

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why is a land exchange being proposed between the Park Authority and Fairfax County Public Schools?

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) is working on the development of the South County Middle School. FCPS currently owns an approximately 40-acre vacant parcel off Laurel Crest Drive, identified on the Fairfax County Real Property Identification Map as Tax Map No. 98-3 ((1)) 25. The Park Authority owns an approximately 40-acre property within Laurel Hill Park, identified as Tax Map No. 107-3 ((1)) parcel 19 (part), between the Middle School site and the existing South County Secondary School. The park property contains 12 former administrative buildings associated with the former Nike missile complex as well as a pond and wetlands area that are currently part of an invasive vegetation management project.

FCPS has proposed an acre-for-acre land exchange with the Park Authority that would allow the Middle School to be developed on the current park site abutting the Secondary School. This adjacency would permit FCPS to construct shared recreational and educational facilities in the development of the Middle School, including shared use of the existing rectangular fields on the Secondary School Site. The proposed land exchange would move the Middle School building and related facilities and their potential impacts further away from the residential uses.

Why is a public hearing being held?

Park Authority Policy 307 Disposal of Land or Facilities states that the Park Authority may dispose of property only after conducting a public hearing on the disposal and under the following conditions:

- Where an exchange of property would better serve the needs of the citizens concerned; and
- When land more suitable for the needs of the citizens who are being served by the property in question has been or can be acquired within six months of the date of decision to dispose of the property.

What will happen after the land exchange occurs?

FCPS would demolish the existing dilapidated structures associated with the Nike resource area and construct an approximately 179,000 square foot school building, a VDOT-approved entrance off Laurel Crest Drive, sidewalk/trail connections to surrounding neighborhoods, and a parking lot for 268 cars and 20 buses. FCPS has also proposed the construction of two rectangular fields and one large rectangular, “overlay” field that can be used as two diamonds or as a rectangular field. Construction of the school facilities would avoid the pond and wetlands on the former park property. FCPS will also incorporate cultural interpretation of the Nike missile site such as kiosks or displays.

What benefits will the Park Authority receive from the land exchange?

The new park parcel is less constrained by Resource Protection Area and therefore contains greater developable area for recreational use. The construction of the Middle School will provide the Park Authority with an entrance into the proposed park site and 118 parking spaces for off-hour use by park patrons. With shared access and parking spaces, the Park Authority will be able to achieve substantial cost savings in the development of park facilities and will avoid the expense of having to raze the Nike administrative buildings. The Park Authority will also have the opportunity to continue its environmental stewardship efforts in the pond and wetland area on the former park property, and to recover any artifacts from the existing Nike site buildings.

What are the plans for the new park parcel?

The new park parcel will go through a master planning process to determine its possible uses and amenities and will be incorporated into the existing Laurel Hill Master Plan. There will be public meetings throughout the planning process to solicit public input and involvement. An initial public information meeting will introduce existing site conditions at the new park site, evaluate alternative park uses, and identify and respond to community issues and questions, including trail connectivity with surrounding neighborhoods and lighting of athletic fields. After a preferred alternative is identified, a draft park master plan will be developed and a formal public hearing will be held to gather further comments from the community.

The approved Master Plan for the new park parcel will also have to undergo a public facility review (2232 Review) by the Planning Commission to determine its conformance with the Comprehensive Plan. The 2232 Review process will afford additional opportunities for public comment.