

Section I-Trail Planning

Trail planning is a process that considers a multitude of factors. The Park Authority trail system consists of a variety of trails, and each trail is planned with a specific purpose in mind. It may be part of a network of trails, such as the Cross County Trail system, a looped trail within an individual park, part of a transportation corridor, for a specific purpose such as mountain biking or interpretation of natural resources, or for multiple recreational uses. All trail planning includes a large amount of public input. It must also consider the environmental impacts, as well as the impacts and relationship to adjoining properties and recreational facilities.



Planning Elements

The Comprehensive Plan for the County of Fairfax, Virginia and the *Countywide Trails Plan* define trails to be constructed throughout the County. The Park Authority develops Park General Management Plans, Conceptual Development Plans and then Park Master Plans for individual parks in order to plan and develop active and passive recreational facilities, including trails. Park Policy # 101.3 establishes the FCPA policy on Greenways, and Policy 103.2 outlines the FCPA Policy on trails.

The Guide to Trail Management concept is to structure these multiple Plans into a single Park Authority Guide for use by the agency and staff to provide direction now and in the future. Trails are a form of development, and have short and long-term impacts on both natural and cultural resources. The Guide to Trail Management evaluates ways to reduce the stress put on these resources by construction and use of trails. These impacts are considered in the planning and development stages; and continue with efforts to educate the public to ensure that the citizenry can contribute to the preservation of their natural and cultural resources.



The Countywide Trail Plan

The *Countywide Trail Plan* is a component of *The Comprehensive Plan for the County of Fairfax, Virginia*. It is modified periodically and approved by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors (BOS). This plan designates trail surface types and widths for the major trail systems within the County. Its primary focus is the interconnectivity of trails and the establishment of transportation corridors, both within and outside parks.

Land Development

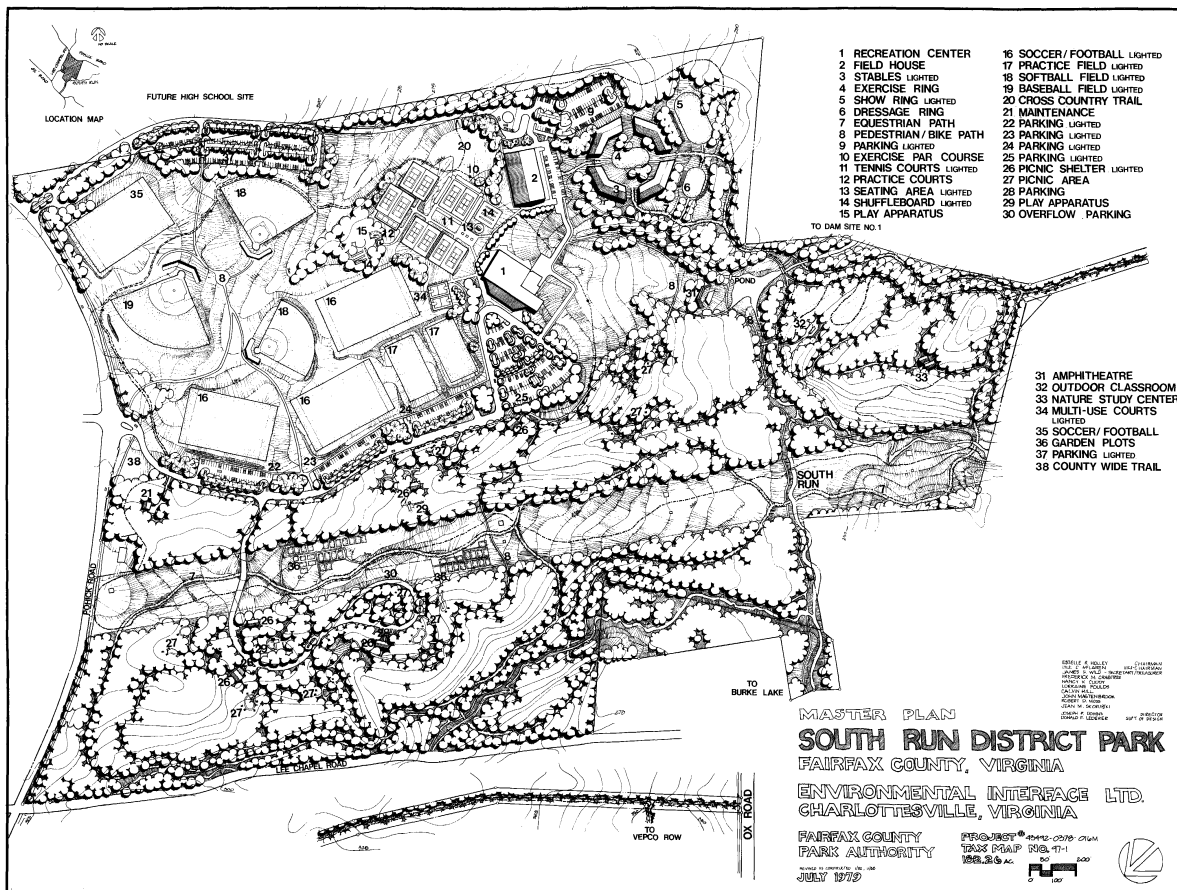
Residential, commercial and other land development is governed by *The Comprehensive Plan*. The plan determines the associated impacts of development on County infrastructure, including the provision of parks and recreational facilities. Frequently, developers are required to include trails as part of their development as defined by the *Countywide Trail Plan*. Such trails are designed in consultation with Park Authority staff and constructed by the developer to Park Authority standards. Upon completion, the facilities are generally dedicated to the County, either the Board of Supervisors or the Park Authority. These trails frequently connect to existing park trails, and once approved for acceptance into the public domain, are managed by the Park Authority.

Park Master Plans and Park General Management Plans

The Park Authority establishes General Management Plans for individual parks that define existing natural, cultural and historic resources. The GMP also determines suggested active and passive recreational uses for the park. The GMP then forms the basis of the Park Master Plan that acts as a blueprint for park improvements. The Plan may include trails as shown on:

- The *Countywide Trail Plan* through the park
- Suggested by staff or requested by citizens during the public input process
- Desired connections either to facilities within the park or to other parks and trails

The trail surface type and expected user types are defined during the planning process. These trails are typically constructed during the development of individual parks and become a part of the Park Authority trail system.



Green Infrastructure Priorities Map

The Green Infrastructure Map identifies environmental and cultural resources deserving protection and preservation. The map utilizes existing environmental, open space, and cultural resource data to define areas of the County that have the greatest concentration of natural and cultural resources. Some factors considered in establishing priority areas include, but are not limited to:

- Wetlands
- Resource Protection Areas and Flood Plains
- Tree Cover
- Agricultural and Forestry Districts
- Archeological Sites
- Proximity to Parkland

The map is used as a tool to define green space priorities for land acquisition, to protect key environmental resources on developing sites, and to target resources that require further protection. Trails may be an appropriate recreational amenity in these green infrastructure priority areas.

The Cross County Trail (CCT)

The Fairfax County Cross County Trail (CCT) provides a connection between the Occoquan River near Route 123 in the south to the Potomac River at Great Falls in the north. When completed, the CCT will be close to forty miles long. The CCT route connects three major stream valleys and greenways: the Pohick Creek, Accotink Creek and Difficult Run. The CCT is primarily on Fairfax County parkland, but also is routed through other public land, private property and along sidewalks. The CCT is a result of a joint effort between the County and volunteer organizations to resolve trail issues and volunteer construction or maintenance projects. Several groups have been integral to the planning and implementation of the CCT. These groups include Fairfax Trails and Streams (FTAS), the Great Falls Trail Blazers (GFTB), the Hunters Valley Riding Club (HVRC), the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) and the Mid-Atlantic Off Road Enthusiasts (MORE). Trail issues are also coordinated with the County Non-Motorized Transportation Committee (NMTC).

