time outdoors and in parks.

Implications for Parks and Recreation include

- more support for active living (walking, running, biking trails)
- desire to preserve open space and the environment
- parks must be accessible to all communities

Changing Parks and Recreation Trends



Growing fitness membership, increasing number of fitness providers.

Rate of growth in fitness facilities is much greater in the DC area than national average, and the popularity of informal high-end fitness options is growing.

Implications for Parks and Recreation include

- lost customers not easily replaced
- greater competition in market
- decreasing consumer demand for multi-purpose generalist facilities

Changing Social Trends



Increased importance of distinctive places & experiences.

People choose where they live based on lifestyle and proximity to activities.

Implications for Parks and Recreation include

- reimagining in parks and other public places
- distinctive programs, events, and destination features
- interest and awareness of the natural environment and local history

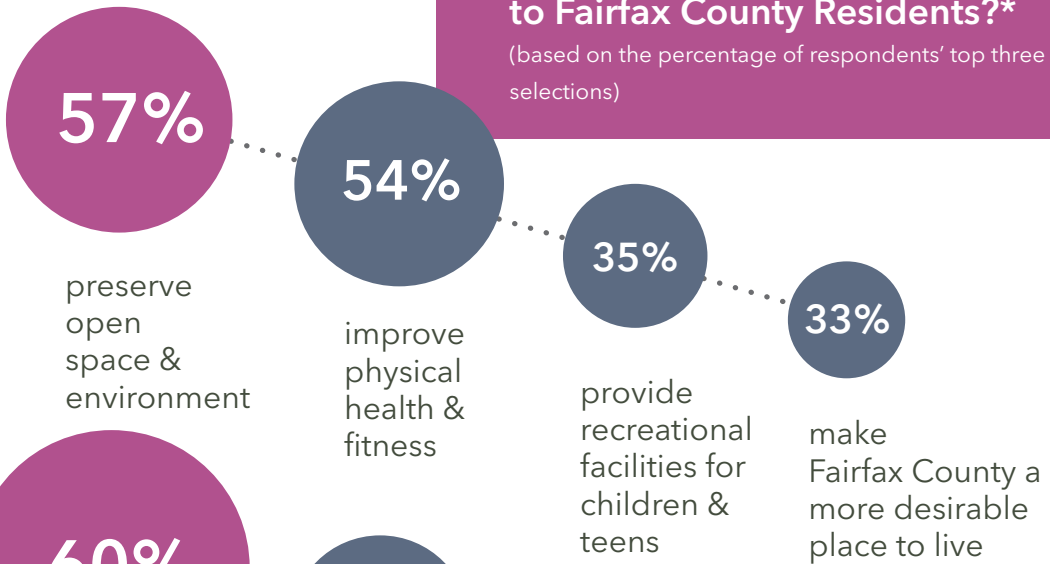
NEEDS AND TRENDS

*Findings from the 2016 Parks Count! Needs Assessment Statistically Valid Survey

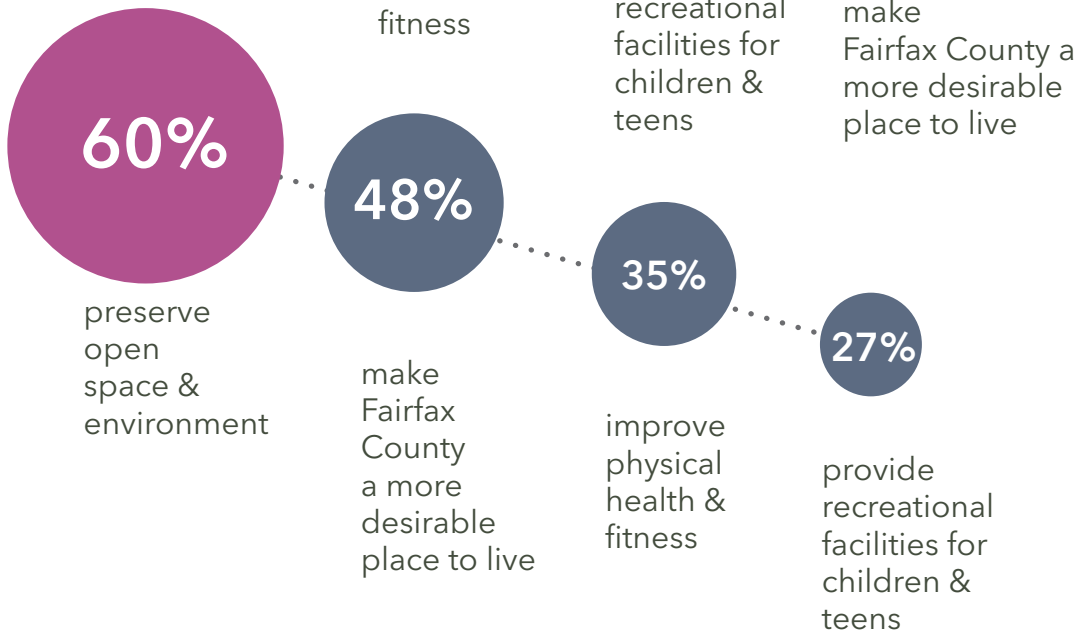
What's Most Important for the Park Authority to do according to Fairfax County Residents?*

(based on the percentage of respondents' top three selections)

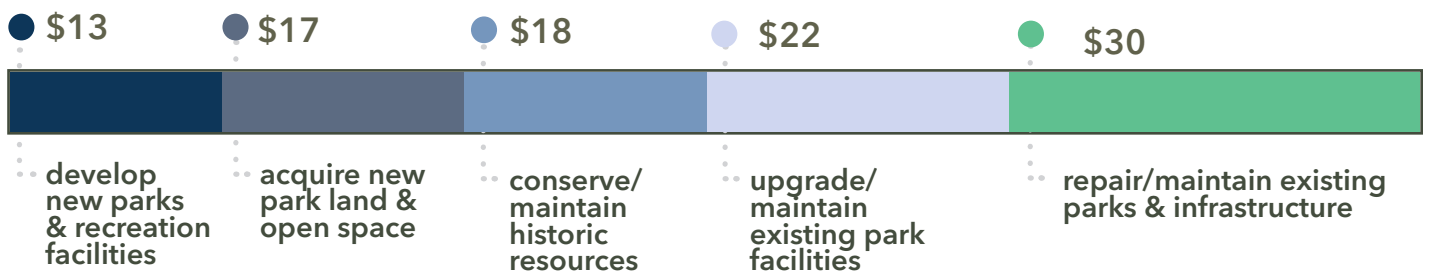
Most Important for Households



Most Important for the Future of Fairfax County



How Would Residents Spend \$100 of Park Authority Funds?*



*Findings from the 2016 Parks Count! Needs Assessment Statistically Valid Survey

**Priority needs listed in order of priority with the #1 priority shown in bold.



Priority Needs by Age Group*

under 18 swim lessons biking, walking special events summer camps exercise boating, fishing

18 thru 49 biking, walking special events exercise boating, fishing

50 and over biking, walking special events exercise

Priority Needs for Parks, Play Areas, Garden, Trails, Equestrian, Nature, or Historic Parks or Facilities*

paved walking/biking trails, small community parks, unpaved walking/biking trails, public gardens, large regional parks, smaller neighborhood playgrounds, lake front parks and marinas, picnic/shelter areas, nature centers

Highest Priority**

Priority Needs Rating for Indoor or Outdoor Facilities*

swimming pools, exercise and fitness facilities, gyms (basketball, volleyball, etc.), water parks & spray grounds, soccer/lacrosse/football/field hockey/rugby fields, tennis courts, basketball/multi-use courts

Highest Priority**

The need survey revealed general use patterns or preferences, as well as needs for individual activities, facilities, and services.

Guiding Framework

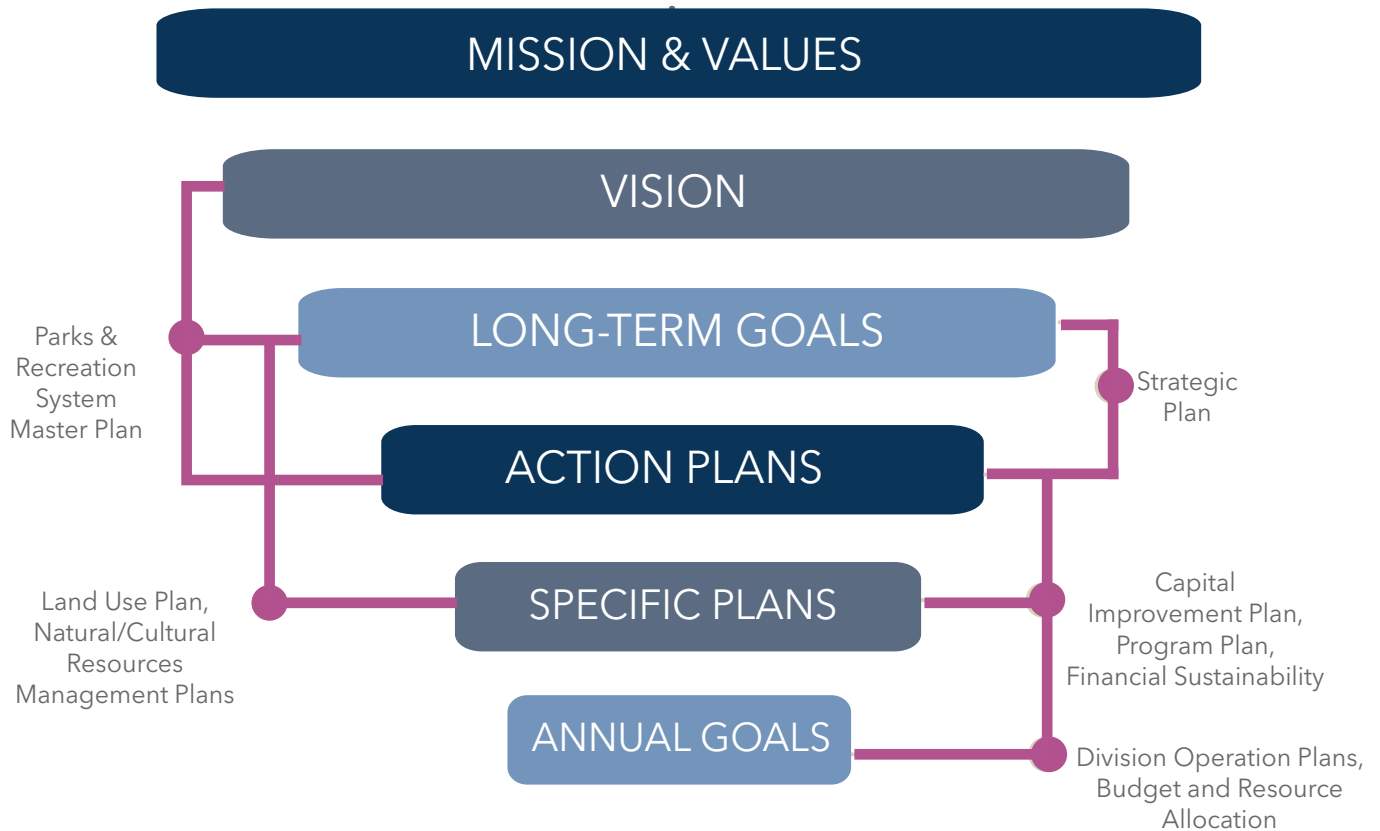
The master plan guides the Park Authority in aligning all agency plans, programs and initiatives to support its mission and vision.



Park Authority Mission

To set aside public spaces for and assist citizens in the protection and enhancement of environmental values, diversity of natural habitats and cultural heritage to guarantee that these resources will be available to both present and future generations.

To create and sustain quality facilities and services which offer citizens opportunities for recreation, improvement of their physical and mental well-being, and enhancement of their quality of life.



Master Plan Guiding Principles

This master plan establishes long-term goals for the park system beginning with guiding principles that capture what the park system strives to be in the future.

Guiding principles are constant and articulate the core ideals that guide the master plan and the agency direction over the plan’s 10-year time horizon. The guiding principles are detailed in the figure below.

Park Authority Vision

The Fairfax County Park Authority strives to inspire and sustain a passion for parks and leisure experiences that enhances our community’s quality of life.

Guiding Principles

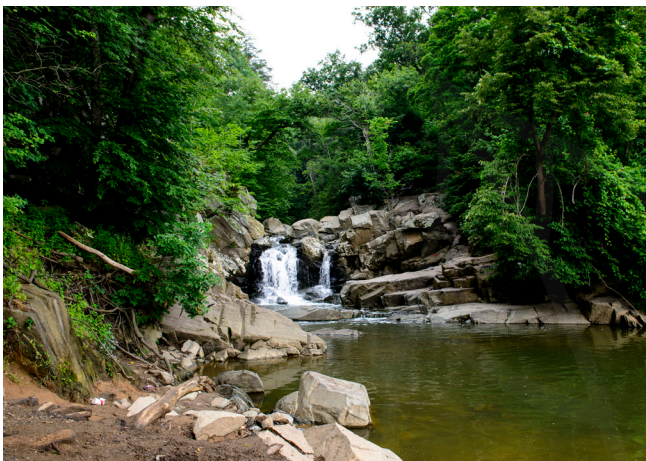


GUIDING FRAMEWORK

Follow the connecting lines and arrows on pages 11 and 12 to see how the Master Plan and new Park Authority Strategic Plan are linked.

Master Plan Elements

The master plan includes three related elements: guiding principles, goals and recommendations. The graphic on this page defines each of these elements and shows how they relate.



Strategic Plan Elements



The new strategic plan includes strategic objectives and action steps that are measurable to demonstrate progress and results towards the master plan goals.

The graphic on this page shows how these elements relate and how the strategic plan will be used to implement the master plan.

The strategic planning process began in late 2017 and will include public and staff involvement into spring 2018. Completion of the strategic plan is anticipated by summer 2018.



Strategic Objectives

Projects and initiatives that support the recommendations

Action Steps

Clear steps to accomplish the strategic objectives

Implementation

Review/update plans and allocate resources to complete action steps

Measure & Report

Follow the connecting lines and arrows on pages 11 and 12 to see how the Master Plan and new Park Authority Strategic Plan are linked.

Goal

Improve and promote natural resource protection and management

Protection, management, and the expansion of natural areas within the park system is essential to preserving the county's natural capital in biodiversity, natural communities, and ecosystems.

The Park Authority strives to be a great steward and to cultivate stewardship to preserve these resources for future generations.

Recommendations

The Park Authority commits to the following priority activities and actions necessary to achieve this goal:

Actively identify, restore, manage, and protect natural resources.

Expand natural habitat and biodiversity, linking larger resource conservation areas within the county and stream valley parks.

Cultivate stewards through the expansion of stewardship education, interpretation, community engagement, and the use of technology.

Enhance environmental sustainability practices within the Park Authority.

Expand and enhance partnerships with other public agencies and private entities that have aligned goals.

Ensure natural resource policies and plans align with county-wide guidance and meet or surpass expectations outlined in the Board of Supervisors Environmental Vision.

Primary Guiding Principles



Inspire a Passion for Parks



Be Great Stewards



Meet Changing Recreation Needs



Promote Healthy Lifestyles



Advance Park System Excellence



Strengthen and Foster Partnerships



Be Equitable and Inclusive

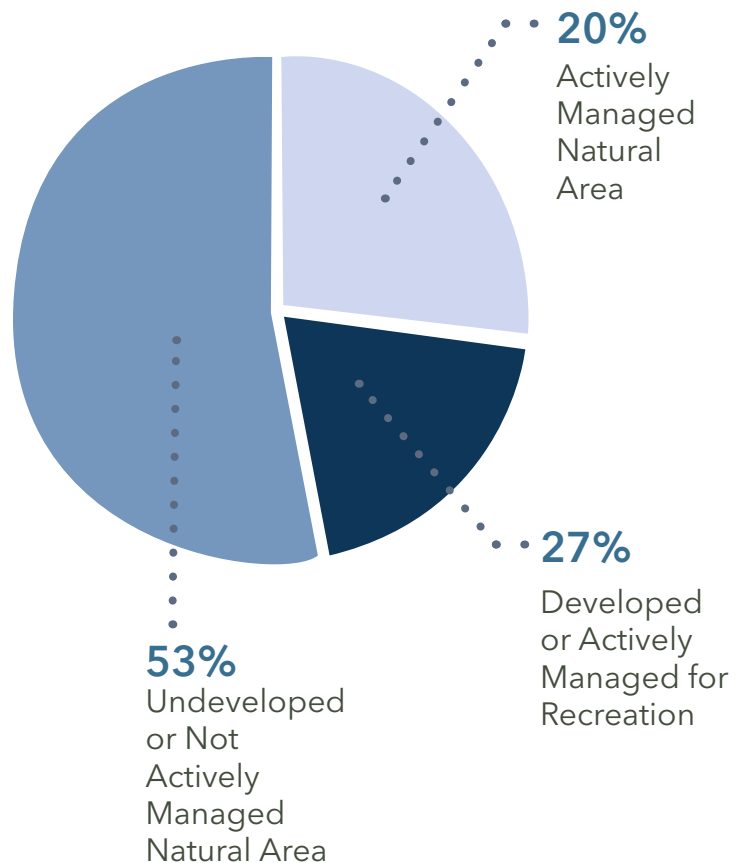
Many parks provide recreation facilities and feature irreplaceable natural habitats and cherished historic sites.

This can pose a challenge as the Park Authority must balance the need to protect and preserve these resources with the need to provide recreational opportunities to residents and park users.



The Invasive Management Area (IMA) program alone has 2,450 volunteers that contribute +9,000 volunteer hours to remove invasive plants and restore native habitat.

Park Authority Land



Goal

Ensure protection, conservation, preservation and interpretation of cultural resources

Protection and management of Fairfax County's cultural and historic resources is essential in order to make them available to a diverse community, help to educate the public and rejuvenate interest in historic buildings and cultural resource collections.

The Park Authority strives to be a great steward and to cultivate stewardship to preserve these resources for future generations.

Recommendations

The Park Authority commits to the following priority activities and actions necessary to achieve this goal:

Establish a suitable facility to preserve, expand, conserve and share county-wide collections.

Actively protect, manage, and preserve the county's cultural and historic resources.

Cultivate stewards through the expansion of stewardship education, interpretation, community engagement, and the use of technology.

Continue to assess, implement and improve resident curator opportunities.

Primary Guiding Principles



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The Park Authority owns and cares for multiple historic buildings, more than 3,500 archaeological sites and over 3.5 million artifacts.



The Resident Curator Program aims to enliven interest and protect several publicly-owned historic properties that were falling victim to the elements. The program allows tenants to use the structures in return for rehabilitating and maintaining them.



The Park Authority teaches others in the community how to be better stewards through interpretation, engagement, and education efforts.

Goal

Improve access and opportunities for healthy and active lifestyles

The park system serves a diverse public and provides high-quality recreational opportunities to all users.

In doing so, the Park Authority aims to empower residents to improve their health and wellness by equitably providing access to parks, facilities, and programs.

Primary Guiding Principles



Inspire a Passion for Parks



Be Great Stewards



Meet Changing Recreation Needs



Promote Healthy Lifestyles



Advance Park System Excellence



Strengthen and Foster Partnerships



Be Equitable and Inclusive

Recommendations

The Park Authority commits to the following priority activities and actions necessary to achieve this goal:

Improve park access and expand trail system connections in partnership with county agencies, developers, and other private entities to make it easier to use parks and to support a wide range of athletic activities.

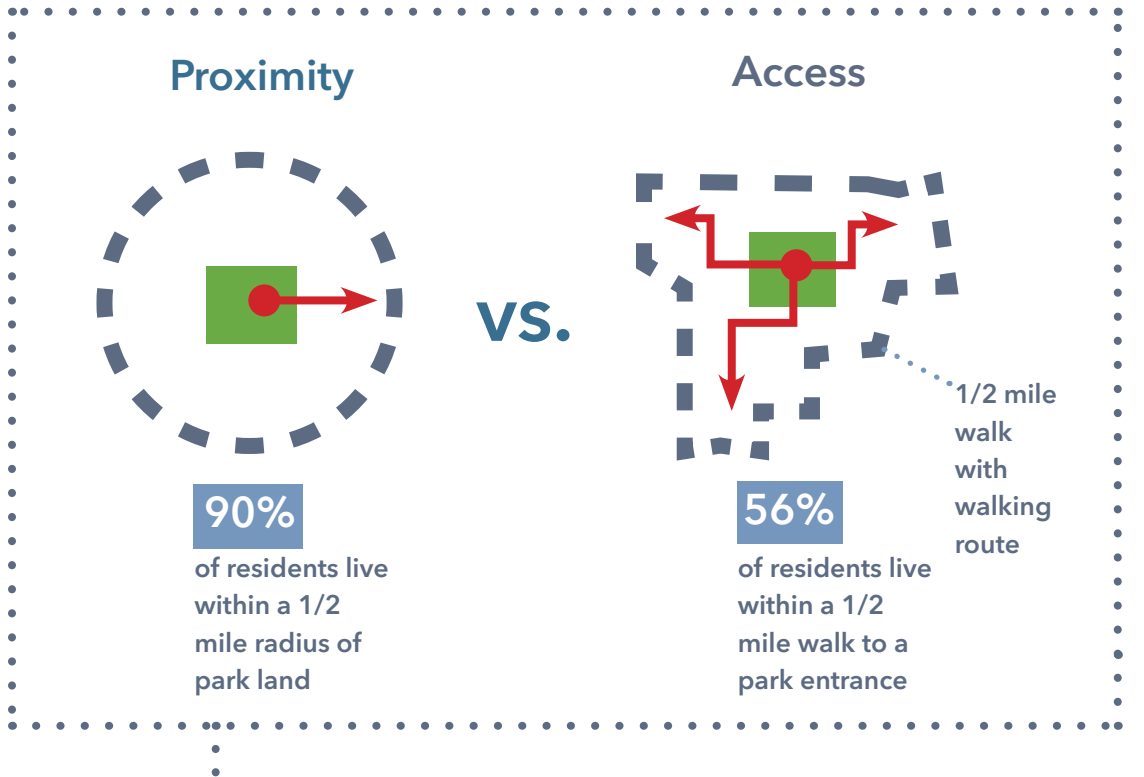
Enhance scholarship programs through dedicated funding sources and partnerships to provide equitable, high-quality opportunities for individuals and families to engage in fitness activities.

Prioritize capital investments and recreation programming and partner with private entities for areas of greatest need for improved or expanded facilities or programs.

Continue to advance the goals of the county's Live Healthy Fairfax and One Fairfax initiatives, including the emphasis on health in Park Authority plans and initiatives and efforts to increase equitable access for physical activities.



In FY16, the Park Authority provided almost 22,000 scholarships to allow program access for low-income residents.



Most county residents live near park land, but far fewer have walkable access to a park. Walkable access, as shown in the figure above, is a key indicator of how well and equitably the Park Authority serves the community.

Goal

Enhance and maintain park system quality and condition

A high-quality, well-maintained park system is important to supporting a vibrant and thriving community. In order to sustain the high-quality park system that residents expect, the Park Authority must continuously renovate and upgrade parks, trails, and recreational facilities.

These improvements are essential for the Park Authority to continue a legacy of providing an excellent and relevant park system.

Primary Guiding Principles

-  Inspire a Passion for Parks
-  Be Great Stewards
-  Meet Changing Recreation Needs
-  Promote Healthy Lifestyles
-  Advance Park System Excellence
-  Strengthen and Foster Partnerships
-  Be Equitable and Inclusive

Recommendations

The Park Authority commits to the following priority activities and actions necessary to achieve this goal:

Establish a long-term strategy for acquisition and management, including maintenance, of all lands and assets.

Take steps to assess and ensure park use balances recreation and stewardship objectives.

Maintain and improve satisfaction with the quality of the park system.

Review and enhance park maintenance practices and priorities.

Work to increase the amount of dedicated and alternative funding that provides for greater reinvestment in facilities, parkland, natural capital, and cultural resource assets.

Increase the amount of maintenance that is funded or completed by others (e.g., partners, other agencies).



If trends of park use county population growth and fiscal constraint continue as expected, continuing to adequately maintain the park system will be challenging.

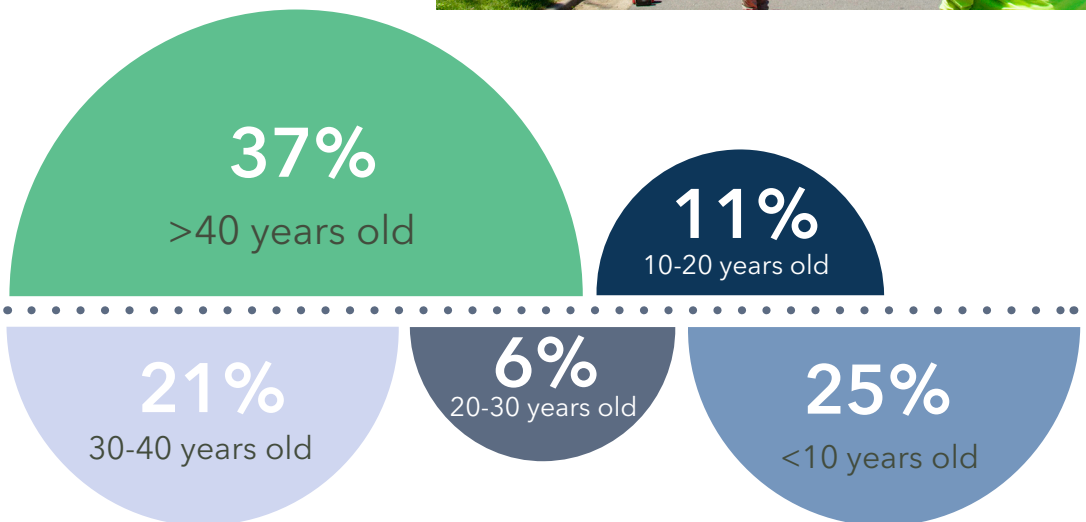


The Park Authority currently has close to \$200 million in deferred maintenance needs throughout the park system.



Age of Park Structures

Of the 374 structures in the park system, 58%, or 217 structures, are 30+ years old.



Goal

Advance as an innovative, responsive, and adaptable organization

The Park Authority is committed to meeting community needs and being the leader in the county, region, and parks and recreation industry.

To continue as an excellent park system requires the focus of a high-performing, dedicated organization, and the support of an empowered community.

Recommendations

The Park Authority commits to the following priority activities and actions necessary to achieve this goal:

Expand and improve use of data and technology to support and enhance organizational performance and decision-making.

Develop and attain measurable outcomes to ensure high-performance and accountability in the organization.

Invest in employee development and provide growth opportunities that empower staff to be innovative, responsive, and adaptable, while remaining user-focused.

Respond and adapt strategically to changes in how residents use and what users want in the park system.

Improve transparency and inclusion by providing greater opportunities for public input and collaboration with the community through the use of various communication venues, including social media.

Primary Guiding Principles



Inspire a Passion for Parks



Be Great Stewards



Meet Changing Recreation Needs



Promote Healthy Lifestyles



Advance Park System Excellence



Strengthen and Foster Partnerships



Be Equitable and Inclusive

With a workforce of over 2,400 staff and thousands of park volunteers providing an extensive and diverse array of services and programs, a strong commitment to continual training and professional development is essential to meet community needs and sustain the agency.



As the use of electronics and mobile devices grows, the Park Authority has more opportunities to engage and educate park users, as well as a greater ability to utilize data.



Goal

Provide sustainable financial management to advance the Park Authority mission



It is critical to determine strategic priorities in a way that balances the Park Authority mission and fiduciary responsibility.

Despite increasing demands and constrained resources, the Park Authority must continue to meet the needs of the community and support county wide initiatives.

Recommendations

The Park Authority commits to the following priority activities and actions necessary to achieve this goal:

Implement Total Cost of Ownership model for managing, developing, and acquiring all existing and future land, assets, and resources.

Seek and increase funding from dedicated and alternative sources.

Maintain sustainable revenue operations.

Reinvest in the RECenter system, golf, and other market-based facilities and revenue-generating programs to ensure continued sustainability and competitiveness.

Increase opportunities for revenue-generating activities and events.

Encourage other entities to provide and maintain high quality park facilities and services.

Increase yearly bond cash flow and bond allocation to meet current and future needs.

Primary Guiding Principles



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Be Great Stewards



Meet Changing Recreation Needs



Promote Healthy Lifestyles



Advance Park System Excellence



Strengthen and Foster Partnerships



Be Equitable and Inclusive



Private citizens, foundations and corporations donated more than \$779,900 to the Fairfax County Park Foundation in FY17 to support a wide array of programs, scholarships, services, parkland and facilities that would otherwise go unfunded.



The Parks Count! Needs Assessment includes a Capital Improvement Framework to facilitate strategic resource allocation for capital projects.

The total projected need in the ten years covered by the report for repairs, upgrades, and new park assets is \$941 million.

In FY16, 66.5% of the Park Authority's operating fund came from user fees and 33.5% came from tax dollars. Most park bonds are fully funded by public tax support.

Implementation

The goals and recommendations in this plan provide a road map for reshaping the parks and recreation system to meet community expectations and priorities, and to achieve the aspirations of the master plan guiding principles.

For the master plan to be successful, all parts of the agency must be moving in the same direction. A few things are critical to make this happen:

- Prioritize and allocate budget and staff resources in support of the master plan;
- Update all agency plans, programs, and initiatives to align with the master plan; and
- Create action plans and recalibrate them as needed to stay on track (strategic plan).

Upon approval of this plan, the Park Authority will check-in on the agency mission and vision to be sure it is consistent with the master plan guiding principles.

Partners in Parks

Partnerships with other county agencies, private entities, and volunteers are vital to providing a great park system.

The Park Authority will continue to nurture existing partnerships, while pursuing new or expanded partnerships that advance the master plan goals.





Strategic Plan

Moving forward, the next step for the Park Authority is to update the strategic plan that focuses specifically on identifying actionable steps towards achieving the master plan goals.

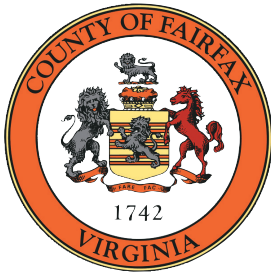
Staff participation in the strategic planning process will be essential to ensure day-to-day work is helping to implement the master plan.

The strategic plan will include objectives and action steps that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound in order to clearly guide implementation.

Tracking and Reporting Progress

Annual reporting will provide an opportunity to course-correct and refresh master plan recommendations if needed. The master plan will be revisited in five years for a comprehensive refresh and fully updated as the 10-year plan horizon nears.





A Fairfax County, Va. Publication

This master plan ties together ideas and inspiration from countless conversations and working sessions.

Many of these same voices will guide and contribute to accomplishing the goals set forth in this master plan.

Thank you for all of your hard work and support.

- *Park Authority Board*
- *Park Authority Director*
- *Park Authority Deputy Directors*
- *Park Authority Leadership Team*
- *Park Authority Staff*
- *Partners & Additional Support*

Graphic Design by Angelica Rockquemore.

December 2017

12055 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, Va.

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks



For accommodations,
contact Inclusion and ADA
Support at 703-324-8563.
TTY: Va Relay 711



APPENDIX



FINAL DECEMBER 2017

Appendices

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Park Authority Board Approved Plans

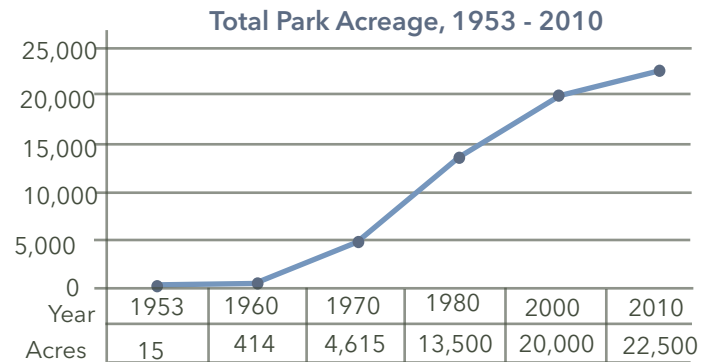
- Park Authority Policy Manual
- 2017 Parks and Recreation System Master Plan
- 2017 Cultural Resource Management Plan
- 2016 Comprehensive Financial Management Plan
- 2016 Bond
- 2014 Natural Resource Management Plan
- 2014 - 2018 Strategic Plan
- 2019 - 2023 Strategic Plan (anticipated in 2018)

Existing Conditions and Trends Summary

Location

Fairfax County is a 400+ square mile jurisdiction in Virginia located approximately 10 miles west of the nation's capital, Washington D.C. As the most populous jurisdiction in both Virginia and the D.C. metropolitan area, the county's population exceeds that of eight states and the District of Columbia.

Despite its current urban and suburban context, the County has agricultural and rural roots that are evident in its westernmost and southernmost communities. Fairfax encompasses dense urban areas with rail transit and skyscrapers as well as irreplaceable natural wetlands and centuries-old horse farms. The Fairfax County Park Authority is charged with managing a park system for all.



History and Today

Over the course of its 67-year history, the Park Authority has grown and evolved to meet the shifting needs of the changing County. From its very first land donation to managing over 750 athletic fields, eight RECenters, and +320 miles of trails, among hundreds of other park facilities, the Park Authority has pursued its mission in earnest.

Today, the Park Authority owns over 23,360 acres of land and averages an annual visitation rate of 17,754,788 (2015). The agency has expanded beyond the more traditional role of open space management to meet the changing demographics and diverse needs of the county.

The Park Authority is also charged with managing, protecting and preserving all of the county's cultural resources.

Demographic Overview

The county's population is growing, aging, and becoming more ethnically diverse.

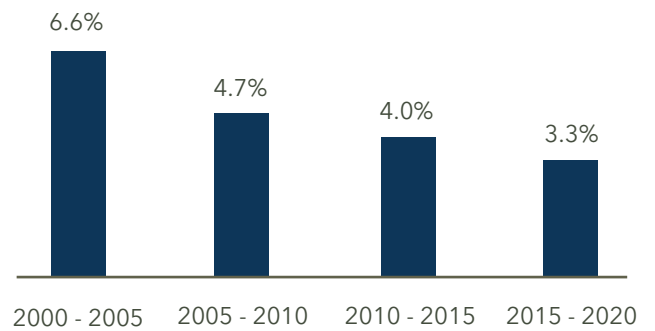
Population

Fairfax County has a current (2016) population of 1,131,900. That represents approximately a 17% increase in population since 2000. Over the 15-year period, however, the growth rate has slowed and is projected to continue to do so.

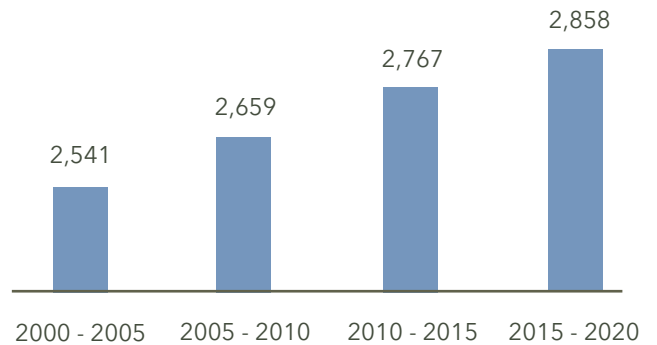
While population growth has slowed in pace, population density has been increasing. Planned redevelopment of strategic growth centers within the county is resulting in increased urbanization in designated areas. These growth centers will continue to be where the greatest concentrations of population growth will occur.

Growth centers historically have been commercial areas with few or no parks. The introduction of mixed-use development with a significant residential component creates a need for new parks and recreation.

Fairfax County Rate of Population Growth (%) Over Time

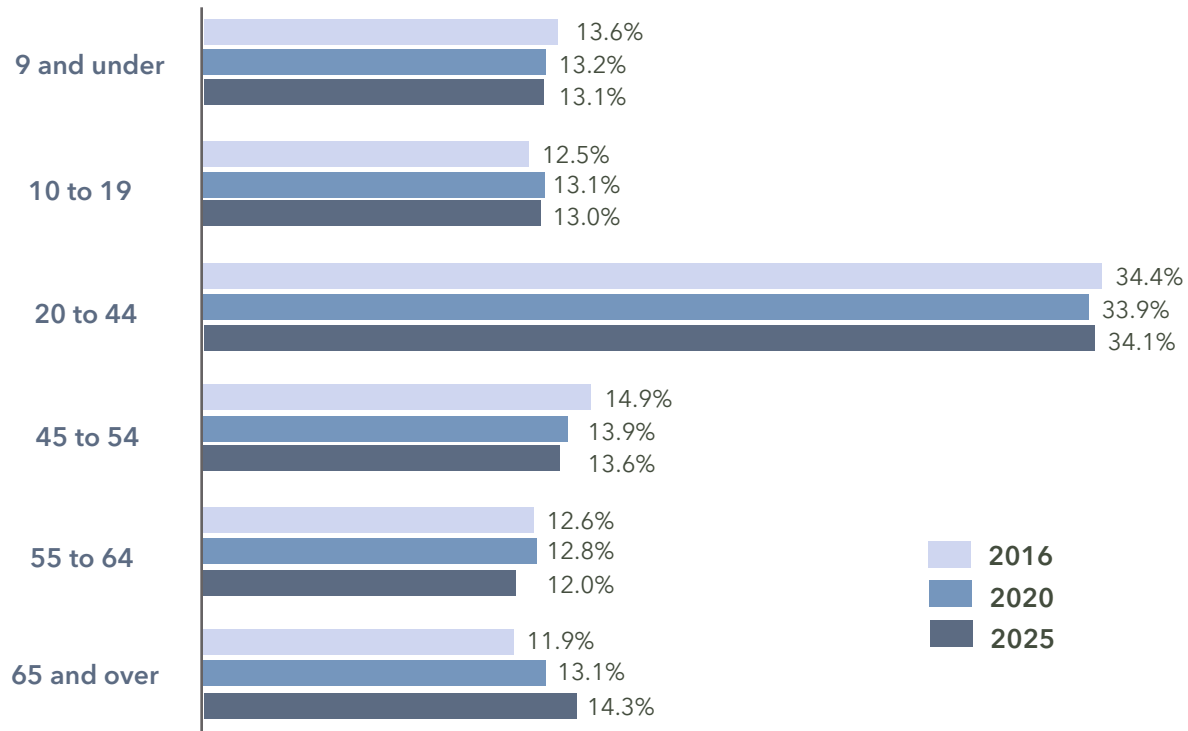


Fairfax County Population Density per Square Mile



Source: Based on data at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/demogrph/gendemo.htm#pop>

Fairfax County Current and Projected Population Age Distribution - 2016, 2020 & 2025



Source: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/demogrph/demrpts/report/fullrpt.pdf>

Age

Fairfax County's population continues to age, mirroring the nationwide trend. The county's median age in 2014 was 37.6 years, compared to 35.9 years at the start of the millennium. While projections to 2040 indicate that population growth will stabilize for all age groups over the long-term, there are distinct age groups growing and declining between 2016 and 2025, as shown in the following figure.

Race and Ethnicity

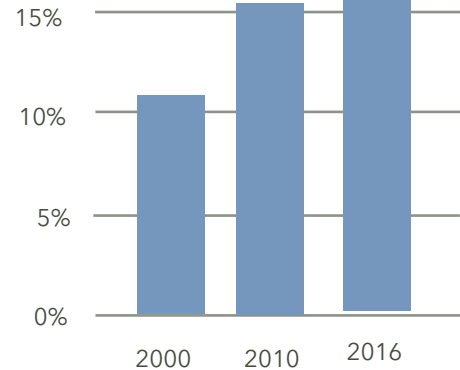
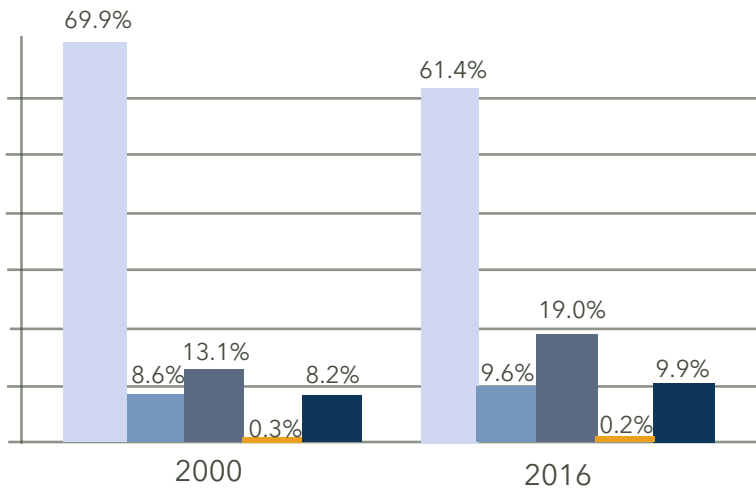
Unlike many areas of the country, diversification in Fairfax County has not resulted from the growth of one predominant minority group but rather from a wide variety of ethnicities from across the globe.

Fairfax County's diverse population is being led by growing enclaves of Hispanic and Asian residents. Several enclaves are clustered in certain areas of the county, including Springfield, Annandale, and Centreville.

Clustering can create rich cultural centers, but may also produce linguistic isolation which has implications for provision of parks and recreation.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS SUMMARY

Fairfax County Racial and Ethnic Population Distribution - 2000, 2010 & 2016



Source: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/demogrph/demrpts/report/fullrpt.pdf>

- White
- Black
- Asian Pacific Islander
- American Indian and Alaska Native
- Other

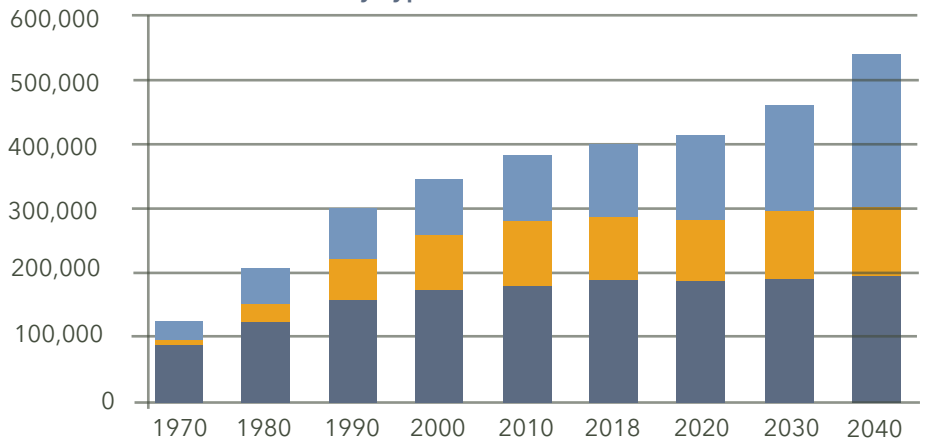
Households

Fairfax County households are also changing. The average household size in the county is 2.78 persons per household.

Over time, those households are increasingly less likely to live in single family homes. Households living in multifamily units often do not have private backyards.

As these types of housing units increase, so does the demand for dog parks, dog walking areas, playgrounds, community gardens, open play areas and other public park amenities.

Fairfax County Historical and Forecast Housing Units by Type of Structure, 1970 - 2040



Source: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/demogrph/demrpts/report/fullrpt.pdf>

- Single Family Detached Housing Units
- Single Family Attached Housing Units
- Multi Family Housing Units

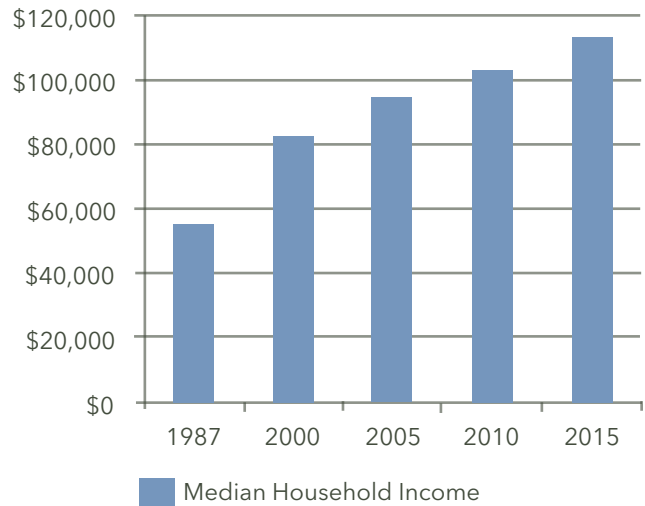
Income

Since 1987, the median household income in Fairfax County has nearly doubled. Within the general increase, however, the data shows an increasing polarization of income with more households gravitating to the extremes and a loss of households in middle.

While the shrinking of the middle class has become more pronounced, the trend is not new.

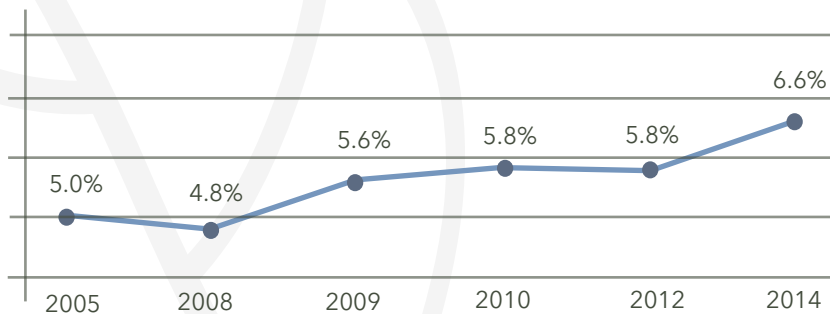
Since 1979, the share of middle-class households has declined from 40% to 33% of households. The proportion of households in the highest income bracket grew from 2001 to 2015, while the number of Fairfax County residents living below the poverty level has continued to increase.

Fairfax County
Median Household Income



Source: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/demogrph/demrpts/report/fullrpt.pdf>

Fairfax County Population in Poverty (Percentage)



Source: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/demogrph/demrpts/report/fullrpt.pdf>

As shown in the figure left, the percentage of residents living in poverty increased from 2005 to 2014. Pockets of higher poverty rates appear near the county's larger towns and places - particularly in Springfield, Annandale, Chantilly, Reston, and Mt. Vernon, as well as on the edges of Arlington and Alexandria.

Health

The social determinants of health are favorable in Fairfax County overall, but there are disparities and opportunities for improving health outcomes.

The Fairfax County Community Health Improvement Plan (2013) identified four key challenges for the county.

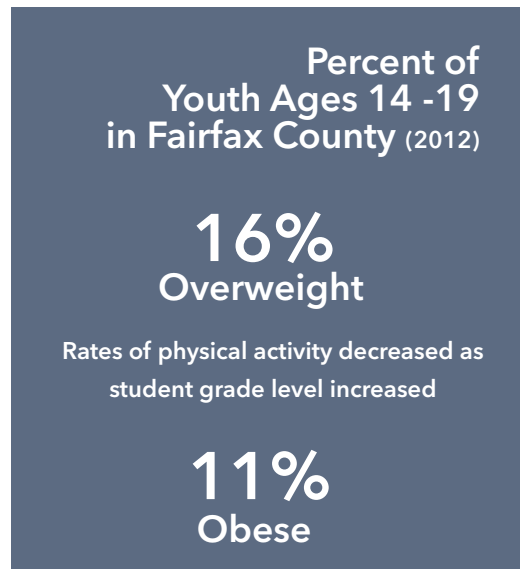
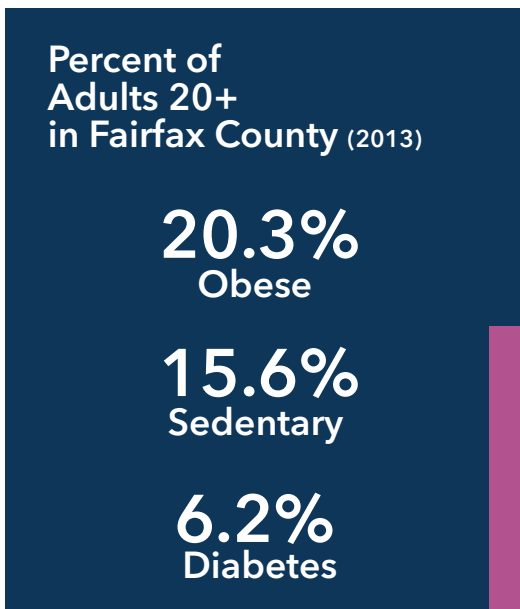
- Negative impacts of tobacco use and secondhand smoke
- Rising obesity rates among youth and adults
- Declining physical activity levels of youth and adults
- Disparities in death rates from chronic disease

Economy and Employment

Fairfax County has seen strong growth in some jobs since 1990, particularly when compared to the larger metropolitan DC area.

Industries and occupations on the rise include professional services, management, financial sector, law, healthcare, and advertising. On the other hand, construction and manufacturing, which provided many good middle-skill jobs in the past, have seen declines in employment.

In February 2015, Fairfax County's unemployment rate was 3.9%, compared with 5.0% statewide and 5.5% nationwide.



Health Disparities: Differences in health status among distinct segments of the population, including differences that occur by gender, race, ethnicity, education, income, disability, or geographic location.

Exploring Key Trends and their Potential Implications for the Parks and Recreation System

Changing Parks & Recreation Trends

In order to keep pace with the demands of a growing and changing population, the Park Authority needs to consider how the dynamic nature of trends, lifestyles and activities will affect facility and programming needs.

Increased interest in niche activities, less interest in traditional team sports.

- from 2010 to 2015, participation declined in nearly all field and court team sports nationwide

Implications for Parks and Recreation include

- changing demand for traditional sports facilities like diamonds and courts
- increased coordination to accommodate new sports that use fields/courts similar to traditional sports

Growing fitness membership, increasing number of fitness providers.

- rate of growth in fitness facilities much greater in DC area than national average
- increased popularity of informal high-end fitness options

Implications for Parks and Recreation include

- lost customers not easily replaced, greater competition in market
- decreasing consumer demand for multi-purpose generalist facilities

Changing Health Trends

Increased interest in aging actively.

- by 2040, it is projected that over 45% of Fairfax County's population will be 55 years of age or older

Implications for Parks and Recreation include

- more senior recreation, mid-day programs, and volunteer opportunities

Increase in preventative care and lifestyle changes for improving physical and mental health.

- increase in sedentary lifestyles, more overweight people.
- doctors are prescribing time outdoors and in parks

Implications for Parks and Recreation include

- more support for active living (walking, running, biking trails)
- desire for open space

Changing Financial Trends

Pinched government budgets.

- many local governments have downsized, reducing staff levels
- increased backlog of deferred maintenance in parks and recreation systems

Implications for Parks and Recreation include

- need for stable funding, life-cycle cost considerations
- increase in volunteer support and partnerships

Changing Environmental Trends

Demand for environmentally sustainable practices.

- importance of natural capital and habitat restoration and maintenance
- concerns about clean air, water, and warming temperatures

Implications for Parks and Recreation include

- improved natural areas, balance stewardship and recreation
- trails as transportation alternatives for commuters
- resident education about the environment and resilience

Changing Demographic Trends

Embracing diversity.

- nearly 40% of county residents five years and older speak a language other than English at home (2015)
- nearly 32% are foreign born

Implications for Parks and Recreation include

- accommodate family gatherings and cluster activities to support multi-generational events
- need for culturally appropriate programs and spaces, and multi-purpose fields (including soccer and cricket among others)

Changing Social Trends

Increased importance of distinctive places and experiences.

- people choose where they live based on lifestyle and proximity to activities and people
- most millennials would choose to spend money on a desirable experience over buying something desirable

Implications for Parks and Recreation include

- reimagining and reinventing in parks and other public places
- distinctive programs, events, and destination features

Increasing demands on time.

- the average American works more hours per week than ever before
- more time spent in front of electronic screens

Implications for Parks and Recreation include

- accommodate flexible hours
- convenient and safe locations

Changing Technology

Increasing use of electronics and mobile devices.

- mobile/Wi-Fi devices mean people connect to family, friends, and work from anywhere
- apps engage and educate people with the outdoors
- greater availability and ability to collect data

Implications for Parks and Recreation include

- changes in participant interest in traditional recreational activities, Wi-Fi in parks
- impacts on how parks and recreation services are delivered
- use of social media and web-based communication tools

By building flexibility into parks and recreation facilities and programs, the Park Authority will be able to adapt quickly and efficiently in order to meet these new demands.

The Park System at a Glance

The park system consists of 427 parks, 324 miles of trails, and over 1,163,056 square feet within 370 structures sited on Park Authority land.

Since its establishment, the Park Authority has sought to increase land ownership to support the agency's mission. With the increasing pace of development over the last decade, the Park Authority set a target of owning 10% of all county land.

Parks contain the various facilities of the recreation system and host the majority of programs and services.

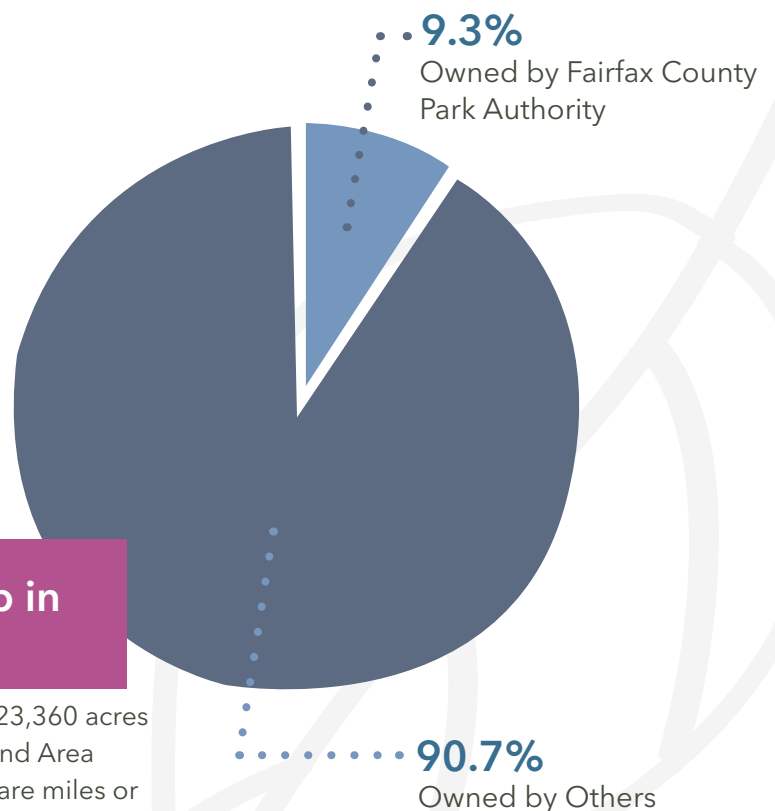
Over time, the creation of parks has mirrored the development of the county, with older parks in the eastern and southern parts of the county and newer parks in the north and west. Incidence of other factors, including aging infrastructure or rapidly changing demographics, often follows the same pattern.

Many parks provide recreation facilities and feature irreplaceable natural habitats and cherished historic sites. This can pose a challenge as the Park Authority must balance the need to protect and preserve these resources with the need to provide recreational opportunities to residents.

Current agency policies provide guidance for purchasing, exchanging, and accepting donated lands. As of 2016, the agency owns nearly 9.3% of all county land.

Land Ownership in Fairfax County

- The Park Authority owns +23,360 acres
- The total Fairfax County Land Area (excluding water) is 391 square miles or 250,240 acres



Recreation

The Park Authority provides a wide variety of recreational opportunities to those who live, work, and play in Fairfax County. From ParkTakes classes to organized sports, there are recreation offerings for nearly every interest.

Health, wellness, and fitness programs and services are offered at RECenters, lakefront parks, schools and private businesses. All expenses associated with the operation of RECenters and much of the active use of lake front parks must be recovered through user fees.

Recreation facilities within parks vary in scale, purpose, and target audience. These include local-serving basketball courts, destination playgrounds, well-traveled trails, and bustling athletic fields.

Many of these parks have designated tobacco-free areas, demonstrating the Park Authority commitment to promoting positive health outcomes as part of the 2013 Community Health Improvement Plan.

Trails

The Park Authority provides about half of the countywide public trail network. Trails cross and connect parks of all types and provide hiking and biking programming and events to county residents.

The park trail system is also important to the county efforts to improve its multi-modal transportation network to support non-vehicular commuting.

Since 2004, approximately 42.8 miles of new trail construction and numerous trail improvements have been completed by the Park Authority, through developer proffers and with the help of volunteers.

RECenters

The Park Authority owns and operates nine RECenters countywide. Each RECenter has similar hours, types of rooms, a natatorium, and a fitness center. The size and amenities differ based on when the RECenter was originally built and subsequent voter approved bonds to expand and renovate spaces.

RECenters host aquatics programs and activities, which are among the most popular in the park system. Admission fees, class fees, and program fees across the system are identical, although scholarships are not currently available for admission fees.

Golf

The Park Authority gives golfers the opportunity to play through the seasons on quality courses. From par-three to championship length, the Park Authority offers courses to suit beginner and expert golfers alike. All courses are professionally designed and carefully maintained.

Outdoor Fitness Gyms

The Park Authority provides outdoor fitness gyms in several communities, including Lincolnia and Gum Springs. These amenities feature high-quality exercise equipment similar to what is found in a gym, but the equipment is located outdoors and is free for the public to use during daylight hours. The fitness equipment can be used by anyone age 14 and up regardless of ability level and some units are designed for individuals in wheelchairs.

Athletic Fields

Diamond fields, rectangle fields and fields with synthetic turf make up a major portion of Park Authority recreation offerings. Residents can check whether a field is closed or open on the Park Authority "Athletic Field Status" website. While the Park Authority has the responsibility to maintain most fields, including synthetic turf fields, field use is organized and allocated through Neighborhood and Community Services. Use of fields for Park Authority activities and programs is limited except during certain times of the year.

Programs

The Park Authority offers numerous activities and programs, covering a broad range of interests and age groups. The Park Authority is committed to providing programs and services to meet the needs of all users residents - children, families, singles, seniors, individuals with disabilities, low-income residents and people of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. This commitment includes ensuring not only physical access to programs, but also adapted programs and a robust scholarship program. In FY16, the Park Authority's programs drew more than 1.5 million customers to its facilities.

In FY16, the value of the scholarship program totaled more than \$1,000,000 and focused on providing programmatic outreach and opportunities.

Program offerings range from youth camps to active senior yoga classes, and from nature study classes to bluegrass festivals. Program offerings are tailored based on regular customer feedback, including the collection and analysis of nearly 16,000 surveys of programs, classes, and camps. The most recent program offerings are available in ParkTakes magazine, which currently has more than 200,000 subscribers.

200
event summer concert series*

2,000
weeks of camp*

12,000
class offerings*

*Programs in 2017

Most Park Authority programs must be financially self-sustaining, meaning they need to make enough money keep the program going each year. Without General Fund support, it is necessary to ensure program and class fees are managed to keep pace with rising costs.

Partners in Parks

County residents benefit from the partnerships between the Park Authority and other county agencies.

- Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) provides playgrounds and athletic fields
- Neighborhood and Community Services (NCS) offers scheduling and coordination for all organized athletic field users
- Park Authority provides athletic fields on park lands and maintenance for school athletic fields, as well as fields and facilities on park lands
- Fairfax County Security, Risk Management, local Fire and Rescue and the Police Department ensure both employee and customer safety

The IMA program alone has 2,450 volunteers and over 9,000 volunteer hours.

Stewardship

Stewardship is ingrained in the values of the Park Authority, which owns and actively manages natural and cultural park sites and features. Staff records, protects, and restores natural features, has responsibility for archaeology countywide, preserves historic features, and maintains archaeological and historic collections.

These efforts take place not only at resource-based parks, but wherever the resources are located, often in local, district, and countywide parks. Outreach, engagement, and interpretation is robust, underscoring the importance of cultivating a stewardship ethic in county residents.

Natural Resources

Natural resource management is guided by Agency Natural Resource Management Plan, which drives stewardship and education about natural capital. Natural capital is the set of natural assets the Park Authority manages for the benefit of the environment and local residents

Current natural resource efforts encompass four program areas: Inventory and Planning, Natural Capital Protection, Ecosystem Management and Restoration, and Volunteer Outreach and Education. These include activities such as:

- Completion of a Natural Vegetation Community Classification across all park natural areas,
- Reviewing development plans and countywide public infrastructure plans for impacts to parks, and
- “Helping Our Land Heal”, a capital-funded program to restore the habitat functionality and value of degraded ecosystems.

The Park Authority flagship stewardship outreach effort is the Invasive Management Area (IMA) program, which organizes volunteers to control non-native invasive species countywide.

Cultural Resources

The Park Authority is responsible for archaeology countywide, for historic preservation on parkland, and serves as a steward of archaeological and historic collections.

Under the guidance of a Cultural Resource Management Plan, the Park Authority cares for multiple historic buildings, more than 3,500 archaeological sites, and more than 3.5 million artifacts. Numerous facilities currently house the extensive archaeology and museum collections, making a new centralized facility a high priority for the Park Authority.

Interpretive Services

The Park Authority provides interpretive programs, excursions, and site tours to supplement stewardship efforts and increase public awareness, appreciation, and understanding of Fairfax County's natural, cultural and horticultural resources. The Park Authority hosts more than 1,500 interpretive programs annually.

Stewardship Volunteers

Volunteers play critical roles in the protection of natural and cultural resources in parks. Among others, roles encompass archaeology at Old Colchester Park and Preserve, historic building care and docents at Sully Historic Site and Historic Huntley, and natural resource efforts and programming at five nature centers.

- In total, stewardship volunteers provided 92,000 hours of service in 2016.
- The Park Authority promoted 143 stewardship volunteering opportunities.
- Participation in stewardship activities included 794 individual volunteers and another 3,569 volunteers as part of organized group efforts.

Education and Additional Stewardship Programs

Programming offered through partnerships helps extend the reach of the Park Authority's work. Student-teacher programs, such as the Meaningful Watershed Education Experience that reached more than 45,000 students in 2016, support agency stewardship.

Popular events including volunteer environmental clean-up days, eleven "buy local" farmers markets, summer camp education programs, and Leave No Trace workshops further support stewardship.

The Resident Curator Program aims to enliven interest and protect several little-used, publicly-owned historic properties that were falling victim to the elements and disuse. The new program allows tenants to use the structures in return for protecting and maintaining them.

Support Functions and Priorities

Maintenance

The Park Authority is responsible for maintaining all park grounds, recreational facilities, fitness centers, and historic and cultural structures and features. This includes all staffed and un-staffed parks serving all areas of the county.

Signs of wear and tear are visible throughout the park system, which suffers from reductions in available funding. The Park Authority is implementing an asset management program to help the agency manage and reinvest in aging infrastructure.

Technology

The Park Authority leverages technology to provide residents with the best possible park experiences. This is evident in all aspects of the Park Authority, including:

- Customer service enhancements: Parknet automated registrations system, EZ Links Golf online tee-time sign-up, and the use of technology to monitor park usage, utilities, and class registration;
- Communications and engagement: Social media presence increase to include Twitter, Facebook, and a new website; and
- Improved resource management: Geographic Information Systems (GIS) applications for natural resources, and trail improvements.

Environmental Sustainability Practices

The Park Authority embraces environmental sustainability practices, including energy management in alignment with county priorities. The energy management program monitors and improves energy performance in Park Authority facilities, and strives to increase awareness for energy conservation within the agency.

In 2016, the Park Authority was awarded the National Recreation and Park Association's Barb King Environmental Stewardship Award. The award recognized the agency's excellence in environmental stewardship, including the emphasis on community outreach and environmental design practices such as the renovation of the Oak Marr RECenter which earned LEED Silver Certification.

Employees

The most recent employee survey was completed in 2014 and the Park Authority has taken steps to address some of the concerns identified. Staff input during the master plan open houses in March 2017 echoes many of the findings from the 2014 employee survey, indicating the potential for greater improvements. Below is a summary of select survey findings on employee attitudes overall:

- Park Authority employees are positive and satisfied at work, but lukewarm; employees tend to like their job more than love it.
- Job does provide good work/life balance.
- Employees are motivated, but not strongly; main factor is recognition and encouragement; employees do not feel they are encouraged to learn new skills.
- Cooperation and collaboration across teams is not strong; communication within teams is effective.
- Employees overwhelmingly want to do more, want more opportunity to lead; three-quarters want to be team players.

Beyond County Parks - An Integrated System

Fairfax County residents benefit from an integrated park system managed and owned by a variety of public and quasi-public entities. Contributors to the system include:

- Fairfax County Park Authority,
- NOVA Parks,
- City of Fairfax
- Town of Herndon,
- Town of Vienna,
- Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS),
- Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services (NCS),
- National Park Service,
- Bureau of Land Management, and
- the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Together, these lands account for nearly 20% of the county's total land area.

Geographically-expansive home owners' associations (e.g., Reston Association) and new urban parks that are privately-owned but publicly-accessible (e.g., Civic Plaza at Tysons Corner Center) provide spaces that further supplement the opportunities for recreation and respite in the county.

Planning Within the Park System

Planning provides direction and guidance to successfully achieving the Park Authority's mission, goals, and objectives and affords orderly growth, stewardship, operation, and maintenance of the park system to meet the county's present and future park needs.

Through participation and coordination in county, state, and federal planning efforts, park resources are protected from impacts that result from development, public improvements, and population growth as well as changing land use patterns, park use patterns, and funding limitations.

Park Classification

The Park Classification System is a general framework intended to guide open space and public facilities planning, as well as assist in the development of public and private land management plans.

The Park Classification System groups parks according to certain characteristics and is based on several inputs including the Needs Assessment, agency policy plans, and national best practices. It is incorporated into the County's Comprehensive Plan, the countywide guide to land use planning.

Park land typically falls within one of three categories:

- Local parks range in size depending on context, typically from 2.5 to 50 acres in suburban settings to ½ to 5 acres in urban settings.
- District and countywide parks provide a wide variety of park facilities and range in size from 50 acres up to and in excess of 150 acres.
- Resource-based parks vary in size, location, and purpose, but are united by the goal of protecting, preserving, and stewarding cultural and natural resources.

Park master planning, determination of substantial conformance with the county Comprehensive Plan pursuant to Code of Virginia section 15.2-2232 (known as the 2232 process), and capital funding allocations are all public processes that precede development on parkland.

Park Classifications provide guidance:

- a) to the Planning Commission for determining whether a proposed park plan is in substantial conformance with the county Comprehensive Plan;
- b) for determining the appropriate geographic location and equitable distribution of varying types of parks;
- c) to the park planning staff during the park planning and development process; and
- d) to set public expectations for future park uses.

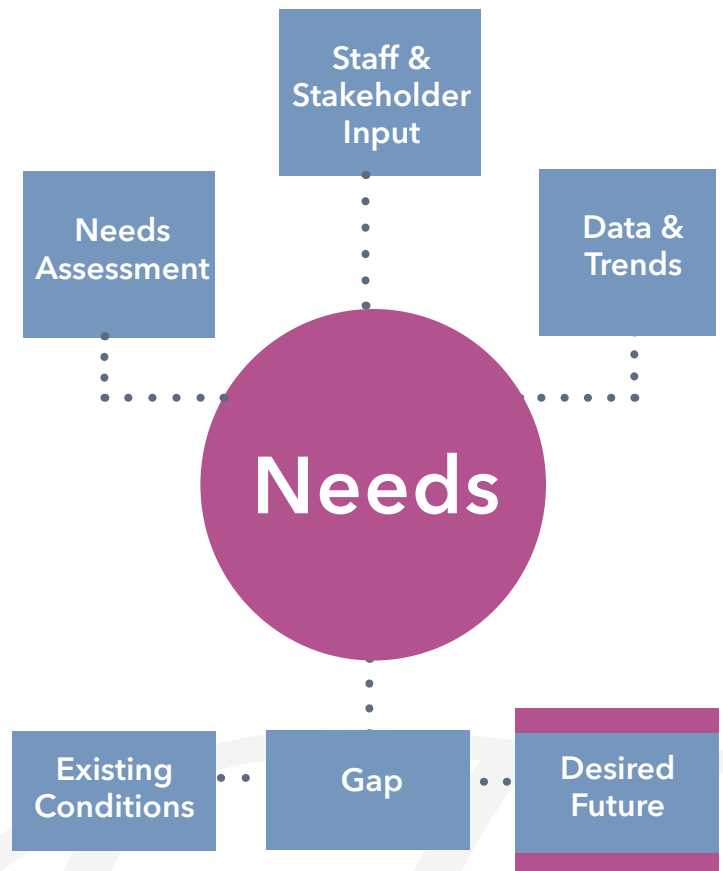
Needs Analysis Summary

The park and recreation needs of Fairfax County are as diverse as the residents themselves. Identifying and measuring those needs is accomplished through various means.

The Park Authority frequently surveys class participants on their experiences and invites stakeholder and user groups to meetings and open houses to share how they use the park system and what is most important to them.

While the most formal method is the completion of a comprehensive needs assessment every 10-years, the Park Authority also analyzes needs based on changing community demographics and evolving trends and best practices in the parks and recreation industry.

The Park Authority also strives to contribute to county priorities, such as those outlined in One Fairfax, Live Healthy Fairfax, and the Board of Supervisors Environmental Vision, among others.



Needs help to identify the gap between today's park system and the park system in 5-10 years.

Community Input

The starting point for creating a long-range plan for the parks and recreation system is to understand the values, needs, and desires of current county residents. The 2016 Parks Count! Needs Assessment (Needs Assessment) was designed to gather this information and provides the foundation for the parks and recreation system master plan.

Community input into the Needs Assessment process included stakeholder interviews, focus groups, public meetings, online engagement, and a statistically-valid community survey.

Interviews, Public Meetings, and Focus Groups

Park users and stakeholders provided input individually and in groups at various points in the Needs Assessment process. Scores of interviews, a series of public meetings, and several small group gatherings generated a wealth of information useful in determining need.

Targeted discussions with certain interest and demographic groups were held in advance of large scale outreach. These focus groups included:

- Athletic users,
- Two groups of low to middle income users,
- Trail users,
- 50+ age group, and
- Teachers.

Key themes emerging from the focus group discussions included:

- Appreciation for program diversity,
- High utilization and appreciation of recreational facilities and programs, with a need for reinvestment and new facilities,
- Appreciation for and desire to expand FCPA's natural and cultural resource programs,
- Agency is working well with a reduction in resources, but would like to see more funding spent on maintenance,
- Staff seem knowledgeable and proficient, but would like to see improved marketing, outreach, and expanded use of technology, and
- Agency has the trust of the public, but some concerns about the scope of planning that it must take on, as well as implementation time frames.

Crowdsourcing and Other Engagement

The Needs Assessment process provided the public the opportunity to participate online, by email, and at times most convenient to them. The project’s crowdsourcing website allowed users to vote for or against selected topics posted by the Park Authority. Participants shared ideas and made suggestions, to the agency and each other.

Some residents chose to share ideas by direct email sent to the Park Authority. Those emails covered a variety of topics including active recreation (baseball, tennis, skate parks), natural resource conservation, trails, and funding.

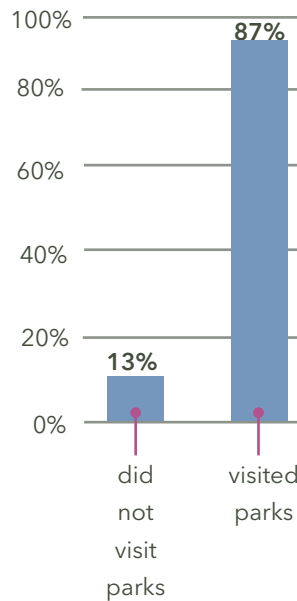
Need Survey

The need survey provided a formal, statistically-valid view into interests and needs of residents. The survey findings reveal respondents’ attitudes toward the park system as well as their usage of individual facilities and program types.

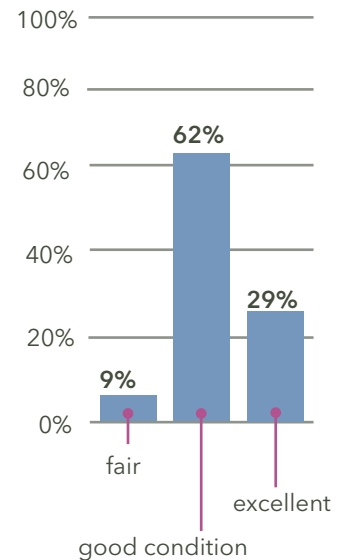
An overwhelming majority of residents use their parks and every one of the facilities and programs the survey listed was used by at least one respondent. Residents love and use their parks more than ever, and as fiscal belts have tightened, that high level of use has begun to show. The need survey revealed not only general use patterns or preferences, but also needs for individual activities, facilities, and services.

Finally, residents had the opportunity to hold a structured meeting on their own, using materials and content provided by the Park Authority. Seven of these “Meetings in a Box” were held and input received from groups affiliated with natural resource issues, equestrian issues, athletic issues, and a university.

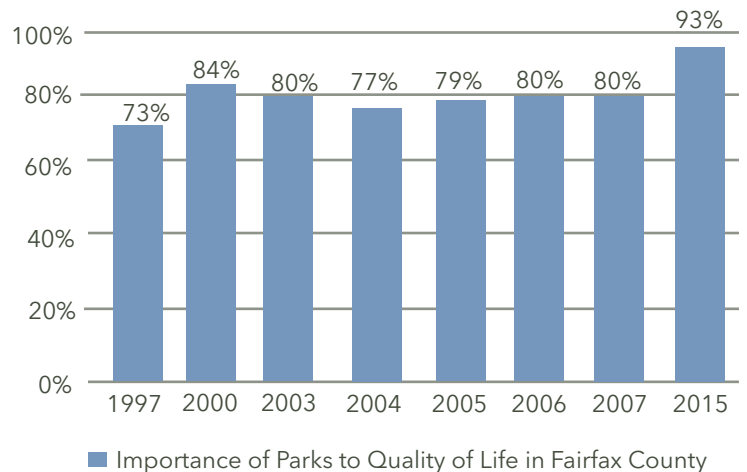
Households that have visited Parks operated by the Fairfax County Park Authority in the Past 12 months



Respondents who visited Fairfax County Parks and rated the condition of parks, trails, and recreation facilities as “good” on a scale of poor to excellent



Parks are more important Than Ever to Quality of Life



EXPANDED MASTER PLANNING ENGAGEMENT

In the spring of 2017, a series of additional engagement sessions were held to build from the Needs Assessment findings and ensure the park system master plan encompassed the breadth of the entire agency.

The outcomes from these discussions help identify additional needs and, along with the Needs Assessment, guide the direction of the master plan.

The groups engaged included:

- Park Authority Board,
- Park Authority Leadership Team,
- Park Authority Staff,
- Friends Groups,
- Athletic Council,
- Audubon Society, and
- Other county agency leadership.

Importantly, the key themes emerging from these discussions aligned considerably with the Needs Assessment themes.

RECREATION NEEDS: FACILITIES SERVICE LEVEL STANDARDS

The Needs Assessment recommended countywide service level metrics for 12 facility types based on a population to service ratio, as shown in the table, right. When supplemented by other policies and plans, these service level standards help define some of the park system facility needs.

Several other facility types are identified as being driven more by programmatic, feasibility, and other factors rather than on a population/service ratio basis.

These include:

- Reservable picnic shelters,
- RECenters,
- Countywide skate parks,
- Countywide dog parks,
- Golf,
- Equestrian facilities,
- Waterfront parks,
- Outdoor family aquatics,
- Horticulture parks,
- Nature centers, and
- Trails.

Details about each of the individual facility types in the park system can be found in the Needs Assessment report, which includes the recommended approach to addressing the Park Authority's portion of the service gaps in the next decade.

Urban Parks Framework

Future development in Fairfax County will be concentrated in growth areas such as Tysons, Reston, central Springfield, Merrifield, Annandale, Seven Corners, Bailey’s Crossroads, and Richmond Highway.

The increasing urbanization requires that the existing suburban park system be supplemented by parks that are more suitable for the unique urban context. Urban parks will provide appropriate elements to enhance the urban landscape, create a sense of place, promote community building, and allow for varied leisure opportunities.

The Framework serves to set expectations for residents, developers, county staff, and community decision-makers to ensure that new urban developments will provide for park and recreation needs in the County’s growth areas.

The Urban Parks Framework includes the following five urban park types:

- Pocket Park
- Common Green
- Civic Plaza
- Recreation-Focused Park
- Linear Park

Park System Element	2016 Recommended Service Levels		
Local Parks	5.00	acres per	1,000
Playgrounds	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, Baseball 60 ft Fields (Youth)	1.00	field per	8,800
Diamond, Baseball 65 ft Fields (Adult)	1.00	field per	22,000
Rectangle Fields (All)	1.00	field per	2,700

Several topics emerged consistently during the expanded master planning engagement including:

- Natural capital/ecosystem benefits,
- Take care of what we have,
- Flexible/responsive programming,
- Adapt/innovative to meet changing community needs,
- Fiscal sustainability,
- Partnerships,
- Staff growth, and,
- Community empowerment.

PARK DISTRIBUTION AND ACCESS

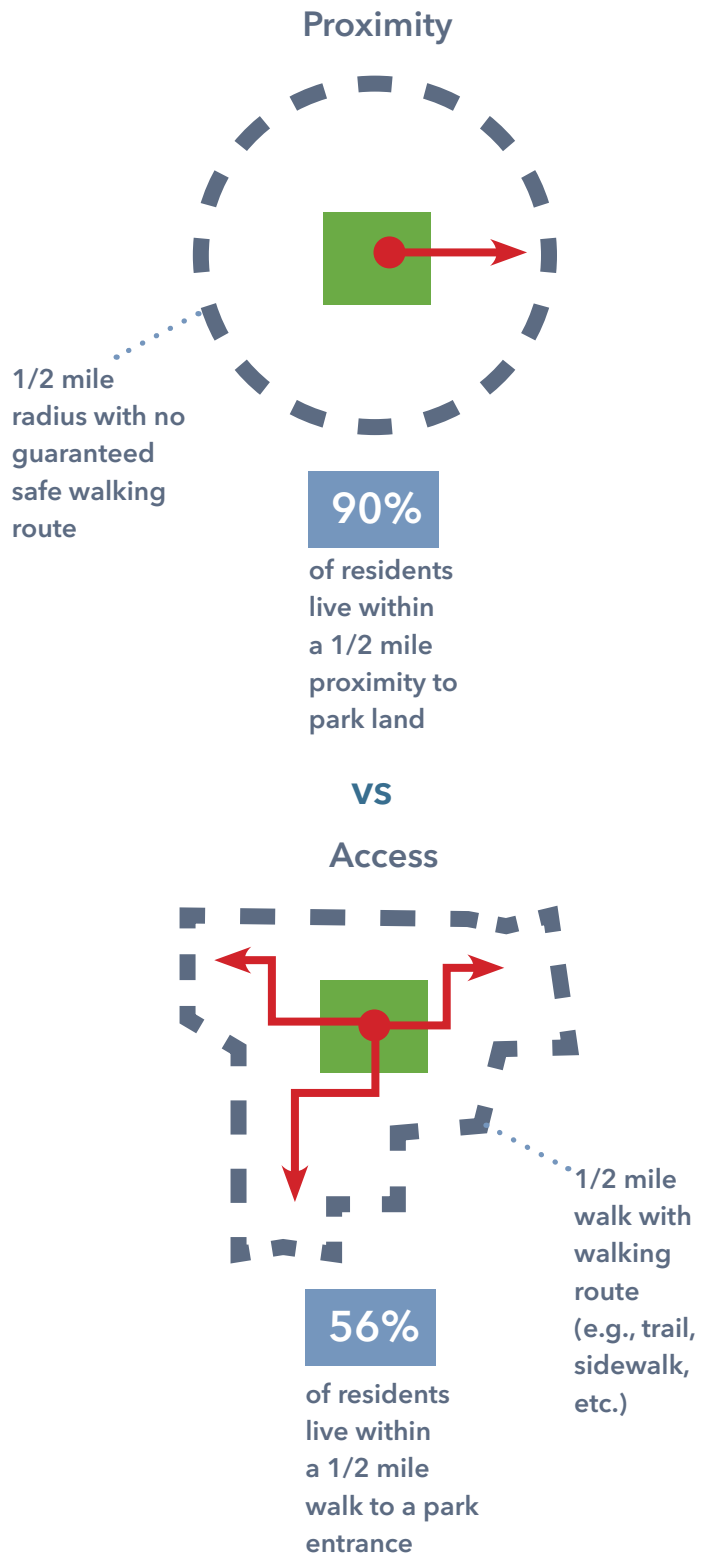
With a county as diverse, vast, and dynamic as Fairfax, needs often depend on the particular development patterns, infrastructure, and community characteristics of different geographic areas.

Using service level standards as well as data about the geographic distribution of facilities, the Needs Assessment produced a gap analysis. Additional input from stakeholders and a walkability analysis were conducted to further understand needs and to assess park accessibility.

Needs Assessment survey findings highlight residents' overwhelming interest in walking and biking trails, facilities that offer recreation but also access. National data indicates that adults with access to open space and parks are more likely to exercise, adding a health and wellness dimension to trail provision.

The Park Authority historically has considered the proximity of residents to parkland as an indicator of how well it is serving the community. Park access is identified as a key indicator in the Board of Supervisors Economic Success Strategic Plan.

Analysis has shown that nearly 90% of residents live within a 1/2 mile proximity of parkland. However, further analysis that factors in walkable routes and park entrances indicates considerably fewer residents (56%) live within a 1/2 mile walk to a park entrance.



The county's population growth is largely forecasted to occur in geographic areas that currently have limited access to parks. In their existing conditions, the areas lack adequate parkland (as defined by service level standards) and walking infrastructure to provide access routes.

As the Park Authority strives to meet residents' needs, this metric of access to parks will be a key indicator to monitor.

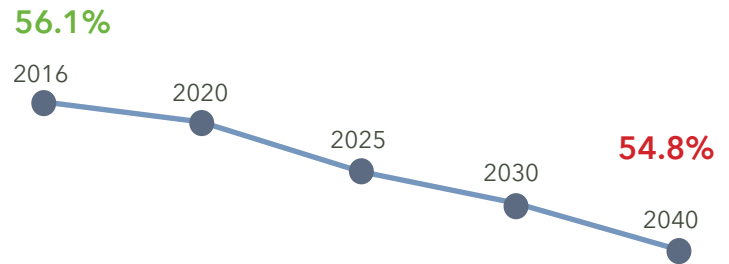
Local Parks

Local parks are well distributed across the county but gaps in service exist in some areas of high density population, lower incomes, and poorer health. Many older park conditions are of concern and need upgrades to landscapes, infrastructure, and facilities.

Countywide investment in new facilities, as well as strategic reinvestment in existing facilities, is necessary for the Park Authority to meet all residents' needs for parks.

In urban growth areas, county policy and plans support the integration of local and urban parks into new development as publicly-accessible parks. This integration will help meet needs generated by growth.

**Current and Future Projections (2016 - 2040)
Percent of Residents within a 1/2 Mile Walk
to a Park Entrance**



There is a need to reinvest in trails and build-out connecting segments. Partnerships with county agencies, including DOT, DPW and DPZ, will be fundamental to meeting this need.

Trails

Trails use has and will continue to increase locally and nationally to support important health and wellness efforts. Connectivity between trail segments is essential to ensuring residents have access to trails and parks.

Trails often supplement the county sidewalk system in providing access to parks and can make the difference between being near a park and being able to get into a park.

Improvements to existing trail conditions are critical to the network and have been deferred in many areas of the county.

Scholarships

Addressing health disparities in the county requires providing greater access to health and wellness opportunities. Access is increasingly important as income disparities grow and access to indoor facilities will be as critical as outdoor. The Park Authority does not currently have a mechanism to provide reduced cost memberships to RECenters for eligible residents and families. This is because RECenters are fully reliant on revenue generation to operate and maintain, and the Park Authority must recoup any additional costs incurred due to additional use.

REC-PAC:

- Number of registrations 17,247 in FY15
- 57% received scholarships valued at \$1,000,000

RECenters

As the flagship fitness and health facilities for the Park Authority, RECenters are designed to serve the broad public. Several RECenters are located in areas that are predominantly accessible by car with few feasible transportation alternatives, such as public transit or sidewalks. As the Park Authority strives to provide RECenter access to more residents, this will continue to be a notable barrier to address.

Reinvestment in aging facilities and infrastructure is critical to remain competitive.

The Park Authority is also looking to expand revenue generating opportunities in certain areas.

American Disabilities Act (ADA)

Accessibility in facilities and communications is an on-going requirement. Residents rely on parks and recreation to ensure equal access, in the form of physical access to parks as well as informational access to the agency's communication channels. The Park Authority continues to implement ADA policies and strives to meet the needs of all residents.

Market-Based Facilities and Programs

As noted previously, many of the Park Authority facilities, programs, and services must be financially self-sustaining. In order to continue providing the things the community expects and needs, the Park Authority must consider revenue generation as a priority. At the same time, increasing income disparities in the county could result in higher quality expectations from the growing higher income sector.

Among the core revenue generating facilities and programs are RECenters, golf, water parks, and birthday parties.

The Park Authority is also looking to expand revenue generating opportunities in certain areas, such as the new *Go Ape!* ropes course at South Run District Park.

2017 RECenter Sustainability Study - Recommendations

The strategic recommendations build upon market analyses, primary research processes, and demand analyses.

- Expand (Providence, South Run, Oak Marr, and Mount Vernon)
- Replace (Audrey Moore)
- Protect (Lee District and Spring Hill)
- Reposition (Cub Run)
- Rebrand (George Washington)
- Create (Reston and Multi-Purpose Complex)

2017 RECenter Sustainability Study - Purpose & Process

The purpose of the assessment is to develop a long-term sustainability plan for Fairfax County Park Authority's RECenter system. This is achieved by identifying strategies that:

- maximize operational effectiveness,
- improve community responsiveness, and
- ultimately ensure long-term financial sustainability of each RECenter.

The study included:

- 10 Strategic Asset Value Analysis sessions with the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and Park Authority Board Members;
- a facilities and operational assessment;
- a detailed market analysis;
- focus groups, and
- an Internet survey.

Key improvement outcomes from Strategic Asset Value Analysis:

- generation of tax revenues and economic impact,
- offering a greater degree of equitable access, and
- providing household management assistance.

Financial performance for the system if it did not receive investment projected over a 20-year time horizon from 2017 to 2036 indicates by 2035, the system's expenses would be greater than revenues.

Special Events

District and countywide parks feature destination facilities and support one of the most desired programming opportunities - special events.

Facilities at these parks can be significant revenue generators for FCPA, but their popularity also makes fitting maintenance and addition of new infrastructure into an already busy events schedule challenging.

Adequate parking, support facilities and amenities, and clustered complexes are desirable in these parks and sometimes deficiencies limit the park's recreation potential. In addition, the Park Authority must capitalize on opportunities to use park facilities for special events to capture the considerable revenue-generating potential.

Responsive Programming

The Needs Assessment survey showed that residents rank some programs more highly than others. At the same time, many residents like the diverse programs provided by the Park Authority. This is a challenge for the Park Authority, as it cannot be everything to everyone.

As the county continues to grow and diversify, it will be critical for Park Authority programs to be flexible and responsive in order to meet changing needs. Among the drivers of change are cultural and age diversification, recreation trends (e.g. PokemonGo, parkour, etc.), as well as advancements in technology.

Classifying Programs & Services

In addition to identifying specific program priority needs, the Needs Assessment includes several recommendations related to programs and services, including:

- to classify programs and services to aid in alignment of community interests and needs, mission of the organization, and sustainable operations; and
- geographic and demographic alignment in delivery of programs and services.

More integration of technology (i.e. Wi-Fi) and additional programming in underserved or underutilized areas are important opportunities for enhancing recreation programming.

Stewardship Needs

Funding

Overall, the Park Authority's ability to steward the county's natural and cultural resources is dependent on funding. While preserving open space and the environment is a top priority for residents according to the Needs Assessment survey findings, the money does not always follow.

As part of the Needs Assessment, it was determined that even necessary maintenance activities (i.e. assessment, installation, monitoring, and maintenance) for natural and cultural resource management are significantly underfunded.

- For select cultural resource management activities, an additional \$500,000 of annual funding would be needed; and
- For natural resource activities, in accordance with best practices, up to an additional \$2,350 per acre of annual funding would be needed.

Natural Resources

A majority of Fairfax County's parkland consists of isolated natural areas that are impacted by many stresses, including development pressures, encroachment, climate change, and the spread of invasive species.

These natural areas range in size from small, less-than-an-acre remnants in neighborhoods to the hundreds of acres of stream valleys. Alone, these are not enough to sustain the county's natural capital and quality of life benefits it provides.

Nature does not recognize property boundaries, making collaborations with other land owners essential for advancing natural resource objectives. Park Authority land could serve as corridors to enhance connections within the county's park system and to connect to natural areas owned or managed by others.

Conversely, some natural areas in the park system show signs of possible over-use. There is a need for the Park Authority to regularly assess the condition of the natural resources in these parks and to ensure recreation activities do not negatively impact irreplaceable resources.

Creating Future Stewards

The Park Authority owns just about 10% of county land, while remaining land is under the care of county residents and other agencies. As part of the Park Authority stewardship mission, there is a need to help and teach others in the community how to be better stewards. To do so, the Park Authority needs to continue and expand its interpretation, engagement, and education efforts.

No matter what income, age, gender, ethnicity, or address, everyone has a need and right to breathe clean air, to drink clean water, and to live and work in clean surroundings. A healthy environment enhances our quality of life and preserves the vitality that makes Fairfax a special place to live and work.

Source: BOS Environmental Agenda

Cultural Resources

With responsibility for county archeology and historic structures across all Park Authority land, cultural resource management is a significant undertaking.

The recent museum accreditation process revealed several areas of concern including lack of diversity and lack of a proper collections storage facility for the expansive collection of artifacts under the purview of the Park Authority. The Park Authority needs to address both of these deficiencies.

Deferred maintenance of historic structures is increasingly visible with some of the Park Authority structures in visible disrepair. A strategic approach to allocating funding for upkeep is needed to ensure funding is used for the greatest possible benefits.

The agency is also exploring alternative approaches to reduce the cost of managing and maintaining historic structures. There is a need to advance the resident curator program and establish similar opportunities.

Environmental Sustainability

Given the Park Authority mission, the agency has a mandate to advance environmental sustainability and the opportunity to be a leader in implementing sustainable practices throughout its internal operations. This includes many practices such as the use of environmentally-friendly pest management practices, recycling materials, and educating staff on the importance of each individual doing their part.

Taking Care of What We Have

Maintenance Operations

Park users, staff, and leadership have identified areas of success in the park system, but also areas needing improvement and growth. The system is robust and well-used, but beginning to show signs of wear along the edges. Findings from the Needs Assessment and the master plan analysis bear this out, placing an emphasis on taking care of what we have while keeping an eye on meeting new and diversifying needs.

As of 2017, the Park Authority has been putting additional emphasis on maintenance and reinvestment in existing facilities and other recreation assets. However, the investments required to adequately meet public needs are extensive and gaps in quality and condition exist throughout the county. In addition, even well-managed and maintained facilities may be perceived to be in sub-standard condition due to aging infrastructure.

Based on Community Input from the Needs Assessment

+ Support for upgrading and renovating the existing system far outweighs support for constructing new parks or facilities that would serve residents.

+ Respondents' satisfaction is high with the condition and quality of parks, trails, and facilities, though it is lower than at any point over the last twelve years.

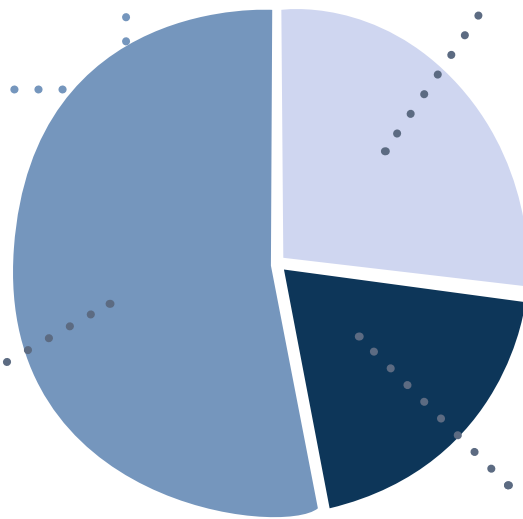
If trends of county population growth and fiscal restraint continue as expected, continuing to adequately maintain the park system will be challenging.

Land Acquisition and Management

In addition to reinvestment in facilities, the Park Authority's large land portfolio requires attentive management. The majority of Park Authority land is protected from development, remaining as undeveloped land or not actively managed natural area.

Some of the more significant challenges in terms of land management include encroachments, maintaining and preserving habitat quality, and regular upkeep. Moving forward, an emphasis on partnerships, shared ownership, and understanding the role of Park Authority lands as part of an open space network with many land owners will be critical.

53%
Undeveloped or Not Actively Managed Natural Area



Park Authority Land

20%
Actively Managed Natural Area

27%
Developed or Actively Managed for Recreation

As land becomes more scarce and difficult to acquire, the agency's land acquisition and management strategy will need to evolve with this changing context.

Organizational Needs

To effectively achieve its mission and the goals of the master plan, the Park Authority must also address procedural and organizational needs. The Park Authority will need to continue planning and operational excellence while pursuing fiscal responsibility and resource alignment.

The creation and implementation of this master plan will require a fresh look at all contributing plans and policies and may offer opportunities to adjust organizational structure to better meet stated goals. Implementation may also help support staff, providing growth opportunities and improving staff satisfaction overall.

Importantly, decision-making must be driven by analysis that uses reliable data and information. This is increasingly important to ensure accountability and progress towards achieving master plan goals.

The agency will need to remain flexible and agile, able to meet shifting demographics and resident needs. Equally as important, however, will be strategically responding to resident needs with the recognition that the Park Authority cannot be everything to everyone.

Technology

Moving even faster than the pace of redevelopment and reinvestment, technology will also play a critical role in meeting needs. This includes:

- integrating technology into agency operations to increase efficiency,
- using technological advances to improve communications and increase options, and
- adapting policy and practice for new technologically based recreation trends (e.g., drones).

There is also an opportunity to cultivate social media use among partners to help meet needs and support the Park Authority's mission. For instance, stewardship partners are often advocates and use social media to encourage stewardship in others.

	FC Park Authority	FC Public Schools	Other Local (Public/Quasi-Public)	Regional, State and Federal	Total
Parkland					
Local Parks (acres)	3,591.44	-	-	-	-
Non-FCPA Local Parks (acres)	-	-	1,939.25	-	-
<i>Local Parks SUBTOTAL (acres)</i>	-	-	-	-	5,530.69
District & Countywide Parks (acres)	6,578.51	-	-	-	-
Non-FCPA District/CW Parks (acres)	-	-	-	21,996.93	-
Resource Based Parks (acres)	13,168.33	-	-	-	-
<i>District, CW & Resource-Based Parks SUB-TOTAL (acres)</i>	-	-	-	-	41,743.77
<i>Parkland SUBTOTAL (acres)</i>	23,338.28	-	1,939.25	21,996.93	47,274.46
Facilities					
Diamond, Baseball 60, 65, 90 ft Fields (Youth, Adult)	162	222	-	3	387
Rectangle Fields (All)	122	230	31	-	383
Multi-Use Courts, Outdoor (Basketball, Tennis)	333	276	80	-	689
Playgrounds	209	181	65	-	455
Dog Parks (Neighborhood, Countywide)	9	-	3	-	12

2016 - Community Inventory Data Review

+ The data included in the “Community Inventory - 2016” table is subject to ongoing review and validation.

+ Data management and integration with the Park Authority Geographic Information System database is being undertaken as part of the Master Plan goal “Advance as an innovative, responsive, and adaptable organization”.

Data Details

+ Other Local (Public/Quasi-Public) includes: City of Fairfax, Town of Herndon, Town of Vienna, Reston

+ Regional, State and Federal includes: NOVA Parks, Commonwealth of Virginia, National Park Service, U.S. Wildlife and Fisheries, and other Federal agencies

+ Not included: New urban parks that are privately-owned but publically-accessible

Public Comment Summary

The public comment period began on August 6, 2017 and closed on September 22, 2017.

Community engagement for the draft plan included a series of informational presentations, press releases, blog articles, social media posts, and a public meeting and open house.

In addition, direct email notifications were provided to stakeholders including the Board of Supervisors, leadership of other county agencies and community partners, Friends groups, the Athletic Council, and individuals who previously signed up for the master plan email list.

Following publication the Park Authority provided informational presentations to partners including the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens' Associations Environment and Recreation Committee and the Fairfax County Office of Community Revitalization.

A public input meeting was held at Green Spring Gardens on September 12, 2017. The meeting included a formal presentation and an open house forum that allowed participants to comment on all aspects of the draft plan.

Comment Overview

Public comments were received through the project website, email to Parkmail and at public meetings. Over 45 comments were received on the Draft master plan, including approximately 30 comments at the public meeting and over 15 through Parkmail.

The Park Authority received formal letters from partners and community groups, including the Partnership for a Healthier Fairfax and the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia.

The comments reinforced the findings from the 2016 Parks Count! Needs Assessment, which laid the groundwork for the guiding principles, goals and recommendations included in the master plan.

Community members also expressed interest in the strategic planning process and additional details regarding implementation and tracking progress towards achieving the master plan goals.

Comment Overview

Community input emphasized topics including: trail system maintenance and development, contributions to healthy and active lifestyles, ecosystem services and ecological integrity. A majority of comments were related to trail system improvements and development.

Highlights from the public comments are listed below:

Trail System Maintenance and Improvements

- Paved vs natural
- Safety concerns
- Increase maintenance
- Commuter use
- Connect w/ entire system (FCDOT, etc.)
- Involve public in more detailed trail planning

Park System-Wide Maintenance

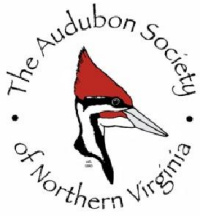
- Provide ways for community members to submit issues/work requests
- Need better understanding of facility/trails condition in different areas of the county
- Budget/plan for trail/park maintenance
- Trail safety concerns

Natural Resources and Open Space

- Balance recreation and natural resource stewardship better
- Need more emphasis on biodiversity, ecosystem services, restoration
- Tree Action Plan
- Land acquisition as a tool for improving natural resources, not just preserving "open space"
- Strive to exceed standards for stormwater, other

Access and Health

- Need more parks and trails in specific areas of the County
- Access to parks/trails and programs is important
- Improve programming (ex., food trucks, bike safety)
- Professional development for instructors
- Review fees to match costs and seek more scholarship funding



**Comments of the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia
On the Fairfax County Park Authority's Parks and Recreation System
July 2017 Draft Master Plan**

September 19, 2017

On behalf of the more than 4,300 members of the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia, I am pleased to share our comments on your July 2017 Parks and Recreation System Draft Master Plan

We have commented numerous times on master plans for various county parks, FCPA's plans and priorities, including the natural resource plan, the "Great Parks, Great Communities" initiative, and your Strategic Plan.

With so little undisturbed land left in the county (around six percent) and with a long history of human disturbance and alteration of habitat, we urge FCPA to make natural resource protection and restoration a higher priority and to bring better balance to natural resource parks versus recreational parks and facilities as there has been an historic imbalance favoring active park uses in FCPA budgets, programs and staffing. Our patterns of development, including park development, have seriously degraded our land, waterways and air. Preserving and restoring natural resources is important for a healthy environment, for the ecological services they provide and to prevent further degradation of our land, air and water, a pattern of degradation associated with the county's land use policies and development practices.

Your information on demographics, needs and trends focuses on development and increasing population pressures, but gives little recognition to loss of native habitat and the adverse impacts of that loss. On page 13, the plan does include commendable language recognizing the need to "improve and promote natural resource protection and management." However, the FCPA historically has given more resources to active recreational facilities and parks, even as our natural resources dwindle. We note that your own surveys cited in page 7 indicate that the public strongly supports "preserving open space." However, we caution that "open space" may not necessarily mean native habitats with true ecological integrity. Ball fields and tennis courts provide few ecological services.

Given the little land available for purchase, we especially urge FCPA to make restoration of natural areas a higher priority in your final plan, as restoration of degraded areas offers many opportunities to improve habitat and the health of the environment, especially in light of the densely developed nature of the county and its urbanizing trends. We urge that your final plan acknowledge that natural resources provide ecological services for free, services like stormwater retention, absorbing carbon dioxide and filtering polluted water.

We appreciate the plan's inclusion on page 13 of this goal: "Improve and promote natural resource protection and management." Again, we urge that this be given a higher priority, especially in staffing and budgets. In addition, we commend your including "linking larger resource conservation areas within the county and stream valley parks." Larger, unfragmented ecosystems like wildlife or conservation corridors are critical for many species survival. We urge you to include in this activity linking all resource conservation areas (not just the larger ones) and linking to state, federal and privately protected properties.

On page 10, “Guiding Principles,” “Be Great Stewards” is one of seven principles, but is not a clear commitment to expand preservation and restoration of natural resources.

We again stress the need for FCPA conduct biological inventories *before* undertaking development and to make that information publicly available. Park planners and the public need to understand what natural resources exist before making development/management decisions. “What is there?” (e.g., a biological inventory) should be the first question when development is contemplated, so that at least you know what natural resources would be affected or even destroyed, and the value of those resources needs to be part of the planning and decision-making equation.

We again urge FCPA to thoroughly evaluate all environmental impacts of proposed park development, in the planning stage, to understand how your development plans impact our natural resources and to make that information publicly available.

One of your guiding principles on page 10 is “Meet Changing Recreation Needs.” Unfortunately, the reality is that FCPA cannot meet *all* recreational demands, such as bowling, curling, boxing, beach volleyball, canoeing, flying model airplanes and drones and snowboarding. FCPA will never have the resources to respond to every need expressed by the public. This concern has been highlighted by your current study of flying recreational drones in county parks. (See our June 1, 2017 letter.) Priorities will need to be established, and we believe it is essential for the health and well-being of county residents that those priorities include protection and restoration of our natural resources and ecosystems.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments and look forward to working with you.

Carl Kikuchi, President
Audubon Society of Northern Virginia
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Reston, VA 20190
703-438-6008
info@audubonva.org
www.audubonva.org

PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY



September 18, 2017

Mr. William G. Bouie
Chairman, Fairfax County Park Authority Board
12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 927
Fairfax, VA 22035

Dear Mr. Bouie:

On behalf of the Partnership for a Healthier Fairfax (PFHF), we would like offer our support for the goals, recommendations, and implementation plans included in the draft "Great Parks, Great Communities: Parks & Recreation System Master Plan."

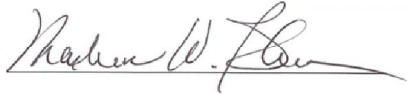
The PFHF is a diverse coalition of individuals and public, community, and business organizations that have joined forces to improve community health by mobilizing resources, increasing awareness, and promoting healthful change. In 2013, with the participation of the Park Authority as one of our strongest community partners, the PFHF developed a five-year Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) that focuses on providing all members of our community with the opportunity to make healthy choices. We are very pleased, therefore, that the Park Authority's proposed Master Plan emphasizes community health and increased equitable access for physical activities.

As you probably know, the Master Plan goal "to improve access and opportunities for healthy and active lifestyles" is also one of the CHIP priorities. We strongly endorse the recommendations aimed at achieving this goal, especially the plans for enhanced scholarship programs and for promoting capital investments and recreational programming for areas with the greatest needs.

The ongoing work of the PFHF has benefited greatly from the contributions of the Park Authority and its outstanding staff and volunteers. We hope this productive partnership will continue as the PFHF develops its

next five-year CHIP, and we look forward to partnering with the Park Authority in helping to implement its Master Plan.

Sincerely,



Marlene W. Blum
Co-Chair



Dr. Robert M. Weiler
Co-Chair

cc: Members of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
Members of the Fairfax County Park Authority Board
Sara Baldwin, Acting Executive Director, Fairfax County Park Authority
Aimee Vosper, Deputy Director, Fairfax County Park Authority
David Bowden, Director, Planning and Development Division, Fairfax County Park Authority
Andrea Dorlester, Manager, Park Planning Branch, Fairfax County Park Authority
Samantha Hudson, Senior Planner, Park Planning Branch, Fairfax County Park Authority

The PFHF's position represents the opinion of the majority of participating groups and individuals, but does not necessarily reflect the position of any particular member organization or individual.

Submitted by:

Susan Sanow
Partnership Program Coordinator, Partnership for a Healthier Fairfax
Fairfax County Health Department
Susan.Sanow@fairfaxcounty.gov
703/246-8856
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/livehealthy



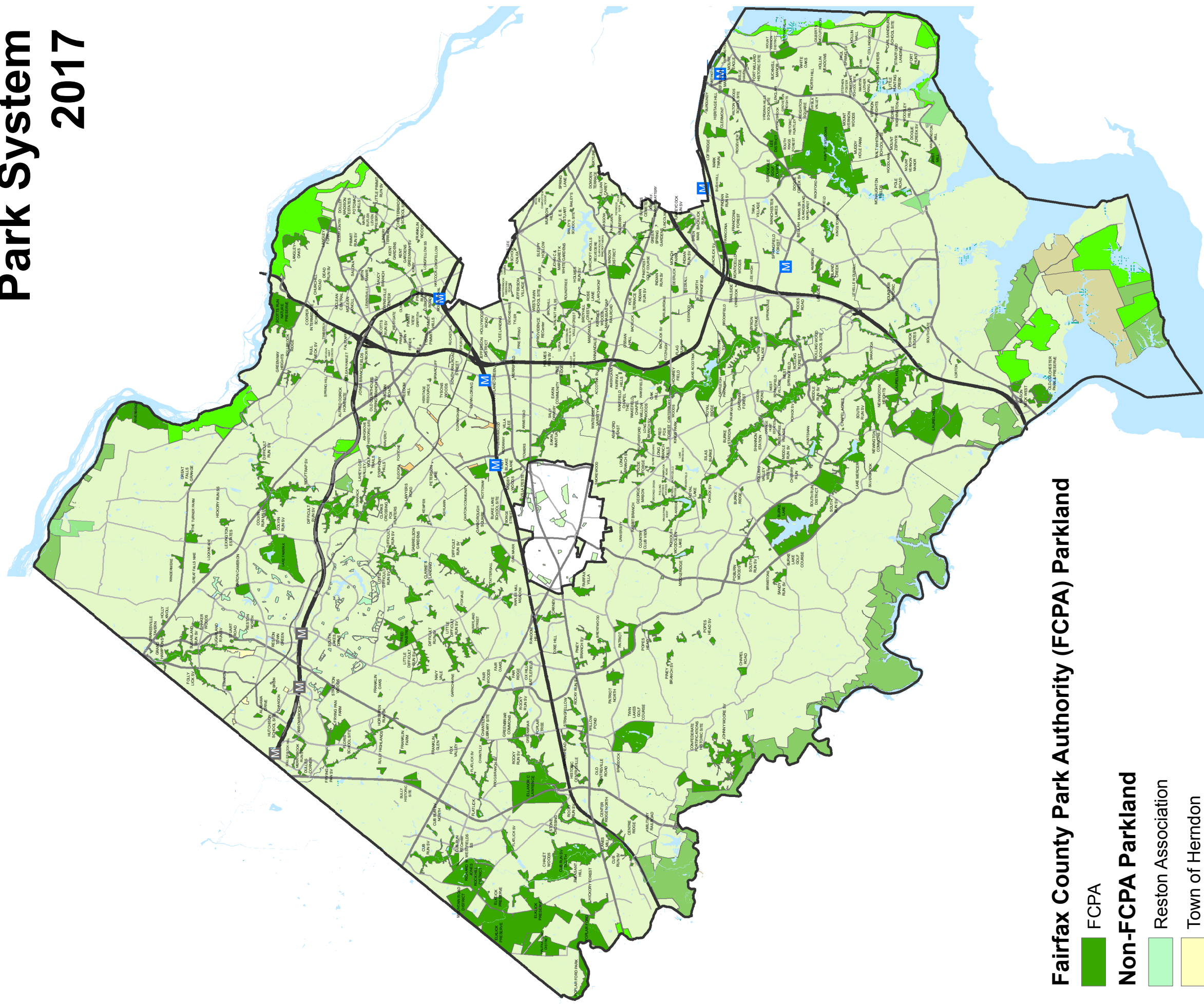
I am in the office part-time, so please be patient when seeking a response.



- an engaged and empowered community working together to achieve optimal health and well-being for all who live, work, and play here.

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Fairfax County, Virginia Park System 2017



Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) Parkland

FCPA

Non-FCPA Parkland

Reston Association

Town of Herndon

Town of Vienna

Town of Clifton

City of Fairfax

Northern VA Regional Park Authority

Commonwealth of Virginia

United States of America

Other

M Metro Stop

M Future Metro Stop



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Board Action Item for Master Plan Approval

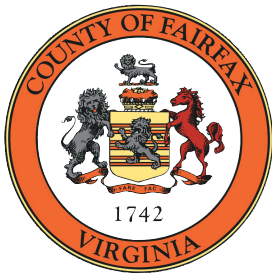
PARK AUTHORITY BOARD – ACTION ITEM APPROVAL OF THE PARK AND RECREATION SYSTEM MASTER PLAN DECEMBER 13, 2017

Excerpt December 13, 2017, Park Authority Board draft minutes. Minutes adopted by Park Authority Board on January 10, 2018.

ACTION ITEMS

A-1 Park Authority Master Plan Approval

Mr. Gorham made a motion to approve the Park Authority Master Plan; seconded by Mr. Alcorn. The motion carried by all members present; Ms. Godbold was absent.



A Fairfax County, Va. Publication



December 2017

12055 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, Va.

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks



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contact Inclusion and ADA
Support at 703-324-8563.
TTY: Va Relay 711





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