Chapter 10
Mount Vernon Planning District

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GREAT PARKS, GREAT COMMUNITIES
2010 – 2020 Park System Plan

Fairfax County Park Authority

MOUNT VERNON PLANNING DISTRICT

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MOUNT VERNON PLANNING DISTRICT

Location & Character

The Mount Vernon Planning District is located in southeastern Fairfax County. It is bounded by the Capital Beltway and City of Alexandria to the north, the Potomac River to the east, Fort Belvoir to the south and Huntley Meadows Park to the west.

The area has a predominately single-family residential character, with much of the residential development occurring in the 1950s-70s. Higher density residential developments including mobile home parks are found along Richmond Highway and near Metro stations. Commercial development is primarily highway-oriented with retail shopping centers along Richmond Highway.

While the addition of 14,000-19,000 BRAC-related jobs to the Fort Belvoir Main Post and the Fort Belvoir North Area (FBNA, previously EPG) in September 2011 is not anticipated to bring new residents immediately, the County could eventually see increased demand for recreation facilities in this part of the County. Both increased demand and additional constraints on where recreation facilities can be developed may affect this District in the future.

Park System Summary

Map 1 depicts the public parkland in the Mount Vernon District. There are 45 public parks with a total of about 2,100 acres in the district. These parks make up about 17.7 percent of the total acreage of the district. Only about one quarter of all the public park acreage in the district is owned by the County, and is within Park Authority Maintenance Area 3. The rest is owned by other providers, primarily the Federal government.

The parks in the district include special uses, historic sites, district- and local-serving recreational facilities, and stream valleys. Facilities include two RECenters, rectangle and diamond ball fields, tennis and multi-use courts, sand volleyball courts, garden plots, dog park, playgrounds, trails and picnic facilities.

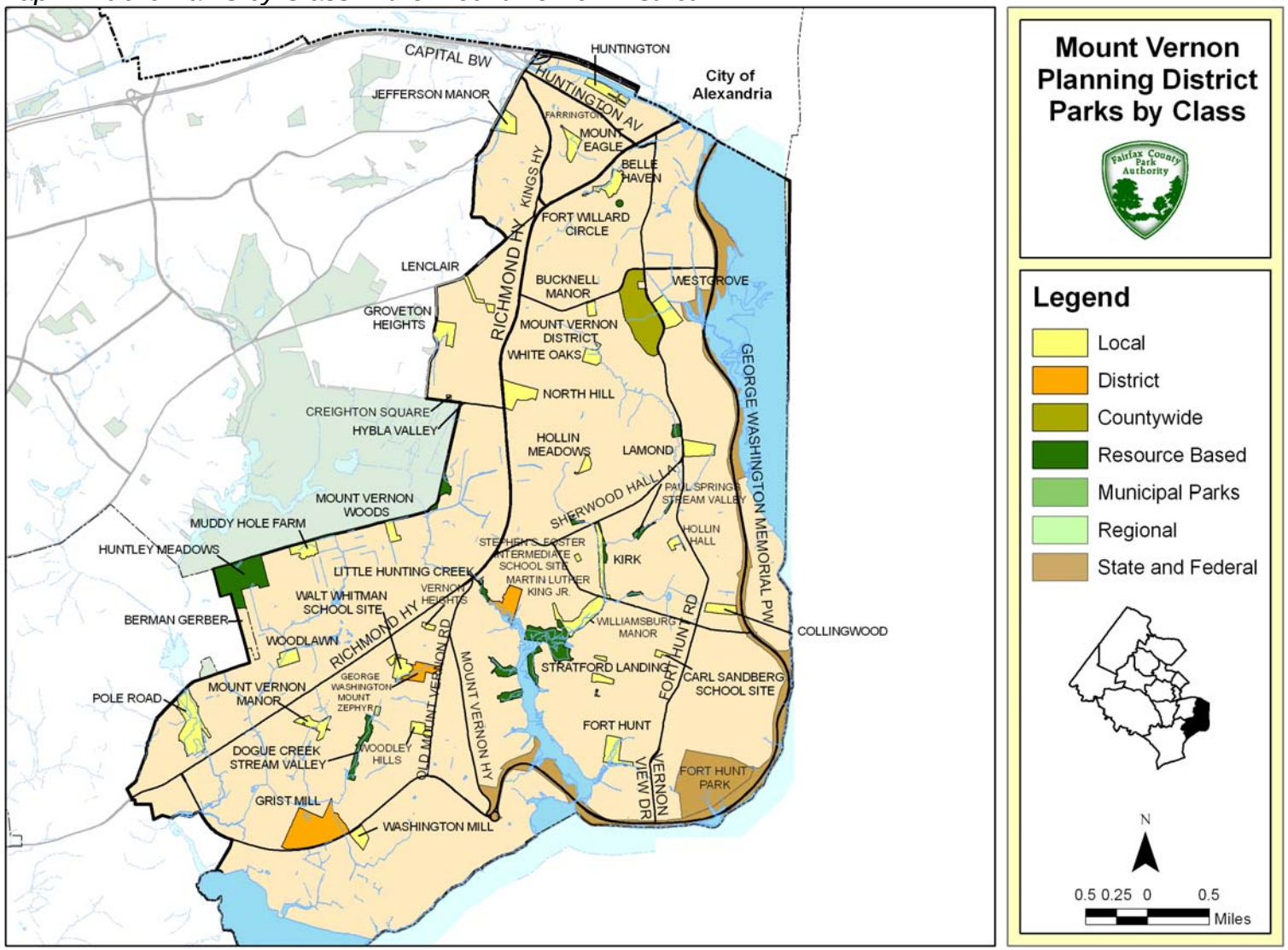
Approximately two-thirds of the county parks in the district are smaller local-serving parks that are well integrated with surrounding neighborhoods. These reflect the long established residential character of the district, and consist primarily of casual play facilities and natural area fragments.

District-serving parks such as Mount Vernon District, Grist Mill and Martin Luther King, Jr. Parks, provide a number of athletic fields, community gathering areas, and unique recreation facilities such as an outdoor swimming pool and ice skating rink. The

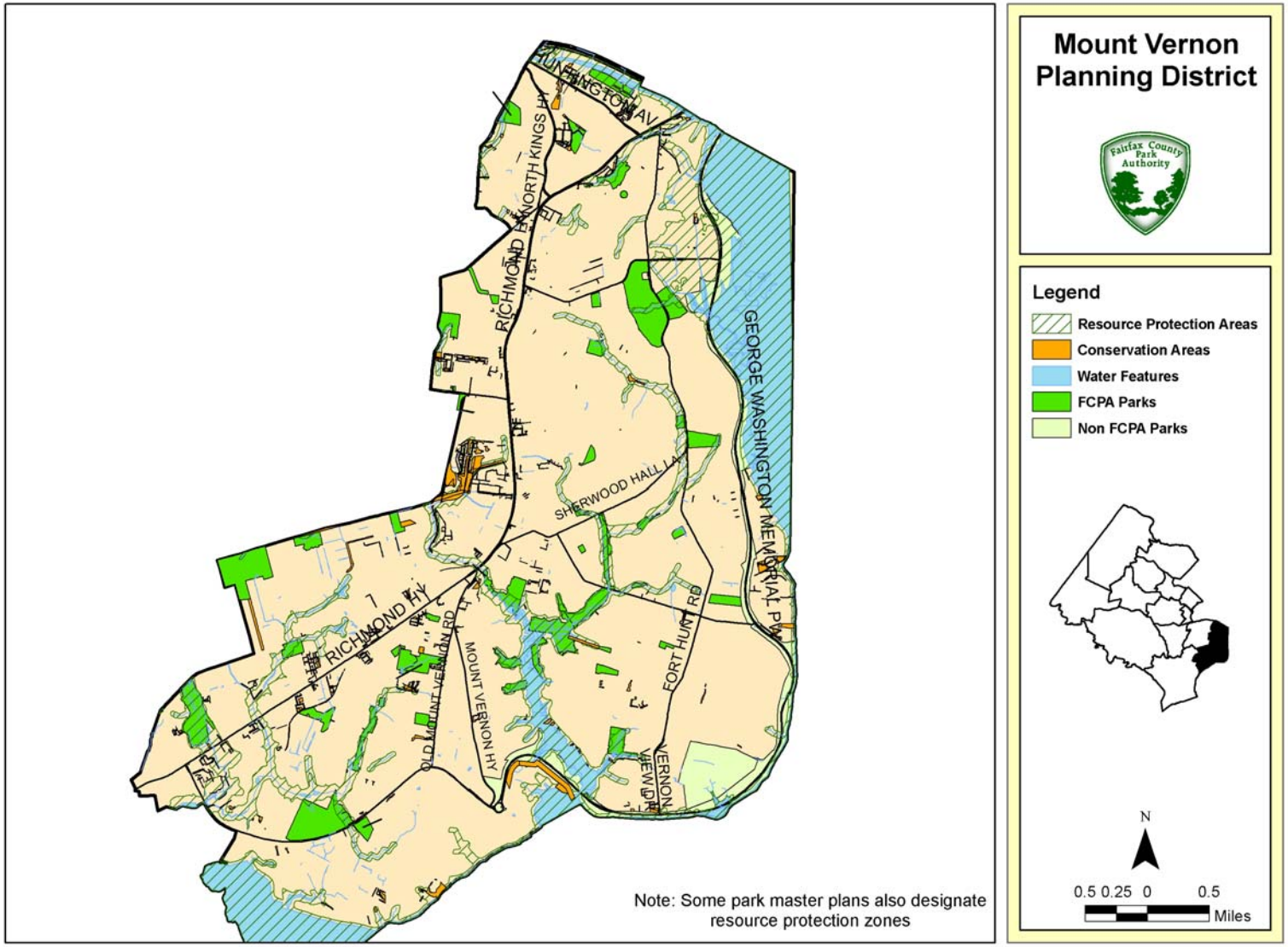
planned North Hill Park will provide the first local-serving park on Richmond Highway in the future.

In addition, the National Park Service manages the George Washington Memorial Parkway, including Dyke Marsh and Fort Hunt. These large parks provide trails, boating access, athletic fields, and large picnic spaces for the community. Many of the important historic resources in the district are privately owned but publicly accessible. These include the Mount Vernon Estate, George Washington's Grist Mill, and Woodlawn Plantation. Map 2 identifies parkland and areas that contain regulatory or other protections, including conservation easements, and Chesapeake Bay Ordinance designated Resource Protection Areas (RPA).

Map 1: Public Parks by Class in the Mount Vernon District



Map 2: Protected Land in the Mount Vernon District



Park Classification

In June 2005, a new Park Classification System was adopted and incorporated into the Park and Recreation chapter of the Countywide Comprehensive Policy Plan. The Park Classification System is a general framework intended to guide open space and public facilities planning by grouping parks according to certain common typical characteristics. The park classification gives an indication of the intended use, general park size range, typical facility types, and the general experience a user may expect at a park:

> Local Parks serve surrounding neighborhoods and communities and offer a variety of local-serving recreation opportunities, such as playgrounds, trails, athletic facilities, picnic areas and natural areas. Typically these parks are designed to serve up to a 3 mile radius depending on the facilities and can range from 2 to 50 acres in size.
>
> Local parks may be urban or suburban in character. Urban parks (including pocket parks, civic plazas and common greens) are a type of local-serving park that are generally more compact and located within an urban or transit-oriented setting. These parks generally consist of high quality design and construction, are well integrated into surrounding development, uses and the public realm and primarily serve to define local urban character, support outdoor enjoyment, social gatherings, recreation needs and special events. These parks may be privately or publicly owned and are usually privately maintained.
>
> District Parks are larger parks that serve greater geographic areas of the County (three to six miles) and provide a wide variety of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities and park experiences. Generally, these parks are more than fifty acres in size. These parks typically accommodate visits of up to a half day, longer operational hours and a larger number of users. Many district parks also have extensive natural areas.
>
> Countywide Parks are larger parks that serve the whole County and provide a variety of larger-scale indoor or outdoor recreation facilities, or both, and facilities or resources that are unique within the County. Typically, these parks are greater than 150 acres and provide opportunities for passive and active recreation to a wide range of simultaneous users for experiences of up to a day in length.
>
> Resource-Based Parks have significant cultural and natural resources. These parks support nature, horticulture and history programs, gardening, nature watching and appreciation of local, regional, state and national history. Extensive stream valley parks are part of the resource-based parks network. Typically, trails and interpretative features and facilities are the primary uses. Some resource parks may have separate areas designated for recreation purposes.

Regional Parks are lands and/or facilities administered by the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NVRPA). These parks have region-wide significance that supplement and enhance the County and municipal park systems.

While some parks are Resource-Based, note that all park types may include areas designated for natural and/or cultural resource protection. In addition, many state and federal parks augment local and regional parks and also serve to protect natural and cultural resources within the County. Table 1 lists and classifies the parks in the Mount Vernon District according to the County parks classification system or by state or federal ownership. Table 1 also includes information about whether and when parks were master planned and if a master planning action (new master plan development or plan update) is needed.

Table 1: Parks in the Mount Vernon Planning District

Park Name	Acres	Supervisor District	Park Classification	Approved Master Plan Date	Master Plan Action Needed
Belle Haven	16.63	MV	Local	*	
Bucknell Manor	4.97	MV	Local	1979	
Carl Sandberg School Site^	2.87	MV	Local		
Collingwood	12.01	MV	Local	1979	
Creighton Square	0.64	LEE	Local	*	√
Dogue Creek S.V.[1]	82.74+	MV	Resource-Based		
Farrington	0.15	MV	Local	*	
Fort Hunt	18.93	MV	Local	1969	
Fort Hunt National Park	136.00	MV	Federal		
Fort Willard Historic Site	1.62	MV	Resource-Based	2006	
George Washington	17.80	MV	District	1981	
George Washington Memorial Parkway & Dyke Marsh	596.00	MV	Federal		
Grist Mill	75.47	MV	District	2002	
Groveton Heights	16.06	LEE	Local	1965	√
Hollin Hall	5.00	MV	Local	1987	
Hollin Meadows	5.34	MV	Local	1975	
Huntington	16.12	MV	Local	1974	
Huntley Meadows	1,479.84+	LEE, MV	Resource-Based	1978	
Hybla Valley	1.15+	LEE, MV	Local	1979	
Jefferson Manor	13.74	LEE	Local	1963	√
Kirk	13.60	MV	Local	*	
Lamond	17.91	MV	Local	2002	
Lenclair	7.72	LEE	Local	*	✓
Little Hunting Creek S.V.[1]	69.27	MV	Resource-Based		
Martin Luther King, Jr.	18.54	MV	District	1967	
Mount Eagle	12.72	MV	Local	1979	
Mount Vernon District	87.81	MV	Countywide	1972	✓
Mount Vernon Estates and Gardens	350.00	MV	Private		
Mount Vernon Manor	13.82	MV	Local	1970	
Mount Vernon Woods	7.19	LEE	Local	1965	
Mount Zephyr	1.97	MV	Local	1982	

Park Name	Acres	Supervisor District	Park Classification	Approved Master Plan Date	Master Plan Action Needed
Muddy Hole Farm	13.60	MV	Local	1978	
North Hill [a]	20.88	MV	Local	2010	
Paul Springs S.V.[1]	18.08	MV	Resource-Based		
Pole Road	50.25	MV	Local	1988	
Stephen S. Foster School Site	1.50	MV	Local	1975	
Stratford Landing	8.58	MV	Local	1967	
Vernon Heights	2.97	MV	Local	*	
Walt Whitman School Site	14.32	MV	Local	1981	
Washington Mill	9.66	MV	Local	1968	
Westgrove	21.32	MV	Local		√
White Oaks	10.32	MV	Local	1975	
Williamsburg Manor	27.88	MV	Local	1970	
Woodlawn	11.61	LEE	Local	1969	
Woodlawn Plantation	130.00	MV	Private		
Woodley Hills	8.15	MV	Local	1971	

1. Resource-based stream valley parks by practice do not have master plans.
* This park was dedicated by a private developer and may be subject to a Conceptual Development Plan associated with an approved rezoning that takes the place of a park master plan.
+ A portion of this park lies outside of the Mount Vernon District.
^ School Sites operated on an interim basis as parks by the Park Authority do not have master plans as they are owned and governed by the Fairfax County Public Schools.
Acreages for non-FCPA parks are estimates derived from GIS.
[a] North Hill is currently owned by HCD, another County agency, but that agency intends to transfer ownership to FCPA.

Park Master Plans

A park master plan is a general guide for appropriate park uses and their approximate location within a specific park site. The plan serves as a long-range vision (10-20 year timeframe) for future development and programming. Issues typically addressed include planned park elements, natural and cultural resource management, and general design concerns. The plan is conceptual in nature and not intended to address detailed issues related to engineered site design or park operations. The plan is just one of many steps in the process that leads to the development of a public park. An archive of park master plans is available at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/plandev/mparchives.htm.

Themes, Issues and Strategies

In early 2008 the Park Authority interacted with citizens at ten *Great Parks, Great Communities* public workshops in all Supervisory districts and at a variety of community festivals and events in the parks to gather input on long-term planning for the land, facilities and natural and cultural resources of the park system. In addition, the Park Authority received public feedback on the park system throughout the year via email and the project web site.

Based on the public feedback and staff expertise, staff identified 26 key issues that fit within eight themes relating to the land, resources and facilities of the Park Authority. The themes are: **Connectivity, Community Building, Service Delivery, Facility Reinvestment, Land Acquisition, Resource Interpretation, Cultural Resource Stewardship, and Natural Resource Stewardship**.

This section describes how the eight themes relate to the park system in the Mount Vernon District and presents strategies for addressing the issues as they apply to the parks in the district. Some strategies include recommendations for construction of facilities, infrastructure and amenities at parks in the district. As part of the planning process for any proposed construction, the project area should first be assessed for possible impacts to natural and cultural resources.

THEME: Connectivity

Better integrating parks with surrounding land uses (neighborhoods and employment centers) and increasing park-to-park connections within the system will allow for greater access and enjoyment. Strategy suggestions include adding trails, trail connections, bridges and other forms of improved access to and between parks.

Map 3 illustrates existing and planned connections and points of interest within the Mount Vernon Planning District. The map depicts high-level, conceptual connections and incorporates elements from the adopted Countywide Trails Plan and Park Authority Trail Strategy Plan. Connections link natural and cultural resources and recreational destinations, supporting recreational activity and frequently offering alternative transportation options.

Issue: ***The Park Authority should work to improve non-motorized access to parks from commercial and residential areas and to increase connectivity between park sites.***

There are no comprehensive stream valley trail corridors within the Mount Vernon District on the County Comprehensive Trail Plan. Only a one mile portion of Paul Springs Branch is identified. In many areas of the county, the Park Authority owns the stream valley corridors and utilizes these areas to provide the primary corridors for non-motorized transportation. Due to the residential development patterns in Mount Vernon, much of the stream valley areas are in private ownership. This private ownership precludes basing the trail system along stream valleys for Mount Vernon. While there is a lack of stream valley trails, a number of Major Regional Trails traverse the Mount Vernon District and create the basis of the non-motorized transportation network. Unlike in many other districts, these were built, or are planned, in conjunction with the major transportation corridors within the district and include the following:

- The Mount Vernon Trail – an 18.5-mile trail managed by the National Park Service along the George Washington Memorial Parkway, of which portions are within the City of Alexandria and Arlington County. The Mount Vernon Trail integrates Fairfax

County with those jurisdictions' trail systems, along with connections to Washington, D.C. and the C & O Canal National Historic Park trails.

- The Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail – a National Scenic Trail that celebrates the heritage of the Potomac and upper Ohio River basins and offers opportunities for hiking, bicycling, and boating. This trail is concurrent with the Mount Vernon Trail, and then follows the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway to Route 1 in the Mount Vernon District.
- The Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail – a historic trail that has been identified as containing a possible route within the Mount Vernon District. The proposed Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route NHT is intended to memorialize the route that took the combined Franco-American armies and navy to victory in the American War for Independence.
- The Civil War Defenses of Washington Bike Trail - A bike trail is being developed by the National Park Service and partner jurisdictions (Fairfax County; Arlington County; Alexandria) linking the Civil War Defenses of Washington. This trail will extend from points in Alexandria, along the Mount Vernon Trail and over to Fort Willard Park.

Heard from the public: "Expand the network of natural surface trails."

Strategies:

MV-C-1. Use criteria provided in the Park Authority's Trail Strategy Plan to evaluate potential new trails, connections and improvements;

MV-C-2. Construct a trail along Little Hunting Creek upstream to Williamsburg Manor Park;

MV-C-3. Construct internal trail improvements at George Washington, Lamond, Quander Brook and Westgrove Parks; and

MV-C-4. Improve trail access from adjacent residential communities into Huntley Meadows Park.

Issue: ***Multiple, separate park sites located across Fairfax County should be linked through thematic interpretive connections.***

Thematic connections, emphasized through elements such as signage, maps or website information, can foster greater public awareness of important features. Increased knowledge of site features could encourage greater support for stewardship and management activities.

Strategies:

MV-C-5. Include the Washington/Rochambeau Camps and Washington's Grist Mill as part of a Revolutionary War themed trail;

MV-C-6. Include Fort Willard, Mount Eagle and Grist Mill Parks as part of a Civil War interpretive trail;

MV-C-7. Consider linking Lenclair (Beacon Field Airport), Mount Vernon District (Watering Trough) and Martin Luther King, Jr. (Peake Family Cemetery) Parks through an interpretive trail that tells the story of early development of Fairfax County;

MV-C-8. Consider linking the community garden plots and mulch site at Grist Mill Park to a gardening interpretive theme including Green Spring Gardens and other horticultural parks; and

MV-C-9. Determine suitability of adding Mount Vernon District, Grist Mill and Westgrove Parks to the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail, a trail system that celebrates the state's bird and wildlife diversity.

Issue: ***Park facilities should be served by the public transportation system to provide access to recreational facilities.***

Two Metrorail stations are located within close proximity of parks in Mount Vernon. These are the Huntington and Eisenhower Avenue Metrorail stations. While the Eisenhower Avenue station is in close proximity, it is not easily accessible due to the physical barriers of the Capital Beltway and Cameron Run. The Huntington Metrorail station is within walking distance of four parks; Mount Eagle, Huntington, Heritage Hill, and Jefferson Manor. Mount Eagle Park provides local serving facilities in close proximity to the station and nearby residents. Both stations provide bike racks and bicycle lockers to encourage bicycle access to the station.

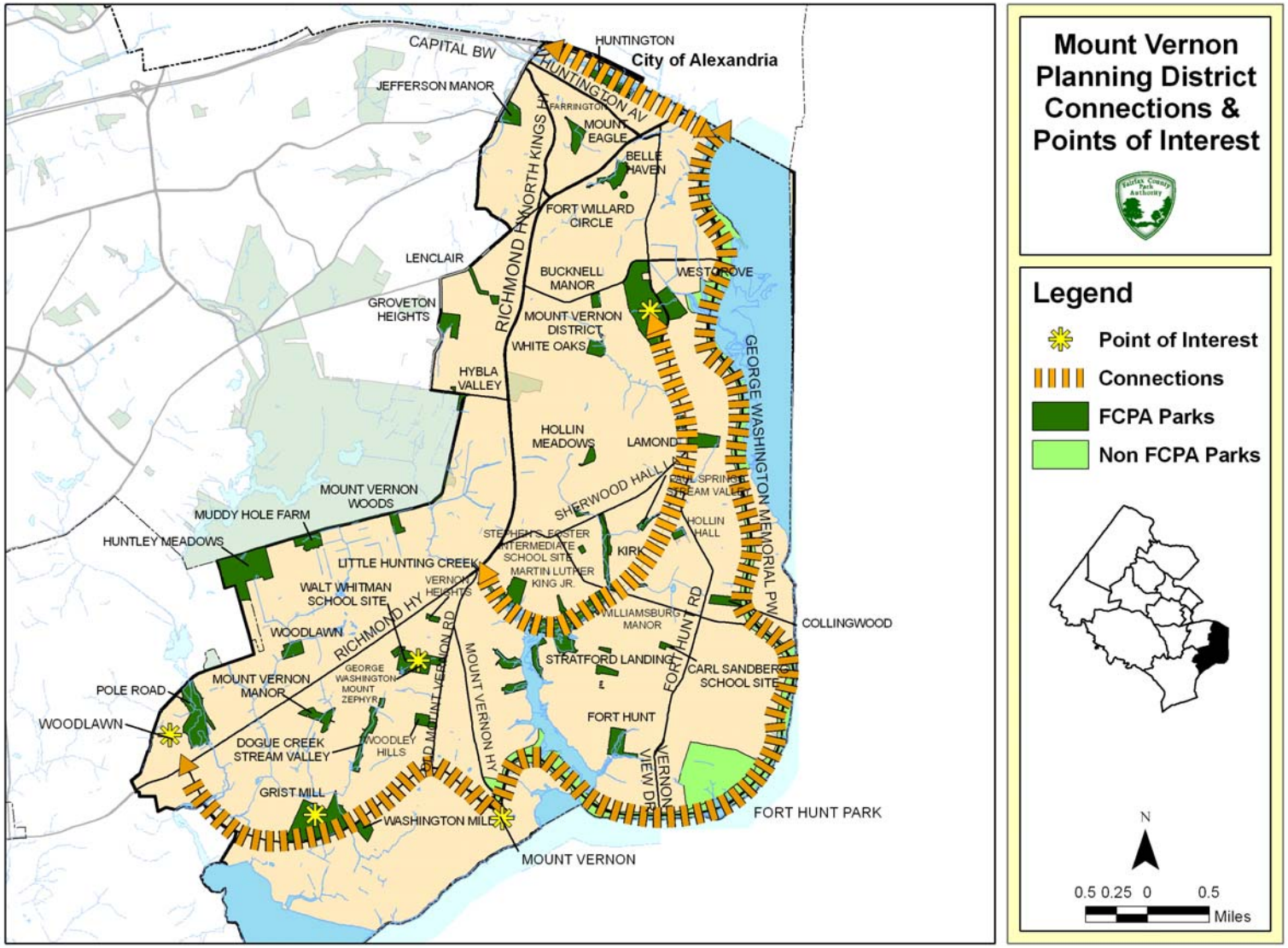
Mount Vernon District is well served by Fairfax Connector and Metrobus routes, with nearly all of the parks in this area within a half mile distance of a Metrobus route. While it may appear that the parks in the district are currently well served by public transportation, they are not, due to stop locations and transit schedules.

Transit stops may be located farther away from parks than a quarter-mile, or across busy streets where safe crossing may be an issue. While there is some limited weekend transit service, the majority of the transit in the area supports morning and evening commuting, with flows to and from the Huntington Metrorail station being a primary goal. Transit supporting commuting times and patterns do not necessarily serve park users who wish to use parks.

Strategies:

MV-C-10. Work with the Department of Transportation to improve bus transit service to parks in the Mount Vernon Planning District, especially Mount Vernon District, George Washington and Grist Mill Parks. This should include coordination with bus stop locations and transit schedules.

Map 3: Non-motorized Connections and Points of Interest in the Mount Vernon District



Issue: ***The Park Authority should work to improve access to waterways and promote the use of "water trails" throughout the County.***

The Potomac River Water Trail is an opportunity for residents to enjoy the Potomac River by boat, canoe or kayak. The trail provides access to a number of state, Federal, and local parks within Virginia and Maryland and is an element of the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network. Water access for boats, kayaks and canoes is also available at the Belle Haven Marina, located within the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

Strategies:

MV-C-11. Search for suitable locations along Little Hunting Creek to provide water access for canoes and kayaks;

MV-C-12. Determine feasibility of adding water access, either for boating or a boardwalk for nature observation, at Huntington Park in conjunction with flood prevention facilities; and

MV-C-13. Work with the National Park Service to encourage additional water access points along the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

THEME: Community Building

Local parks are places where people can interact and build community. Well-designed and located parks, park facilities and programs support greater social interaction. Community-building park facilities and activities include reservable picnic areas, amphitheaters, dog parks, garden plots, farmers markets, performances and special events. Collocation of facilities with other community uses can also assist in strengthening communities. Strategy suggestions include ways to increase the community-building role of local parks in residential neighborhoods and providing parks and recreation facilities near other civic uses.

Issue: ***Local and urban parks should include a combination of facilities, amenities and gathering spaces to attract and promote social interaction among community members.***

A number of parks in the Mount Vernon Planning District provide community building facilities that help to promote social interaction and better integrate local parks with the surrounding community. Mount Vernon District and Grist Mill Parks provide amphitheaters and outdoor art programs in the summer through the Mount Vernon Nights concert series. In addition, the Park Authority coordinates the Mount Vernon Farmers Market offered at Sherwood Regional Library.

Heard from the public: "I'd love to see more community gardens and garden plots in Fairfax County, specifically in the Mount Vernon District."

Reservable picnic areas are available in Martin Luther King, Jr. and Jefferson Manor Parks, accommodating up to 100 users in total. Fort Hunt Park, operated by the National Park Service, also provides programming and large reservable

picnic areas that in total can accommodate seating for over 1,000 users. A number of picnic areas are also operated by the National Park Service within the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

There is an off-leash dog area at Grist Mill Park in the southern portion of the Mount Vernon District. The district has high population densities with many high-density residential buildings, especially in the northern portion of the district. Outdoor community spaces for people and dogs are needed to provide casual leisure opportunities and to build community.

Strategies:

MV-CB-1. Support the construction of the planned dog park at Lenclair Park, to be provided by the developer through a proffered commitment;

MV-CB-2. Explore feasibility of developing an amphitheatre and lawn seating at Mount Vernon District Park, as shown on the park's master plan;

MV-CB-3. If feasible, develop picnic shelters at Mount Vernon District, Stratford Landing, Woodlawn and Woodley Hills Parks in accordance with the parks' master plans; and

MV-CB-4. Consider additional appropriate locations for dog parks within the district.

Issue: ***Parks should be collocated with other civic uses (libraries, community centers, senior centers, etc.) to promote social interaction among community members.***

A number of existing parks are integrated with other public facilities, primarily schools. Walt Whitman, Washington Mill, Woodley Hills, Stratford Landing, Carl Sandburg, Hollin Meadows, Hybla Valley, Groveton Heights and Westgrove Parks are all adjacent to school sites and provide some of the recreation facilities that serve the schools. In addition, Mount Vernon District, Huntington and Pole Road Parks are close to public buildings and could be used to support community activities.

Strategies:

MV-CB-5. Add recreational facilities and amenities, where appropriate, to parks in the district that are collocated with other civic uses; and

MV-CB-6. Work with public facility providers, such as schools and libraries to create new park spaces with renovation and improvements made to existing public structures in the district.

THEME: Service Delivery

The Park Authority provides quality facilities that are well used, but may not be equitably distributed across all parts of the County or accessible to all groups. Countywide and specialty facilities, in particular, may not serve a true countywide service area.

Residents desire recreational facilities and opportunities at parks near where they live and for all age groups and socio-economic populations. Strategy suggestions include creating more facilities, better distributing facilities across the County, and reducing barriers to use.

Service level standards for over twenty park facility types were established through the 2004 Needs Assessment (http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/needsassessment.htm) process and incorporated into the Countywide Policy Plan (http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/comprehensiveplan/policyplan/parksrec.pdf) in 2005. Facility standards are countywide goals for providing park and recreation facilities that reasonably satisfy community needs. Standards are expressed in units per population, and are based on extensive analysis of citizen demand and preferences compared with the existing public facility inventories. Based on the Countywide adopted facility service level standards and projected population growth, Table 2 shows the projected surplus or deficit of several key local serving facilities in the Mount Vernon Planning District for the year 2020. While overall facility needs are quantified in Table 2, the location of needed facilities is determined through the site specific master planning process that considers site conditions, context, resources, and community input. For more detailed information on existing facilities in each park and service levels, please see the Existing Conditions Report.

Table 2: Mount Vernon Planning District 2020 Local Serving Facility Needs Analysis

95,120	2010 population				
101,298	2020 projected population				
Facility	**Service Level Standard**	**2010 Existing Facilities**	**2020 Needed Facilities**	**2020 Projected (Deficit)/ Surplus**	**2020 Projected Service Level**
Rectangle Fields	1 field / 2,700 people	26.0	37.5	**(11.5)**	69%
Adult Baseball Fields	1 field / 24,000 people	5.0	4.2	**0.8**	118%
Adult Softball Fields+	1 field / 22,000 people	0.0	4.6	**(4.6)**	0%
Youth Baseball Fields+	1 field / 7,200 people	15.5	14.1	**1.4**	110%
Youth Softball Fields+	1 field / 8,800 people	12.0	11.5	**0.5**	104%
Basketball Courts	1 court / 2,100 people	15.0	48.2	**(33.2)**	31%
Playgrounds	1 playground / 2,800 people	28.5	36.2	**(7.7)**	79%
Neighborhood Dog Parks	1 dog park / 86,000 people	1.0	1.2	**(0.2)**	85%
Neighborhood Skate Parks	1 skate park / 106,000 people	0.0	1.0	**(1.0)**	0%

+ *60 ft and 65 ft diamond fields are assigned to the sport where primarily allocated.*

Issue: ***The Park Authority should provide and equitably distribute facilities to meet established facility service level standards.***

As a result of the early suburban residential development, many of the smaller local parks in the Mount Vernon District did not include athletic fields, and many were never developed with recreation facilities. Mount Vernon has a relatively high population density (7.5 persons/acre), and the population is projected to increase by 14 percent by 2020, adding almost 13,000 new residents.

Mount Vernon is projected to only have a surplus in adult baseball fields, and youth baseball and softball fields, and is projected to have deficiencies in all other facility types. This is typical of Fairfax County as a whole, where deficiencies are projected for all facility types other than adult baseball and youth softball diamonds.

There are a number of tennis courts, multi-use courts and playgrounds that have been master planned at parks in the district, but have not been constructed.

Strategies:

MV-SD-1. Consider constructing master planned facilities to improve service level provision within the district;

MV-SD-2. Consider upgrading existing rectangular fields at parks to increase field capacity within the district;

MV-SD-3. Pursue partnerships with schools to improve field quality and increase public access to these facilities;

MV-SD-4. Explore the possibility of adding a neighborhood skate park facility to one of the parks in the district;

MV-SD-5. Encourage rezoning applicants to provide turnkey urban parks and recreational facilities in the growth areas along Richmond Highway to serve new residents and employees that will be concentrated there; and

MV-SD-6. Implement master planned facilities for North Hill Park, including the planned dog park.

Issue: ***The Park Authority should provide new kinds of parks and facilities and in new ways to meet the needs of the County's changing population.***

No district- or park-specific strategies exist for this issue in the Mount Vernon Planning District.

Issue: ***The Park Authority should re-examine park master plans to determine if parks are planned to best serve the needs of Fairfax County residents.***

Most of the parks in Mount Vernon have existing master plans, many of which are over 30 years old. Master plans may periodically be updated to address changes in demographics, site conditions or usage. The majority of the parks in Mount Vernon

have been planned with facilities that are anticipated to continue to support adjacent, stable residential communities. Additional facilities which are planned yet remain to be constructed provide opportunities to expand service within local parks to meet additional need.

Strategies:

MV-SD-7. Consider updating the Master Plan for Mount Vernon District Park; and

MV-SD-8. Develop a master plan for Lenclair Park.

THEME: Facility Reinvestment

The Park Authority has a great diversity of facilities and resources in various lifecycle stages. Funding and schedules for replacement or reinvestment are inconsistent and adding new facilities has sometimes taken precedence over renewal of existing facilities. Strategy suggestions include repairing, replacing, upgrading, and improving utilization of existing facilities and equipment.

Issue: ***Repair, replacement, and upgrading of existing park facilities should be addressed through a system-wide lifecycle replacement program that takes into account changing facility needs.***

Strategies:

MV-FR-1. Replace playgrounds at Bucknell Manor, Collingwood, Farrington Avenue, Hollin Hall, and Woodlawn Parks;

MV-FR-2. Collocate play equipment for the full age-range of children wherever possible to increase use of playgrounds by the community;

MV-FR-3. Renovate and upgrade tennis court lighting at George Washington Park;

MV-FR-4. Evaluate suitability of renovating, redeveloping or replacing the RECenter at Mount Vernon Park. An architectural assessment and market feasibility study are needed to determine what changes will best serve the community's recreation needs; and

MV-FR-5. Any proposed renovation, redevelopment or replacement should be evaluated for conformance with the Board of Supervisors' Environmental Agenda.

Issue: ***Parking standards and levels of service should reflect user patterns to minimize impacts on surrounding neighborhoods.***

Due to the dense residential nature of the district, there can be parking conflicts between local residents and park users arriving by automobile.

Strategies:

MV-FR-6. Repave entrance road and parking lots at Mount Vernon District, Grist Mill and George Washington Parks;

MV-FR-7. Develop all local parks in a way that encourages non-motorized access to the surrounding residential areas;

MV-FR-8. Avoid building parking lots at local parks that do not have recreation facilities; and

MV-FR-9. Promote shared access and parking agreements when parks are adjacent to other civic uses, such as libraries or schools.

THEME: Land Acquisition

Additional parkland is needed to protect and buffer natural areas and historic sites and to provide room to develop new recreational facilities. Strategy suggestions include ways to continue to add appropriate land to the Park Authority's land holdings to expand the park system.

Service level standards for both local and district/countywide parkland were established through the 2004 Needs Assessment and incorporated into the Countywide Policy Plan in 2005. Parkland standards represent countywide goals for providing land for the two types of parks (Local and District/Countywide) that support service delivery and facility development and are expressed in units per population. Local parks include both suburban and urban park types. Resource-based parks occur where resources are located and therefore do not require quantitative service level standards. Please refer to the Park Classification discussion earlier in this chapter for additional information on park classification descriptions.

Based on adopted service level standards and projected population growth, Table 3 shows the projected surplus or deficit of parkland in the Mount Vernon Planning District for the year 2020.

Table 3: Mount Vernon Planning District 2020 Parkland Needs Analysis

95,120	2010 population					
101,298	2020 projected population					
11,982	District Size (acres)					
	Parkland/Open Space Type	**Service Level Standard**	**2010 Existing Acres**	**2020 Needed Acres**	**2020 Projected (Deficit)/ Surplus**	**2020 Projected Service Level**
Public Parkland	Local Suburban	5 acres / 1,000 people	524	506	**17**	103%
	Urban	1.5 acres / 1,000 people plus 1 acre / 10,000 employees				

	District/Countywide+	13 acres / 1,000 people	93	1317	(1224)	7%
	Resource-Based	*	195			
	Parkland Total		**812**			
Private Open Space	Private Recreation		0			
	HOA Property		334			
	Private OS Total		**334**			
Public & Private Total			**1,146**			

+ The District and Countywide Parks that serve this Planning District may be located outside the Planning District and this outlying acreage is not reflected in this table.
** There is no service level standard for Resource-Based parkland. The amount of resource-based parkland owned and/or protected is based on the existence and sensitivity of the resources.*

Issue: ***Parkland for recreation should be provided according to adopted service level standards and distributed equitably throughout the County.***

Due to the existing dense development within Mount Vernon, there are few opportunities to purchase land suitable for park facilities. The most likely source of new parkland to address the service level deficiencies will come from infill development and redevelopment within commercial areas. Improvements to schools, libraries, and community centers may offer opportunities to improve existing parkland or create new parks.

> **Heard from the public: "Focus on getting more parks and recreation opportunities in your critical needs communities (revitalization districts)…We have plenty of brownfields along Richmond Highway. How about reclaiming a few of these and turning them into parks?**

Strategies:

MV-LA-1. Seek to create additional parks with infill development and redevelopment with emphasis on critical needs communities within revitalization districts;

MV-LA-2. Consider adding or improving parks and public recreation uses when other public properties are redeveloped and/or renovated; and

MV-LA-3. Pursue transfer of Parcel 83-3 ((1)) 24 from Board of Supervisors to Park Authority ownership.

Issue: ***Urban parks should be provided in higher density/mixed use areas of the County (i.e. Tysons Corner, Transit Station Areas, Commercial Revitalization Districts).***

The Richmond Highway Commercial Revitalization District, Huntington Transit Station Area, and Beacon/Groveton, Hybla Valley/Gum Springs, North Gateway and Penn Daw, South County Center, and Woodlawn Community Business Centers are all future growth centers within the district.

Strategies:

MV-LA-4. As commercial corridors within Mount Vernon redevelop, urban parks should be included to provide outdoor recreation spaces;

MV-LA-5. Parks within walking distance to urban redevelopment areas should be evaluated for redevelopment to support increased residential and commercial activities; and

MV-LA-6. Promote the establishment of urban parks in the Huntington Transit Station Area and the Richmond Highway Commercial Revitalization District, which includes the Beacon/Groveton, Hybla Valley/Gum Springs, North Gateway and Penn Daw, South County Center, and Woodlawn Community Business Centers, as part of residential and/or commercial redevelopment.

Issue: ***Property acquisition is important for protecting historic resources in Fairfax County and ensuring their preservation for future generations.***

Strategies:

MV-LA-7. Encourage new development to create buffers between historic sites and development;

MV-LA-8. Search for opportunities to acquire additional properties that contain significant cultural resources; and

MV-LA-9. Encourage owners of private parcels with historic resources to place conservation easements on their property to protect these resources.

Issue: ***Property acquisition is an important strategy for protecting natural resources in Fairfax County and ensuring open and natural areas for future generations.***

Strategies:

MV-LA-10. Seek to acquire and/or protect through purchase, donation, development dedications, or conservation easements remaining natural areas in the district especially large tracts, those connecting to other natural areas and those containing unique or significant natural resources; and

MV-LA-11. Encourage owners of large private parcels to place conservation easements on their property to protect natural resources.

THEME: Resource Interpretation

Residents may not be aware of or understand the importance of the vast number of natural and cultural resources the Park Authority holds in public trust. Strategy suggestions include adding to the existing interpretive facilities, signs, and programs. Roadway and trail waysides permit park visitors opportunities to stop and view interpretive signage.

Issue: ***The full range of natural and cultural resources within Fairfax County should be interpreted through facilities as needed.***

The Mount Vernon Planning District has many important cultural resources, but many of the important historic resources in the district are not owned by the Park Authority. Some, such as Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens or Woodlawn are owned by private groups. Others are owned by the National Park Service.

The most important County owned sites contain Civil War features, a number of 18th through 20th century domestic sites, and many Native American sites. These Native American sites exist in abundance in the undeveloped portions of our parklands. Some of the important historic resources in the district are Fort Willard Historic Site, Mount Eagle Park, Mount Vernon District Park, and Grist Mill.

Historic sites in county parks in the district reflect different phases of the architectural and agrarian history of Fairfax County during the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. They provide opportunities to interpret the evolution of Fairfax County from colony through the Revolutionary War into the period of the New Nation and the Civil War.

The Mount Vernon District lies within the service area of the Huntley Meadows Nature Center, although only a small portion of this park is actually located within the district.

Strategies:

MV-RI-1. Focus natural resource interpretation at Huntley Meadows Park and augment this with interpretive signage and wayside exhibits in Local and Resource-Based parks within the district;

MV-RI-2. Develop natural area interpretive activities at Mount Vernon District Park;

MV-RI-3. Develop interpretive materials for George Washington's Union Farm, remains of which are present archaeologically at Grist Mill Park;

MV-RI-4. Construct appropriate cultural resource signage and facilities at Belle Haven, Mount Eagle, Mount Vernon District, Bucknell Manor, Groveton Woods and Jefferson Manor;

MV-RI-5. Continue to develop the interpretation and educational efforts underway at Fort Willard Circle; and

MV-RI-6. Work towards the development of Grist Mill Barn as an interpretation or community center.

THEME: Cultural Resource Stewardship

Many factors threaten the health, protection and viability of natural and cultural resources on county parkland. Strategy suggestions include focusing on managing threats and actively managing existing natural and cultural resources consistent with

guidance provided in the countywide Cultural Resource Management Plan and Natural Resource Management Plan.

The most important County owned cultural resource sites in the district contain Civil War features, a number of 18th through 20th century domestic sites, and many Native American sites. These Native American sites exist in abundance in the undeveloped portions of our parklands.

Issue: ***Historic structures should be stabilized, repaired, renovated and/or restored to ensure their preservation and availability for public viewing and interpretation.***

Historic sites in county parks in the district reflect different phases of the architectural and agrarian history of Fairfax County during the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. Some of the important historic resources in the district are Fort Willard Historic Site, Mount Eagle Park, Mount Vernon District Park, and Grist Mill.

Strategies:

MV-CR-1. Mount Eagle Park should be evaluated to determine if a Resource Management Plan should be developed in order to prevent degradation of the Civil War earthworks;

MV-CR-2. Replace siding and roofing material at Grist Mill Barn to protect integrity of structure; and

MV-CR-3. Seek funding opportunities and/or public-private partnerships for improvement of access to and use of the historic house at Lamond Park.

Issue: ***Cultural Resources should be identified and evaluated prior to any proposed construction activity.***

Strategies:

MV-CR-4. For any site subject to proposed construction activity, a preliminary assessment of the property will be carried out using GIS and pedestrian reconnaissance. Should potential resources be present, a cultural resource survey will be conducted and mitigation measures will be developed, as necessary.

Issue: ***Impacts to National Register eligible cultural resources should be avoided where at all feasible. If impacts cannot be avoided mitigation level documentation or data recovery should occur.***

Strategies:

MV-CR-5. Document and record buildings and structures using Historic American Buildings/Historic American Engineering methods (research, measured drawings and archival photographs) and conduct data recovery excavations for archaeological sites, as appropriate.

Issue: ***New, expanded and upgraded facilities are needed to house artifact collections to ensure their preservation for future generations.***

No district- or park-specific strategies exist for this issue in the Mount Vernon Planning District. This is an issue of countywide concern that should be addressed with centralized facilities.

THEME: Natural Resource Stewardship

When compared to other planning districts, parkland within the Mount Vernon District has limited natural resources. These resources are primarily related to the water resources and the protection associated with non-fragmented forested areas. Dogue Creek Stream Valley and Little Hunting Creek Stream Valley Parks comprise the majority of the natural resources. Most of the remaining parks in the district have fragments of natural areas.

Issue: ***Natural habitats and the wildlife they support are disappearing and are fragmented.***

The natural areas of the district are extremely fragmented, with significant portions of edge and few large tracts remaining. Most of the natural areas are concentrated in the low-lying lands since many of the uplands have been converted to built features. Almost all of the tidal wetlands on Park Authority land occur in the Mount Vernon area in the parks along Little Hunting Creek and at Huntington Park. The stream valley corridors on the North Fork of Dogue Creek and the North branch of Little Hunting Creek are valuable wildlife corridors, with regular sightings of hawks, herons and eagles.

The largest park parcel, Mount Vernon District Park, has over 87 acres but its plant communities are somewhat isolated from other plant communities. This site contains some of the most unusual forest communities on parkland. These intact forest remnants are relatively healthy.

Strategies:

MV-NR-1. Seek to acquire and protect remaining natural areas in the district especially large tracts, those connecting to other natural areas and those containing unique or significant natural resources;

MV-NR-2. Protect and improve existing corridors, linkages and watersheds;

MV-NR-3. Provide new linkages between remaining public and private natural areas;

MV-NR-4. Manage utility corridors and other easements consistent with natural resource goals, not just utility service goals; and

MV-NR-5. Designate permanent resource protection zones in park master plans that define appropriate uses and development.

Issue: ***Water resources and stream valleys are degraded due to development and associated stormwater runoff.***

Strategies:

MV-NR-6. Work with the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) and private land owners to capture and treat stormwater. This could take the form of incorporating Low Impact Development (LID) methods on residential and commercial lots and renovation of larger properties to provide new or enhanced stormwater facilities;

MV-NR-7. Encourage private property owners to adopt wildlife and water friendly landscaping practices to improve water quality and habitat; and

MV-NR-8. Coordinate efforts with DPWES for planned stormwater management improvements to Parcel 83-3 ((1)) 24.

Issue: ***The Park Authority does not have an adequate inventory of natural resources on parkland.***

Strategies:

MV-NR-9. Direct development of park infrastructure to areas that, when inventoried, reflect few or poor quality natural resources, unless otherwise incompatible;

MV-NR-10. Ensure that natural resources are assessed prior to any park development. Use design principles that minimize natural resource impacts and include monitoring and restoration of impacted natural areas as part of development plans;

MV-NR-11. Conduct natural resource inventories and develop and implement natural resource management plans for natural areas; and

MV-NR-12. Identify, preserve, protect and enhance wetlands within Dogue Creek, Little Hunting Creek and Cameron Run stream corridors.

Issue: ***Non-native invasive plants are threatening natural resources by reducing the diversity of native species and impacting wildlife habitat.***

The extremely fragmented nature of the natural areas in the district coupled with small park size and high levels of human disturbance have generally resulted in degraded natural areas within parks and high occurrences of invasive plant species. Due to the mature nature of the urban and residential development in the Mount Vernon area, invasive plant species are well established and often cover large percentages of vegetated areas.

Strategies:

MV-NR-13. Educate citizens on the problems associated with invasive plant species. Work with them to eliminate or limit invasives on private property near parks and to prevent new introductions of invasive species; and

MV-NR-14. Expand non-native invasive plant management and habitat restoration on parkland by implementing the Non-Native Invasive Plant Prioritization Plan and Assessment.

Issue: ***The County has a goal to expand tree canopy. The Park Authority should contribute to this goal wherever possible by ensuring existing forested areas are sustainable and expanding canopy where possible.***

Strategies:

MV-NR-15. Ensure sustainability of tree canopy on parkland by developing and implementing management plans and controlling threats such as non-native invasive plants and deer herbivory;

MV-NR-16. Encourage tree planting and natural landscaping techniques on private land;

MV-NR-17. Incorporate natural landscaping techniques on parkland, avoid tree loss from development and where possible increase tree canopy; and

MV-NR-18. Designate permanent resource protection zones in park master plans that define appropriate uses and development.

Heard from the public: "One great way to keep the neighborhoods and trail systems around the parks in good environmental status is planting new trees where old ones have died."

Issue: ***The Park Authority should utilize innovative practices in construction of recreational facilities and buildings to minimize impacts to the environment and demonstrate stewardship.***

Strategies:

MV-NR-19. Incorporate Green Building and other best practice techniques into any renovation or redevelopment of Mount Vernon RECenter.