FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY

OSSIAN HALL MASTER PLAN REVISION

Approved July 28, 2004

The Fairfax County Park Authority acknowledges the special efforts of the Ossian Hall Task Force members in developing the recommendations for this plan.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Fairfax County Park Authority
Ossian Hall Park Master Plan Revision
July 2004

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Project Team

Angela, Allen, Park Planning Branch
Todd Bolton, Resource Management Division
Kelly Davis, Special Projects Branch
Kirk Holley, Park Planning Branch
Richard Maple, Park Operations Division
Jenny Pate, Park Planning Branch
Richard Sacchi, Resource Management Division

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION
A. Purpose and Plan Description 5
B. Property Description 5

II. PARK CLASSIFICATION 5

III. EXISTING FACILITIES
A. Listing of Existing Facilities 7

IV. EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS
A. Natural Resources 7
1. Topography 8
2. Soils 8
3. Green Infrastructure Statement 8
B. Site History & Cultural Resources 8
1. Park Survey 11
C. Access 11
D. Utilities 11
E. Surrounding Facilities 12

V. NEEDS ASSESSMENT STATEMENT 12

VII. CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN
A. Recommendations on Conceptual Development Plan 12
B. Elimination of Previously Master Planned Facilities 18
C. Relocation of Previously Approved Master Plan Elements or Existing Facilities
1. Rectangular Fields 18
2. Diamond Fields 18
3. Multi-Use Court 18
4. Playground 18
D. Description of New Plan Elements
1. Urban Core 19
a) Plaza 19
b) Picnic Shelter 19
c) Multi-Use Area 19
2. Managed Woodland 20
3. Trails 20
4. Parking 20
5. Site Furnishings 20
6. Buffering 20
E. Design Concerns
1. Safety Considerations 21
a) Active Edge 21
b) Entrances and Primary Routes 21
c) Visibility and Sight Distances 21
d) Informal Surveillance 21
2. Future Recommendations 21
a) Batting Cage 22
b) Outdoor Classroom 22
3. Stormwater Management 22

MAPS & GRAPHICS

Figure 1—1973 Master Plan.....6

Figure 2—Slope Analysis 9

Figure 3—Green Infrastructure Map.....10

Figure 4—Public Facilities within Service Area 13

Figure 5—List of Public Facilities within Service Area..... 14-16

Figure 6—Conceptual Development Plan 17

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose and Plan Description

The purpose of the master plan revision is to update the plan first approved in 1973 (See 1973 Master Plan, figure 1). Since approved, this plan has served as a guide for all planning of the site. However, the park is aging and in need of facility improvements. This master plan revision is a means to update the plan by recommending facility upgrades and site improvements. When approved, this document will serve as a guide for all future planning on the site and should be referred to before any planning and design projects are initiated.

The plan will describe the facility to be developed based on a variety of factors, including how it fits into the established plan, where it will be constructed and how it will operate in conjunction with other areas of the park and existing uses.

B. Property Description

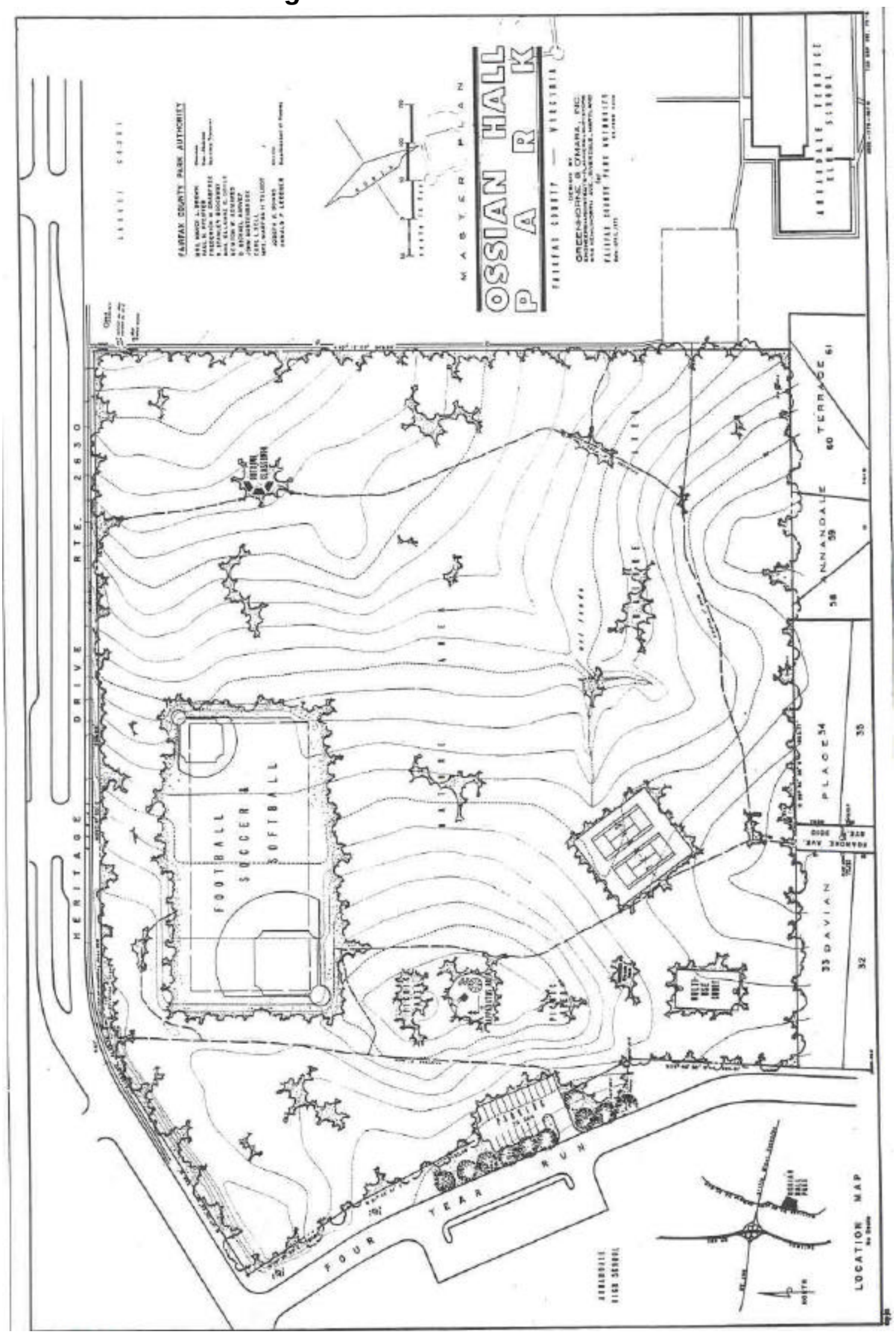
Ossian Hall Park is located at 7900 Heritage Drive in Annandale, Virginia, in a densely developed area of the Braddock Supervisory District. Classified as a Community Park, this 22.75 acre site represents one of the few remaining open areas in this portion of Fairfax County. The land is bounded on the north by an apartment complex and Annandale Terrace Elementary School, single family subdivision homes on the east, Annandale High School to the south and Heritage Drive on the west. Heritage Mall and Immanuel United Methodist Church are located across the street on the west side of Heritage Drive, surrounded by primarily apartment and condominium communities. Public transportation is available to the northwest with a Metro bus stop located at Patriot Drive and Forest Glen.

The site is comprised of gently rolling slopes and wooded areas with two diamond fields, tennis courts, a multi-use court, trails and a playground. In the 1980's, lights were added to the diamond fields and recent upgrades include a new irrigation system.

II. PARK CLASSIFICATION

Ossian Hall Park falls under Fairfax County Park Authority classification 2.0 Community Park. Community Parks provide a variety of individual and organized recreation activities conveniently located for short term visits. These parks may be located in residential neighborhoods or Suburban Centers. Community Parks primarily support active recreation including organized sports and may be intensely developed, while still providing a moderate amount of vegetated open space. All facilities planned for a Neighborhood Park can also be located in a Community Park. Facility development may include lighted or unlighted athletic fields, court facilities, picnic areas, playgrounds, tot lots, garden plots, fitness courses, trails, and parking. Parking is provided on-site or co-located with appropriate adjoining development. Community Parks are typically 10-50 acres in size serving several neighborhoods. The service area is measured by a 5 to 10 minute drive or 15 to 20 minute bicycle trip. Depending on the density of surrounding communities, the service area generally extends up to three miles.

Figure 1-1973 Master Plan



Though it falls under the Community Park classification based on size, facilities, and service area, Ossian Hall Park offers the opportunity to incorporate elements of an urban park in response to the site's surrounding context. In the park system, urban parks are intended to provide visual enhancement, open space, and pedestrian-oriented amenities including urban-style plazas and trails oriented to pedestrian and/or bicycle use by workers and local residents. These urban parks can offer spaces for informal activities and programmed events during lunch hours and after-work to foster interaction between users and provide leisure opportunities.

III. EXISTING FACILITIES

A. Listing of Existing Facilities

The following facilities currently exist at Ossian Hall Park:

- Parking (20 spaces)
- 2 -60'/65' Diamond Fields (lighted, irrigated)
- Multi-use court (lighted)
- 2-Tennis courts (lighted)
- Playground/tot-lot
- Paved trails

IV. EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

A. Natural Resources

The forest at Ossian Hall is mostly at the end of the primary regeneration phase. This means that the dominant tree species are common pioneer plants. At this site, the majority of the trees are Tulip Poplar, *Liriodendron tulipifera*. This is a fast growing deciduous tree that is unlikely to maintain dominance on the ridgetop and poor soils of Ossian Hall. While the trees here are relatively large compared with many woodlots in the county, the species are generally low in habitat value with few wildlife species able to use the seeds for food. The understory includes significant numbers of American Holly, *Ilex opaca*, which is likely to prosper in the poor soils and limited moisture available. White oak (*Quercus alba*), Chestnut oak (*Quercus prinus*), Mockernut hickory (*Carya tomentosa*) and Pignut hickory (*Carya glabra*) could be expected as dominant species in the future if the park is managed for natural resources. The fruit of these species are shade tolerant and will sprout under the existing Tulip tree canopy. If over the next 75 to 150 years these trees are protected from clearing, overbrowsing by wildlife, and invasive plants, they will become the dominant trees in the park.

At this time the extensive presence of exotic invasive species such as English ivy (*Hedera helix*), shrub honeysuckle (*Lonicera tartarica* or *mackii*), and Wintercreeper (*Euonymus fortunei*) significantly impair the habitat value of the forest. If not controlled these species will come to dominant the understory, and prevent the evolution of the forest into an area with value as wildlife habitat.

However, even if this site matures as a forest with diverse plant species it will still have limited value as wildlife habitat. The isolated nature of this park within relatively high-density suburbs creates the situation where birds and rodents will probably be the only wildlife able to sustain populations over the long term. Further, due to the high edge to forest interior ratio within the park it will only be the more common species of birds that will successfully breed.

1. Topography

The highest point in the park is at approximately the location of the existing playground, sloping south down to the parking lot and north to the northwest corner of the site. In the southern most third of the site, slopes are generally below 5 percent, though slopes increase in the remainder of the site. (See Slope Analysis Map, figure 2).

2. Soils

Soil information is not mapped for the site.

3. Green Infrastructure Statement

The Fairfax County Park Authority has developed a modeling tool to identify significant natural and cultural resources in the County. Using the County's geographic information system (GIS), the FCPA has produced a countywide "Green Infrastructure" model and resultant map based on a weighted analysis of significant environmental and historic features. The weighted analysis produces a general resource value that recognizes the combination in value of various resources within the three general categories of environmental, cultural, and open space areas, but does not rank importance between categories. The model is limited by the extent, accuracy, and resolution of the source data used. Several important resources, such as rare, threatened, and endangered species and Environmental Quality Corridors (EQCs) are not considered in the analysis due to the unavailability or incompatibility of the data.

The Green Infrastructure Map indicates that Wakefield Park and a series of small streams to the northwest has the most resource value in the vicinity of Ossian Hall Park, classified as a medium resource value based on the model's weighted analysis. The map shows a minimal resource value for the Ossian Hall Park site and the majority of the immediate surrounding area, though an isolated area ranked as a low resource value is shown to the west of the park. Though the site does not rank high within the Green Infrastructure Model, the site is important to the local community as one of the few remaining forested properties in the area. (See Green Infrastructure Map, figure 3).

B. Site History & Cultural Resources

The Ossian Hall Park site was originally the southeast corner of a 250-acre parcel purchased by Henry Warren Sommers in 1856 (FX Deeds, Y3:61). After Sommers died in 1867, his estate was divided among his widow and children. A plat detailing that division shows that Lot Number 1, located at the eastern end of the property, was allotted to his married daughter, Mary F. Windsbecker. This lot contained 55 acres, with the rear or southern third to one half being designated as "Woods and Pines" (FX Deeds, H4:222). The southern 20 acres of the Windsbecker land is where Ossian Hall Park is located today. Mary Windsbecker, and her husband Julius, owned the property until 1891. At that time, the 30-acre northern half of the property fronting on Little River Turnpike was sold to their immediate neighbor and Mary's brother, George Sommers. However, he sold the lot back to them on the same day. Both deeds are filed at the same time (FX Deeds, K5:322 & 324). The Windsbeckers sold the entire 55 acres in 1904 (FX Deeds, P6:619), and the

Figure 2-Slope Analysis

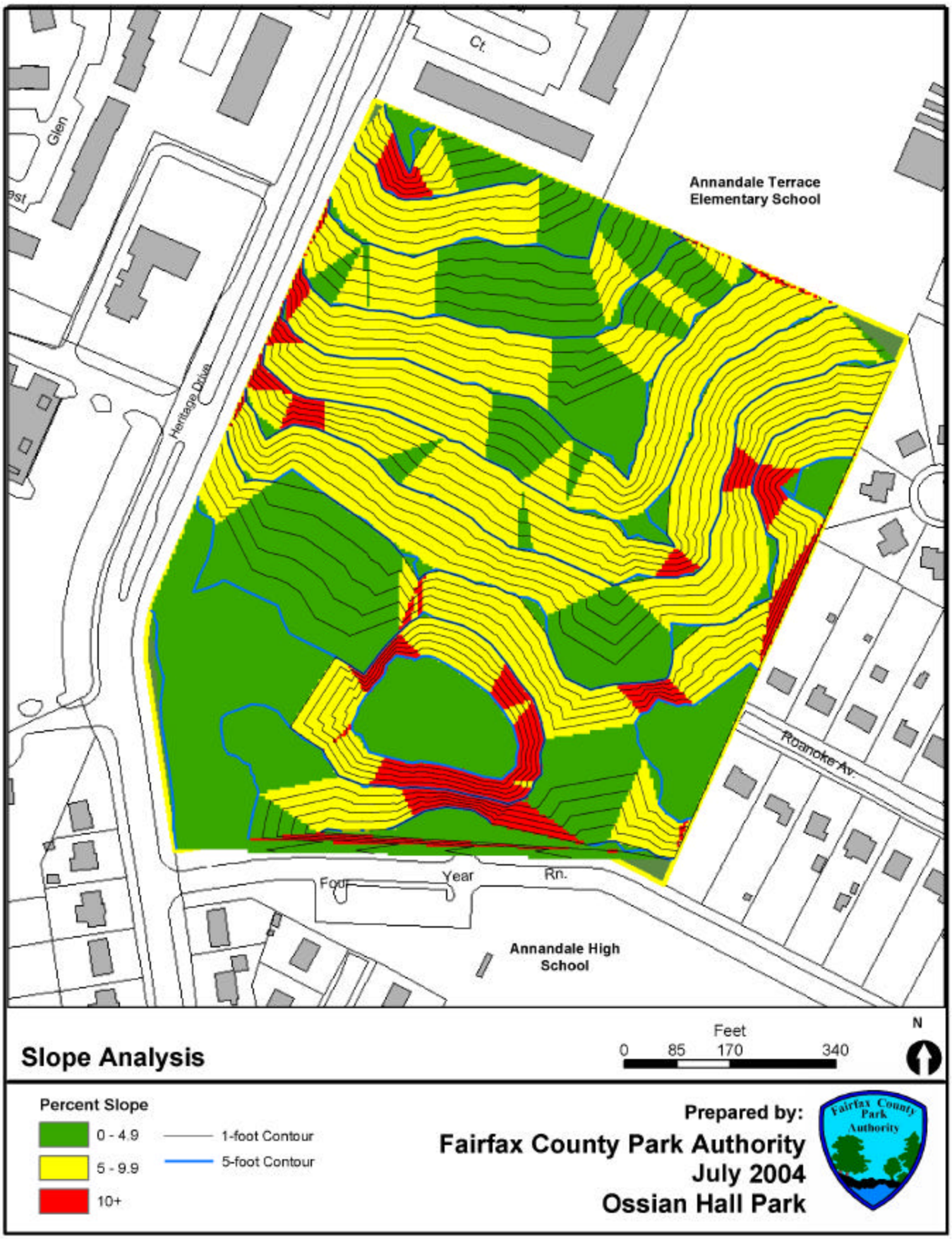
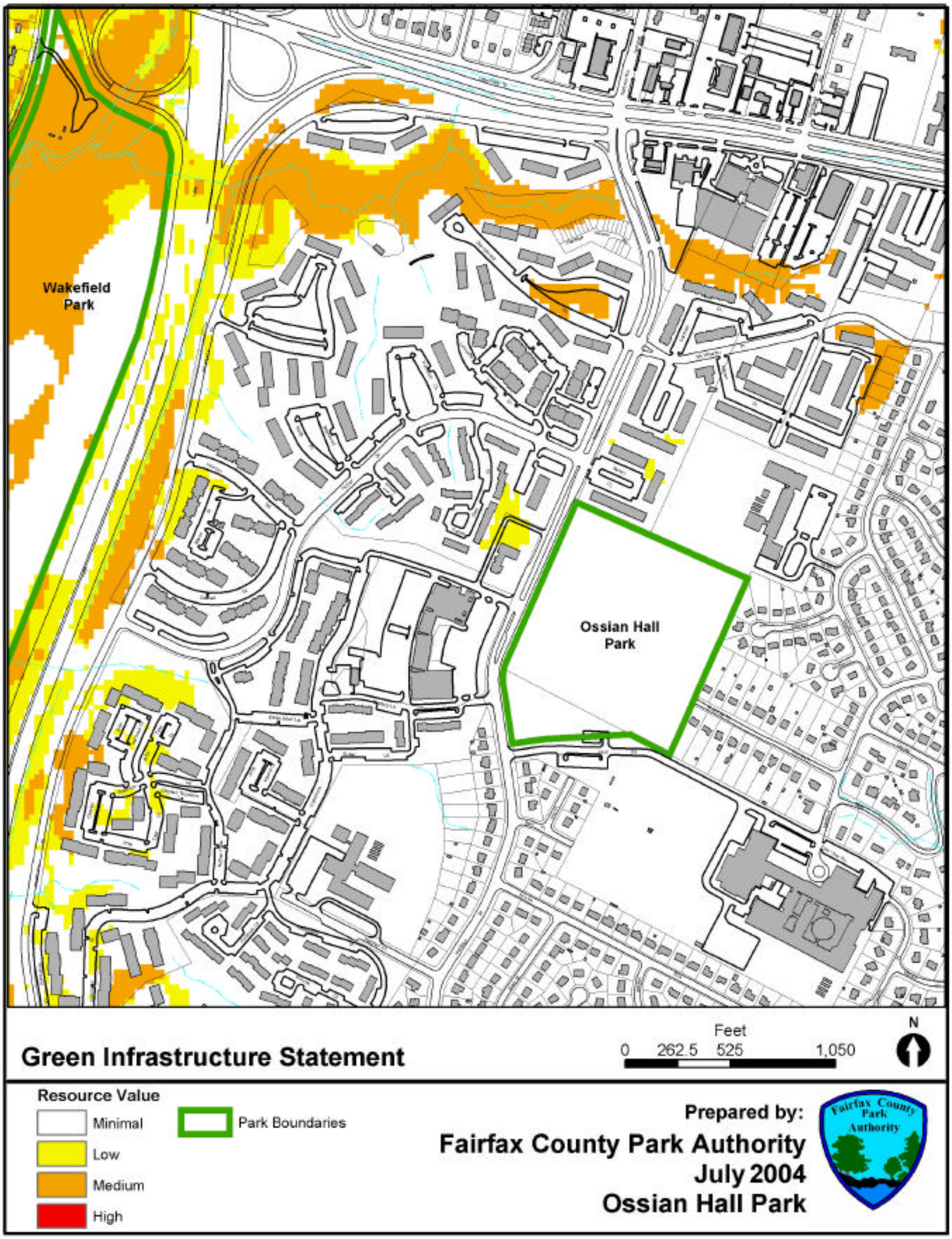


Figure 3-Green Infrastructure Map



property again changed hands in 1906 and 1913 (FX Deeds, U6:458, R7:341).
The Hopkins 1879 and 1894 maps both show the Windsbecker property. On the 1879 map, the entrance road is clearly marked, crossing a branch of Accotink Creek, with the house just south of the branch. Comparing this map to the 1867 plat of Windsbecker's property, it seems probable that the site of the house was north of Ossian Hall Park, closer to Little River Turnpike.

Tax records from 1876 to 1891 show a building value for Windsbecker of $150 to $200. In 1904, Windsbecker and his wife were taxed separately for 30 and 25 acres. The 30-acre parcel is most likely the one fronting on Little River Turnpike, which had a building value of $210. The 25-acre parcel, located at the rear of the property and containing the present Ossian Hall Park, had a building value of $0. The house known as Ossian Hall, built in the 1780s, was located approximately ¾ mile south of Ossian Hall Park, on Regina Drive. Ossian Hall, empty and vandalized, was burned by the Annandale Fire Department in 1959. A family cemetery, located near the house site at 7817 Royston Street, is identified as the Haislip family cemetery (#117 on the Cemeteries Map of Fairfax County). This cemetery is also ¾ mile south of Ossian Hall Park.

The Park Authority first acquired the smaller 2.5 acre parcel in 1962 from the McGregor Carbon Forms Company. In 1963, the Park Authority purchased the 20.25 acre parcel from a private citizen.

1. Park Survey

A pedestrian walkover of the park revealed no above ground remains of outbuildings from Ossian Hall or period artifacts. No other above ground cultural resources of any type were noted and there were no indications of Native American sites. A pedestrian walkover is a low-level reconnaissance and cultural resources may exist buried underground. Further archaeological testing is recommended if planned development is proposed.

C. Access

Vehicular access to the park is off Four Year Run, approximately 480-feet from the intersection with Heritage Drive. A small, paved parking lot with approximately 20 spaces is located at the entrance. A portion of these spaces are on school property and used by students, faculty, and employees of Annandale High School during school hours. In addition, there are three pedestrian entrances—one to the east at the end of Roanoke Avenue, another to the west off Heritage Drive near the diamond fields, and a third at the northwest corner of the park off Heritage Drive.

D. Utilities

Public sanitary sewer lines run along Roanoke Avenue to the east and to the southwest tip of the site along Heritage Drive. Existing water main lines are located along Four Year Run and Roanoke Avenue. From the main line at Four Year Run, a 2-inch water line extension

supplies water to the irrigation system at the diamond fields. An additional water extension will be required for irrigation at the proposed rectangular field. Overhead electrical lines along Heritage Drive and Four Year Run supply power to the site. Four catch basins to the stormwater system are located along the perimeter of the park with two found at the northwest corner of the site, one along Heritage Drive, and one along Four Year Run to the west of the existing parking lot.

E. Surrounding Facilities

See Figure 4-Public Facilities within Service Area Map and Figure 5-List of Public Facilities within Service Area

V. NEEDS ASSESSMENT STATEMENT

Need for park and recreation facilities is determined through long range planning efforts. The Park Authority tracks inventory of facilities and land, looks at industry trends, surveys County citizen recreation demand, and compares itself with peer jurisdictions to determine reasonable need. The Needs Assessment analyses were completed in 1993 and 1996. The most recent report was completed in 2004.

The findings of the 2004 report indicate a countywide shortage of most types of athletic fields with the most notable deficiency of 117 rectangular fields, projected to grow to 177 by the year 2013. An increase in the number of trails is recommended as trail use has the highest participation rate among County residents, while a need for larger picnic shelter areas for group use was also determined. Additionally, skate parks and multi-purpose facilities are necessary to satisfy the youth age segments that most often use these types of facilities. The needs assessment findings indicate that the number one unmet need in the County is skate parks. This is consistent with the fact that only one small facility exists in the City of Fairfax and one countywide skate facility at Wakefield Park. The Park Authority has established the goal of contributing 9 neighborhood-scale skate facilities over the next 10 years.

V. CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

A. Recommendations on Conceptual Development Plan

An Ossian Hall Task Force was established in June 2003 composed of Ossian Hall park users, local residents, and citizens associated with Annandale High School to provide recommendations to the Park Authority for any revisions or updates to the existing master plan. The input from the task force guided the development of the Conceptual Development Plan (CDP), which has two primary purposes. First, it describes the elimination of facilities previously planned, though no longer appropriate or needed in the park. Second, the CDP contains descriptions of the concept plan elements, design concerns, and a plan that illustrates the general location of the recommended facilities. (See Conceptual Development Plan, figure 6).

Figure 4-Public Facilities within Service Area

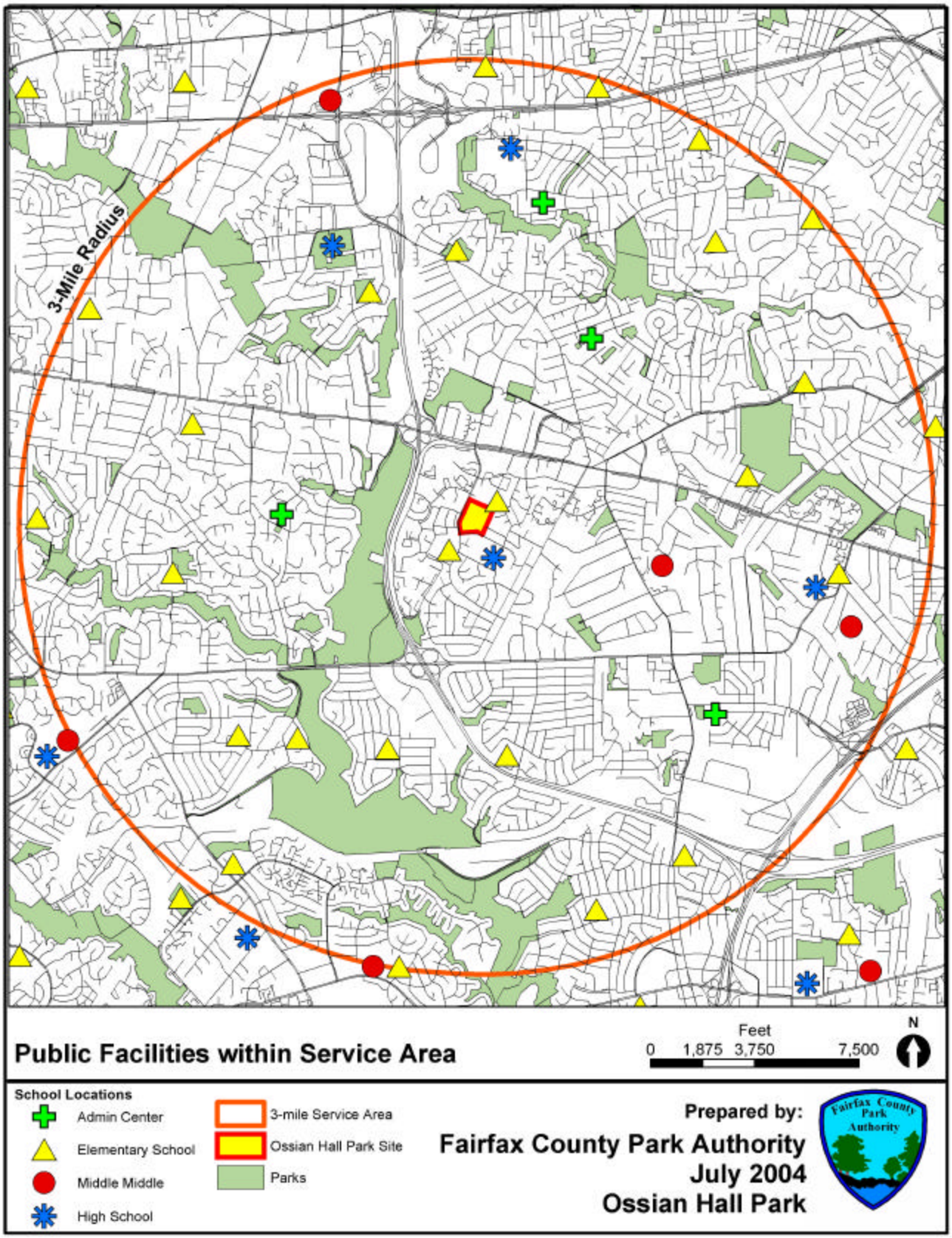


Figure 5-List of Public Facilities within Service Area

FACILITY / PARK SITES	ACCOTINK STREAM VALLEY	AMERICANA	ANNANDALE	ASHFORD EAST	BACKLICK	BACKLICK STREAM VALLEY	BARCROFT KNOLLS	BELVEDERE	BROOKFIELD	BROYHILL	BROYHILL CREST	CAMELOT SCHOOL SITE	CANTERBURY WOODS	CARDINAL FOREST	CARRLEIGH PARKWAY	DEERLICK	EAKIN COMMUNITY	EDSALL	FAIRFAX HILLS	FITZHUGH	FLAG RUN	GREEN SPRING GARDENS	HOLMES RUN STREAM VALLEY	HOWERY FIELD	INDIAN RUN STREAM VALLEY	KENDALE WOODS	KINGS PARK	LAKE ACCOTINK	LARCHMONT	LEEWOOD	LONG BRANCH FALLS
Lit Rectangular																															
Unlit Rectangular										●					●										●			●			
Lit 60'/65' Diamond																								●							
Unlit 60'/65' Diamond			●	●						●		●			●			●										●			
Lit 90' Diamond																															
Unlit 90' Diamond																															
Lit Tennis Courts				●		●																					●				
Unlit Tennis Courts																●	●									●					
Lit Basketball Courts				●																											
Unlit Basketball Courts						●			●					●						●			●			●	●	●			
Lit Multi-Use Courts																															
Unlit Multi-Use Courts																	●														
Volleyball																	●											●			
Golf																															
Garden Plots																	●														
Tot-Lot/Playground														●			●	●		●			●			●		●			
Picnic														●			●	●					●			●		●			
Trails		●						●	●		●	●		●	●	●	●			●		●	●	●	●	●		●		●	

Figure 5-List of Public Facilities within Service Area

FACILITY	PARK SITES (Con't)	LONG BRANCH STREAM VALLEY	LURIA	MANASSAS GAP RAILROAD	MASON DISTRICT	MASONVILLE	NORTH SPRINGFIELD	OAK HILL	PARKLAWN	PINE RIDGE	PINECREST GOLF COURSE	POE TERRACE	PROVIDENCE	RED FOX FOREST	ROUNDTREE	RUTHERFORD	SLEEPY HOLLOW	TURKEYCOCK RUN STREAM VALLEY	VALLEY CREST	WAKEFIELD	THE WAKEFIELD CHAPEL	WAKEFIELD CHAPEL	WILBURDALE	WILLOW WOODS	WOODBURN SCHOOL SITE		SCHOOL SITES	ANNANDALE HS	ANNANDALE TERRACE ES	BEECH TREE ES	BELEVEDERE ES
Lit Rectangular					●															●									●		
Unlit Rectangular					●					●					●															●	●
Lit 60'/65' Diamond					●															●											
Unlit 60'/65' Diamond			●						●	●					●	●							●						●		●
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Golf											●																				
Garden Plots										●	●									●											
Tot-Lot/Playground			●		●				●						●	●				●			●						●	●	●
Picnic			●		●	●									●	●				●			●								
Trails		●	●	●	●			●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●										

Figure 5-List of Public Facilities within Service Area

FACILITY	SCHOOL SITES (Con't)	BRADDOCK ES	CAMELOT ES	CANTEBURY WOODS ES	CARDINAL FOREST ES	CHAPEL SQUARE AC	COLUMBIA ES	CRESTWOOD ES	FALLS CHURCH HS	GRAHAM ROAD ES	HOLMES MS	IRVING MS	JACKSON MS	JEFFERSON SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY	KINGS GLEN ES	KINGS PARK ES	LACEY CENTER AC	LITTLE RUN ES	LYNBROOK ES	MANTUA ES	NORTH SPRINGFIELD ES	PINE RIDGE HS	PINE SPRING ES	POE MS	RAVENSWORTH ES	WAKEFIELD FOREST ES	WESTLAWN ES	WEYANOKE ES	WOODBURN ES
Lit Rectangular																					●								
Unlit Rectangular		●			●	●	●	●			●	●			●	●	●	●	●	●			●	●	●		●	●	●
Lit 60'/65' Diamond																													
Unlit 60'/65' Diamond		●		●	●							●			●		●	●	●	●			●	●		●			
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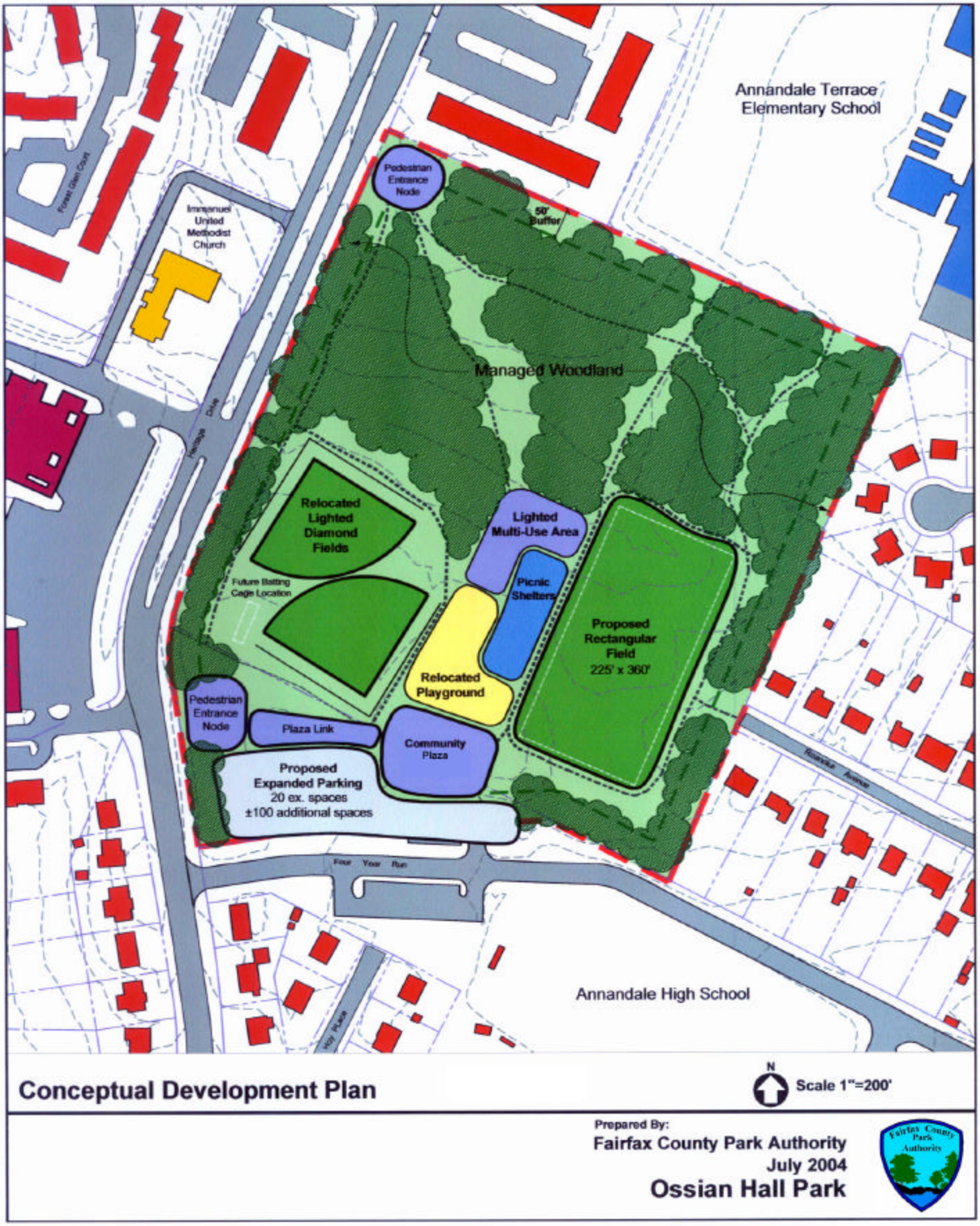
Picnic																													
Trails																													

Figure 6-Conceptual Development Plan



B. Elimination of Existing Facilities

It is recommended that the tennis courts be removed from the site, as public access to tennis courts is available across the street at Annandale High School.

C. Relocation of Previously Approved Master Plan Elements or Existing Facilities

1. Rectangular Field

In the previous master plan, a multi-use rectangular field was approved along Heritage Drive with two diamond overlay fields. A new irrigated rectangular field is proposed in the southwest corner of the site that can be used for soccer, football, lacrosse, field hockey, or other organized team sports. The field is not planned to be lighted. Trail connections should be made from the field to the parking lot, adjacent schools, surrounding residential areas, and the existing trail system.

2. Diamond Fields

If the opportunity arises in the future to reconstruct the diamond fields, it should be pursued to eliminate the overlap condition existing with the current field configuration. The relocated fields should be lighted and irrigated. The lighting schedule should be in accordance with current Park Authority standards for Level 1 facilities. Construction should minimize the removal of trees and grading to the extent practicable. Relocating the fields is not recommended in the near future as they are in excellent condition and have had recent capital improvements. New development at the park should be located to accommodate the field arrangement as indicated on the CDP.

3. Multi-Use Court

One lighted basketball court is located in southwest portion of the site. The revised plan shows these facilities relocated to the center of the park within the multi-use area, adjacent to the proposed urban plaza and playground. The court should be independently lighted on the same schedule as the diamond fields and out of season, throughout the year, on a reduced schedule.

4. Playground

The CDP proposes relocating the existing playground to the east to accommodate the entry plaza. The central location of the playground is in close proximity to the plaza, picnic shelter, and athletic fields so children may be easily monitored. The equipment and events should encourage the development of physical, social, and cognitive skills by offering a variety of surfaces, textures, colors, and changes in level. Permanent resilient surfacing should be installed to insure safety and accessibility for all users.

D. Description of New Plan Elements

1. Urban Core

The proposed central urban core is intended to develop a new identity for the park. From the corner of Heritage Drive and Four Year Run extending into the center of the site, the space consists of a plaza, multi-use area, picnic shelters, and playground. Clustering these uses in between the recreation fields offers spectators the opportunity to engage in the park, while remaining in close proximity to the fields. Envisioned to be open and visible from the street, the activity within the urban core is intended to draw users into the park. While the Park Authority is committed to providing facilities accessible to all populations, an extraordinary effort should be made to locate, design, and develop the urban core to meet and exceed the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

a) Plazas

A plaza area in the southwest corner of the site is intended to function as the primary gathering space for the site consisting of a pedestrian entrance node, a plaza link, and a community plaza. A small-scale entrance node serves as the primary pedestrian entrance to the south, also improving the park's visibility along Heritage Drive. A plaza link connects the entrance node to the performance area, while also providing seating for park users. In the center of the park, a community plaza is proposed to accommodate small neighborhood events, such as musical performances. The plaza area should consist of a decorative hardscape with trash receptacles, benches, and/or seatwalls. Perennial planters and trees in containers or wells are envisioned to add texture, color, and seasonal interest. Potentially, a water feature or sculptural element could be incorporated into the plaza space. To promote safety, it is recommended that the plaza be independently lighted on the same schedule as the diamond fields and out of season, throughout the year, on a reduced schedule.

In addition, a smaller plaza is proposed for the northwest corner. This pedestrian entrance is envisioned to be a small-scale hardscape plaza with benches and planters to create a stronger, more welcoming presence on Heritage Drive. It will also offer an opportunity for midday passive use by neighboring office workers.

b) Picnic Shelter

A pavilion with hardscape paving, picnic tables, and trash receptacles is proposed to accommodate families and other social gatherings. The picnic shelter offers shade and weather protection in close proximity to the athletic facilities and playground. A restroom facility could be considered for this area if on-site staffing becomes available in the future.

c) Multi-Use Area

In between the athletic fields, a hardscape multi-use area is proposed. Given its proximity to dense residential areas, two elementary schools and the high school, it is an ideal location for developing facilities targeting youth users, many of whom are too young to drive or are without access to a vehicle. The area is currently intended for one or two basketball

courts, but should remain flexible to meet the changing interests and needs of youth users. For example, it could in the future be used for a small skate play area with moveable elements, or for organized after-school programs and activities.

2. Managed Woodland

The northern half of the site is to remain wooded with trails and benches throughout to accommodate passive recreation. Regular landscape maintenance is proposed for this portion of the park to thin the understory and create open pockets in the forest canopy and larger meadow-like areas in select locations, though the majority of trees will be preserved. These openings have the potential to be developed into small seating areas. The landscape maintenance is intended to create a variation of experience in the wooded portion of the park ranging from open, sunny areas to a more shaded, canopied forest setting.

An urban forest treatment plan should be completed to determine the best method to open up the forest to provide the intended experience, while maximizing ecological value. Such a plan is intended to improve the health of the remaining trees and result in the identification and removal of detrimental invasive species.

3. Trails

Multi-use, paved trails are proposed throughout the park. The park's internal trails should connect all activity centers and offer multiple routes through the natural areas. In addition, an 8' wide loop trail is planned along the perimeter of the park.

4. Parking

To accommodate additional use generate by the proposed rectangular field and multi-use area, it is recommended that 100 paved parking spaces be added to the north of the existing parking. The parking should be independently lighted, year-round. The existing entrance from Four Year Run should remain as the only vehicular access to the site.

5. Site Furnishings

Presently, the park lacks adequate basic site furnishings. Existing bike racks should be replaced and relocated near major entrances and by the rectangular and diamond fields. Adequate seating should be provided at the athletic facilities to accommodate spectators and within the natural area to offer places to rest and relax. In an effort to reduce litter, the number of trash receptacles should be increased throughout the site.

6. Buffering

A minimum 50-foot vegetative buffer will be provided along the periphery of the park to minimize impacts where adjacent to residential areas. The Park Authority typically tries to preserve any existing vegetation within this buffer zone and will supplement the existing plant material as may be needed or appropriate.

E. Design Concerns

1. Safety Considerations

With reports of gang activity occurring within the park, safety is the primary concern of local residents and park users in regards to Ossian Hall Park. Currently, visibility is poor within the site and the park does not have a strong or inviting presence along Heritage Drive or Four Year Run. The proposed master plan intends to improve and promote park safety by creating an active edge, clearly marking entrances and main routes, increasing visibility and sight distances, and developing informal surveillance in and around the park.

a) Active Edge

The pedestrian node to the north and the larger plaza area to the south are intended to open up the park to Heritage Drive. The activity within these spaces will be visible from the surrounding residential areas and from Heritage Road and Four Year Run, encouraging additional users to engage in park usage and allowing the site to have a more visible presence in the neighborhood.

b) Entrances and Primary Trail Routes

Park entrances should be clearly visible from inside and outside the park. It is recommended that the primary entrances and paths be lighted to create a safe environment for park use in the evening. Overgrown and dense vegetation should be cleared along the main paths and at the entrances to increase sight distances. Plantings along the primary path within the park should not exceed 3 feet in height within 4 feet of the path on either side to maintain visibility.

c) Visibility and Sight Distance

Visibility has proven to be a key component in developing a sense of security within a park by reducing the number of isolated areas where users feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Regular landscape maintenance is recommended to increase visual connectivity and extend sight lines into and through the wooded portion of the site. The specific clearing, enhancement, and on-going maintenance treatment of the wooded area will be described in the forest treatment plan.

d) Informal Surveillance

Sense of security is increased when people feel that others can see and/or hear them. By increasing the visibility into and within the park, users and adjacent residents can monitor the activity within the site. It is recommended that the Park Authority encourage and support the efforts of the Park Watch group already in place. The group has the potential to serve as an initial contact point for park users and residents reporting questionable activity in or around the site. Increasing the number of Park Watch signs at the site could encourage surveillance by park users.

2. Future Recommendations

a) Batting Cage

A batting cage could be accommodated at the diamond fields to provide additional practice facilities.

b) Outdoor Classroom

The previous master plan shows an outdoor classroom located in the northwest portion of the site, though never built. In the future, the facility could be located in proximity to Annandale Terrace Elementary School and developed in collaboration with the school.

3. Stormwater Management

It is anticipated that stormwater management can be accommodated in the southeast corner of the site, or possibly behind the proposed rectangular field in the central portion of the park.