

# Grist Mill Park

## Master Plan Revision



July 2002



**Approved 7/31/02**

Fairfax County Park Authority

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### Fairfax County Park Authority Grist Mill Park Master Plan Revision

July 2002

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The Fairfax County Park Authority acknowledges the special efforts of the Grist Mill Park Oversight Committee members in developing a recommendation for this plan.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Purpose and Plan Description

The purpose of this master plan revision is to update the master plan that was first approved in October 1976 (See Page 20). At that time the park was known as Bryant Farm Park. The name was later changed to Grist Mill Park. Since approval, this plan has served as a guide for all planning of the site. Many of the formerly proposed facilities remain un-built and the plan seems out of place within the community as it is today. This master plan revision is a means to update the plan by removing un-built elements and possibly add other new elements. 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.

In the late 1980's a Grist Mill Park Task Force was created under the auspices of Mount Vernon District Supervisor Gerry Hyland. The Task Force was composed of representatives of the park's neighboring communities. Significant effort was put forth by the Task Force that resulted in the "Recommendations for the Development of Grist Mill Community Park" dated May 19, 1989. This report was presented to Supervisor Hyland. However, the Park Authority never acted upon the master plan revisions recommended in the report. Subsequent to the completion of the report the Grist Mill Park Task Force was renamed the Grist Mill Park Oversight Committee whose purpose is to provide continued input on the development of Grist Mill Park.

In March 2001 staff met with the Grist Mill Park Oversight Committee to initiate this revision of the master plan of the park. The Oversight Committee has reviewed draft plans and feedback has been received. Changes

have been made to the plan to address the recommendations. The Oversight Committee and staff agree on the facilities and their locations in the park.

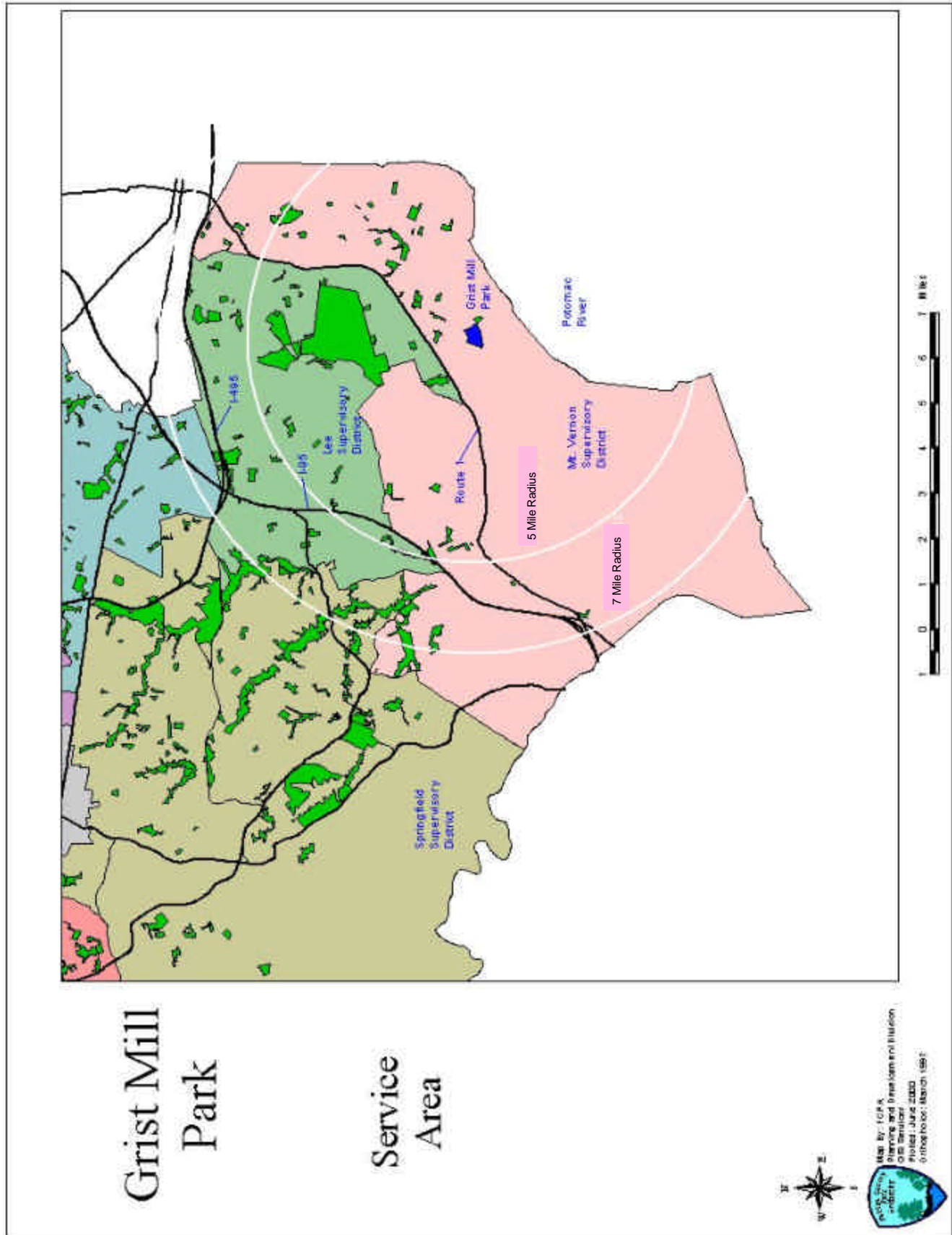
The plan will address new conceptual development, describing what facilities should be developed based on a variety of factors, how they fit into the established plan, where they will be constructed and how these facilities will be operated in conjunction with other areas of the park and existing uses.

### B. Property Description

Grist Mill Park is approximately 75 acres located in the Mount Vernon Supervisory District at 4710 Mount Vernon Highway in Alexandria, Virginia (See vicinity map on page 5). It is comprised of a variety of natural habitats in conjunction with intensively developed recreational facilities. These facilities include athletic fields, parking lot, playground, multi-use courts, garden plots, a community mulch distribution area and a barn with a milk house out building. These facilities presently occupy the western half of the park acreage.

Vehicular access to the park is from Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, Route 235, which fronts the entire southern boundary. Single-family residences bound the site on the east and west. To the north are a single-family residence and the Woodlawn Country Club.

The North Fork of Dogue Creek traverses the entire park flowing from south to north near the eastern boundary. The stream is centered in a one hundred year floodplain that is approximately 300 feet wide.



Grist Mill  
Park

Service  
Area

Potomac River  
Community and  
Development  
Authority  
Printed June 2020  
Digitized March 1997



### C. Park History

The Fairfax County Park Authority has the distinction of being the steward of the sole remaining building complex of George Washington's four outlying farms. Grist Mill Park, misnamed for George Washington's grist mill, located a short distance away, contains the ruins of the overseer's house, archaeological evidence of 5 slave dwellings and a portion of the original farm lane for the 500 plus acre Union Farm. Union Farm was a late addition to George Washington's land holdings, the acquisition of which wasn't completed until 1784.

The original landform of the farm located between Dogue Run Creek and Little Hunting Creek was granted to Robert Castleton and Henry Vincent in 1657. Nicholas Spencer and Colonel John Washington later secured it in 1674. This grant would later contain Mount Vernon and Union Farm with parts much later becoming Grist Mill Park. In 1690, Spencer's widow and Washington's son, Lawrence, divided the land into two tracts with a line perpendicular to the Potomac River.

The Spencer tract was sold several times between the ownership of Nicholas Spencer to Daniel French. When Daniel French died, his widow, Penelope, deeded the majority of what would become Union Farm to George Washington in 1784. At the very south end of the farm lane George Washington built a sizeable barn. Today, if it had remained standing, the barn would be located across Old Mill Road and Mt Vernon Memorial Highway in the backyards of 4 to 6 homes. Along the farm lane to the north, a short distance from the Washington barn, were located the 5 slave cabins. Across the farm road and slightly south of the cabins was the overseer's house.

Bushrod Washington, a nephew of George Washington, received the majority of the Five Farms after Martha Washington's death in 1802. The Union Farm lands were divided among his nephews Bushrod Corbin Washington, and George Corbin Washington, both absentee landowners, and another nephew, John Augustine Washington. At this point, the land that was later to become Grist Mill Park, had become divided between George C. Washington and Bushrod Corbin Washington. The parcels were partially reunited in 1860 when John Ballinger purchased the adjacent 125 acre parcel from David Walton. The angled two acre tract of the park was also purchased by Ballinger (under his wife's name, Rebecca) in 1885 from J. Kuehling and completed the rejoining of the land. This two acre tract abuts the present archaeological survey areas A and B on the northern boundary.

Ballinger died in 1900 and his wife sold the 213 + acres to Daniel D. Thompson in November 1900. After changing ownership several times, the property was purchased by the former United States Senator from Minnesota, Moses Edwin Clapp in 1917. Just a few months after he bought Union Farm, Clapp sold a right-of-way to the Washington, Alexandria, and Mount Vernon Railway Company. The line, built for trolleys, runs across the northern edge of the park and a small section can be seen today close to the boundary line with the golf course. Senator Clapp died in 1929 shortly after conveying his lands to his daughter, Elizabeth Clapp. The Mount Vernon Parkway completed by 1932 cut across the southeastern portion of Elizabeth Clapp's property. With her death in the 1930s, 64 acres of her land were conveyed to Anna B.

Wickes, who had a promissory note due her from Elizabeth Clapp. Wickes did not receive the Union Farm house complex, but she did receive the southern and eastern portions including the area where the current barn complex is located.

Wickes conveyed the 64+ acres to Margo Couzens in 1940 who later married J.C. Bryant. The Bryants planned to build a subdivision on their portion of Union Farm, and the plans were filed with the Fairfax County Tax Maps in the mid-1970s. The Fairfax County Park Authority purchased the Bryant farm in 1978 and the land became known as Grist Mill Park.

\*The history section is a synopsis of the manuscript prepared by Patrick O'Neill of Parsons E.S. Inc., 2001.

## II. PARK CLASSIFICATION

### A. District Park

Grist Mill Park falls under Fairfax County Park Authority classification 3.0, District Park, which provides diversified area-wide recreation services to several sectors of the County. District Parks are intended to support extended day use for both informal and organized activities and to protect and interpret identified natural and cultural resources. A District Park may be located anywhere in the County outside of Urban Centers, preferably with access by secondary or arterial roads. Access should be available by the Countywide Trail System to encourage pedestrian and bicycle trips; access by public transit is also highly desirable. On-site parking is required. District Parks are typically 50-200 acres in size. Depending on site characteristics, District Parks may combine large complexes of intensively developed facilities with extensive natural areas. The extent of the

development will depend on topography, environmental and culturally sensitive site features, and amount of developable area. Lighted facilities and extended hours of operation are expected. Development may include all Neighborhood and Community Park facilities but at a greater scale than those park types and may include athletic field complexes or a recreation building. Facilities typically included in Neighborhood and Community Parks include: picnic use, open play areas, court facilities, playgrounds, tot lots, trails, gardens/seating areas, activity/games areas, fitness courses, lighted or unlighted athletic fields, and garden plots.

## III. PARK PURPOSE & SIGNIFICANCE

### A. Park Purpose

Park purpose statements are intended to provide an umbrella for planning and decision making. If a proposed use conflicts with any one of the purposes listed, it will be considered an incompatible use. By establishing park purpose, future plans can remain flexible, as legislative requirements and visitor preference change.

The purpose of Grist Mill Park is to:

- preserve, protect and restore natural resources
- preserve and protect cultural resources
- provide active recreation for all county citizens

It may appear that some of these statements are in conflict with each other. The purpose statements are not intended to be mutually exclusive. They are intended to be integrated into a common purpose of protecting the existing resources and

# GRIST MILL PARK

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providing recreation.

## B. Park Significance

Grist Mill Park is important to the Fairfax County park system because it is the largest park in the southeastern portion of the County that can provide the opportunity for a wide variety of activities including a multi-field athletic complex.

## IV. EXISTING FACILITIES

### A. Listing of Existing Facilities

The following facilities currently exist at Grist Mill Park (see page 9):

- 2 - 60' Diamond Fields
- 1 - 90' Diamond Field
- 2 Rectangular Fields
- Parking
- 2 Multi-use Courts
- Playground
- Trail
- Barn
- 28 Garden Plots
- Mulch Distribution Area



## V. EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

### A. Natural Elements

**1. Topography** – A slope analysis of the park was completed that defined slopes of 0-

10%, 10-15% and over 15%. Nearly the entire park, 99%, has slopes of less than 10%. Those areas that exceeded 10% were dispersed around the site but primarily were along the drainage swale to the stormwater management pond, in the vicinity of the pond dam, and in the eastern half of the site.

**2. Soils** – A total of three soil types are found within Grist Mill Park. A brief summary of each soils type is included. (see page 10)

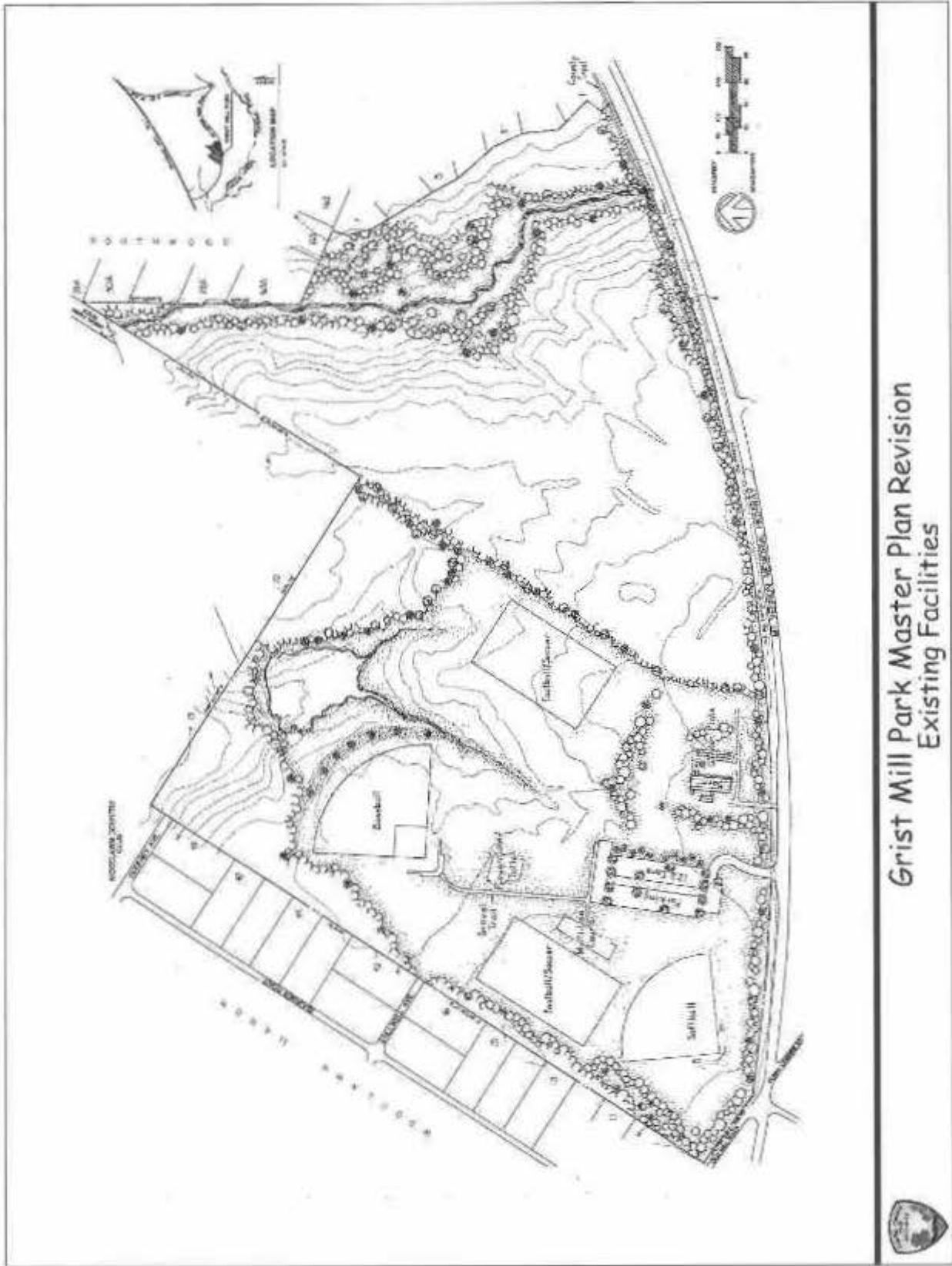
**a. Mixed Alluvial Loam**, soil type #1A (0-2% slopes)

This soil is derived from recent soil materials that have washed from the uplands and deposited along the small stream bottoms. It is subject to frequent flooding and needs drainage in places. The seasonal high water table varies from 0 to 2.5 feet below the surface. Depth to hard bedrock ranges from 3-30 feet. Hydric soils, which may include non-tidal wetlands, occur within the mapping unit.

**b. Bertie Silt Loam**, soil type #26AO

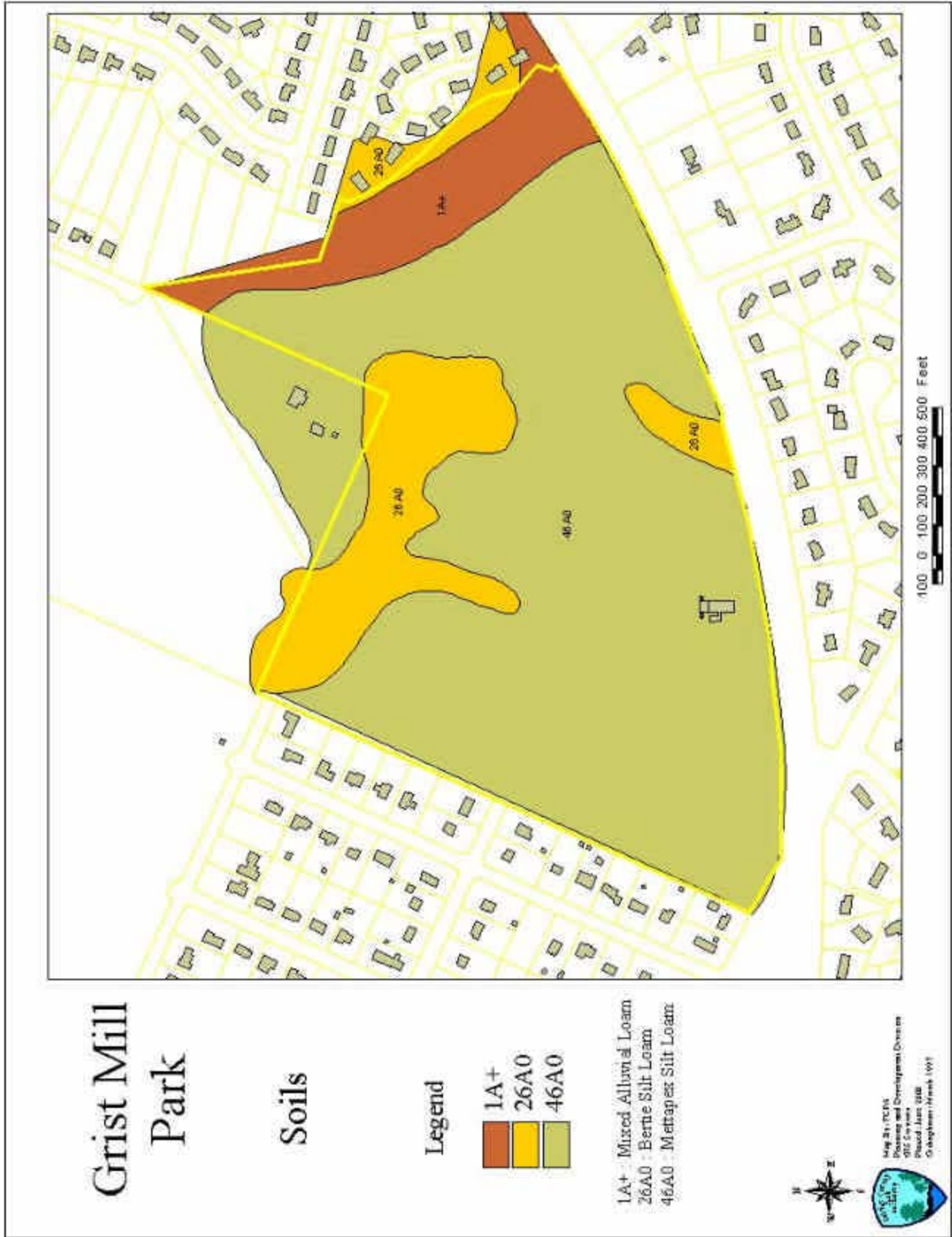
Bertie silt loam consists of predominately silty and clayey sediments on relatively flat landscapes in the coastal plain. Sandy strata may occur below 4 feet in some areas. The seasonally high water table is 1.5 to 2.5 feet below the surface. Depth to hard bedrock is greater than 50 feet. Permeability is moderately slow. Foundation support may be marginal to poor because of soft soil and seasonal saturation. Surface grading and subsurface drainage may be needed to eliminate wet yards.





Grist Mill Park Master Plan Revision  
Existing Facilities

# GRIST MILL PARK



**c. Mettapex Silt Loam**, soil type #46AO

This soil occurs on uplands in sand, silt and clay sediments of the lower coastal plain. Sandy clay loam, clay loam, and silty clay loam soils are typical. A dense layer occurs 2.5 to 3 feet below the surface. A perched seasonally high water table is found above the dense layer, one to two feet below the surface. Depth to hard bedrock is typically greater than 200 feet. Permeability is moderately slow. Foundation support may be marginal because of occasional soft soil and seasonal saturation. Surface grading and subsurface drainage are often necessary to eliminate wet yards.

### 3. Vegetation/Natural Resources

The forest stands in Grist Mill Park are of the Sweetgum - Willow Oak Community. The difference between the stands is the age of the trees. The youngest is east of the soccer field, older near the stream. More mature trees are along the northern property line. The oldest and largest trees are in the northeast end of the park west of the stream where Pin Oaks of 36" and 42" diameter are found.

In suburban or developing regions, the habitat value of any land cover increases with the size of uninterrupted area. That is, the larger the block, the more valuable it is to wildlife. The eastern half of the park is labeled as a Managed Conservation Area in the revised Master Plan. While there has been an incursion for the Countywide Trail along the frontage of Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, the majority of this section of forest remains contiguous, and therefore very valuable as habitat. However, even a forest system this large will suffer from a steady degradation and disorganization

or "entropy" and will need energy input in the form of active human management. This management is necessary to prevent the incursion of invasive exotic plants or damage from insects like Gypsy moth.

Most of the soils in this park are not very fertile and several of them also provide structural challenges to trees, as well as to buildings. The presence of these soils limits the tree species that are likely to establish themselves to some of the more hardy and slower growing. These include Willow Oaks, Sweet Gum, as well as Red Maple. The drier areas of the eastern half of the park contained Black Walnut, Black Cherry, Pin Oak, Hickory, White Ash, Persimmon, and Tulip Poplar. These upper canopy trees, in turn, moderate the soils and climate in ways that create niches for sets of understory trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants.

Dogwood, Red Cedar, Sassafras, and American Holly as well as small trees are typical of the understory trees.

A recent inventory found great variety in the herbaceous and shrub layers of the forest. Many of the more common small trees, wildflowers and shrubs were found. Blackhaw and Arrowwood Viburnum, Blackberry, Poison Ivy, Pokeweed, and Christmas Fern, Polygonum, Smartweed were found in various parts of the park. Japanese Honeysuckle, Multi-flora Rose, Japanese Stilt Grass and other invasive exotics are also present throughout the park but have not yet become a large problem in most of the forests.

The Natural Resource Inventory report



is available under separate cover.

### **B. Cultural Resources - Prehistoric**

Prehistoric Native American site 44FX1957 is located in the general area of the garden plots adjacent to the barn. It consists of a heavy scatter of quartz flakes and flake fragments exposed during horticulture activities. Although local informants have reported finding projectile points, none have been viewed nor is the material of the projectile points known. The site has been under historic cultivation for at least 200 years and there is a well defined, although eroded plow zone visible. Several small springs are located within 600 feet of the site. The cultural horizon is unknown as no diagnostic artifacts have been located.

### **C. Cultural Resources - Historic**

The most significant aspect of Grist Mill Park is its connection with George Washington's Union Farm in the form of the tangible remains of the overseer's house located in the north section of the park in "Study Area B" (see page 13). Constructed between 1793-1795 the site today is defined by overwhelming historic documentation, architectural remains in the form of bricks and brickbats, and domestic artifacts. The possible location of one of the slave cabins appears to reside on parkland with the other 4 located further north on private property. The core areas of Washington's other farms, Dogue Run, River, and Muddy Hole, have all been highly developed and the possibility of intact cultural deposits is unlikely. Further archaeological research in "Area B" is warranted to determine the integrity of the overseer's house and slave cabin in order to proceed with the placement of these sites on the National Register of Historic Places. North of, and running adjacent to, "Study Area B" are depressions associated with the

farm road that lead from the overseer's complex to George Washington's non-extant barn built in 1787. The farm road is part of overall landscape integrity of Union Mill farm and requires preservation. An additional farm road running along the eastern edge of the park is another landscape feature probably dating to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and should not be disturbed.

"Study Area A" is the ruins of a banked barn, well and possible other outbuildings. This complex is not part of Washington's Union Farm but dates to the John Billinger mid-19<sup>th</sup> century ownership. It represents the continuing development of the farm and should be protected, enhanced and interpreted.

Another interesting landscape feature is the trolley line built in 1893 that ran from the City of Alexandria to Mt. Vernon. At that time, John Ballinger owned the property. A very small section still exists in the northwest portion of the park and should be interpreted as an additional land form and an example of late 19<sup>th</sup> century transportation in Fairfax County.

Of all the cultural resources located on Grist Mill Park, the most apparent is the cinder block barn built by Senator Clapp or his daughter Elizabeth in the 1920s. In the 1970s and again in the late 1980s, the Park Authority investigated adaptive use for this prominent park historic structure. The Bryant Barn, as it later became known, was to be converted from a dairy barn into an athletic/ clubhouse, community center, or theater facility. At that time, it was considered by a professional structural engineer, under contract to the Park Authority, as being in generally good condition including the attached buildings



Grist Mill Park Master Plan Revision  
Study Areas A & B Plan

Prepared By:  
Fairfax County Park Authority  
Date: August 2003  
Scale: Not To Scale



## GRIST MILL PARK

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and the silos. By 1989 the building retained its structural integrity, with the exception of a failure of the foundation in the southeast corner, evidence of rot on the north gable siding and all doors and window areas were damaged beyond repair.

Today, further damage is apparent but exact existing conditions are unknown. Barns of any type, from any period, are rare in Fairfax County, and are considered significant structures in the County Heritage Resource Plan. Historic Structures notoriously decline when left unused. The periodic upkeep of this structure is important.

## VI. PARK OPERATIONS

### A. Overview

The size and diversity of Grist Mill Park allow it to serve many roles in the County's park system. It is host to extensive natural resource areas as well as intensively used recreation facilities. It generally contains facilities that cater to a local community market. As the largest park located centrally in the Mount Vernon District, it provides the opportunity to attract large numbers of users. The multi-purpose character of Grist Mill Park makes it a unique component in the Park Authority's leisure service delivery and open space preservation system.

### B. Use

Although Grist Mill is open year-round, the majority of use occurs in the nine-month season extending from March through November.

Athletic Fields. The parks' athletic fields currently service local adult softball, youth baseball and softball, and youth soccer groups from the Gunston and Mount Vernon areas during an eight-month period from

April through November. Grist Mill is the home of Gunston Micro-Soccer played by children ages 6 – 10. Demand is great in this age range for rectangular field space. As a result the small sized game fields are set up in nearly every available open flat area in the park. Because of limited parking, scheduling of the micro-soccer games has been adjusted to accommodate the vehicles on site.

Playground. The recently installed playground centrally located in the park is very popular. Children can be found using the equipment on every nice day throughout the year.

Mulch Distribution Area. The mulch distribution area just off the edge of the parking lot provides a valuable service to the community by providing free mulch to homeowners. This popular feature does create traffic circulation problems during spring and fall when ballgames are being played.

Barn. The barn, although not used for any purpose inside, is a beloved visual element that reminds us of the former use of this site, as well as much of the surrounding area.



Garden Plots. The 28 garden plots are in high demand. A waiting list with six names currently has contained as many as 15 names of citizens desiring to get a 25' X 30' plot to grow some vegetables or flowers.

## C. Funding

Annual operation and maintenance of Grist Mill Park is funded through the County's General Fund, which pays for general grounds maintenance. Capital improvements are typically funded by park bond referendums. Funding has been allocated to Grist Mill Park from the 1998 Park Bond.



## D. Operational Issues

Inadequate Entrance. During the spring and fall athletic seasons turning into and out of the park is a challenge due to the heavy traffic on Mount Vernon Memorial Highway. Future development in the park will require the entrance to be relocated to the east across from Forest Haven Drive. This will move the entrance further away from the atypical intersection of Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, Ferry Landing Road, and Old Mill Road.

Poor Soils. The high water table and poor internal drainage of the soils make the athletic fields unplayable for extended periods of time after wet weather. The low fertility of the soil makes maintaining turf on non-athletic field areas difficult. Erosion occurs easily on areas with inadequate stands of turf.

Inadequate Number of Athletic Fields. The micro-soccer use is occurring at any location

in the park that will accommodate the use. These areas should be formalized so proper turf management practices can be applied to provide high quality turf for the safety of the players.

Scheduling of the fields must be cognizant of the capacity of parking to avoid an overloaded, potentially hazardous situation.

Inadequate Parking. More parking is needed for the existing and planned uses of the park.

Poor Vehicular Circulation at the Mulch Distribution Area. The mulch distribution area is adjacent the parking lot and vehicles have access to all sides of the mulch pile. Vehicular circulation conflicts occur between those trying to get mulch and other park users during busy times. Containment measures are needed for the mulch and vehicular access needs to be controlled.

Barn Maintenance. The barn is not used for any purpose, however, it requires routine care and maintenance to ward off deterioration. The windows and doors must be secured to prevent unauthorized entry. The window glass has over the years been broken out. As a result the remaining glass has been removed to eliminate an attractive nuisance and eliminate a safety hazard. Metal bars have been installed to prevent entry. The negative to this solution is that the temperature and humidity affect the inside of the barn unabated. This also allows birds and bats to take up residence in the barn, which generates unhealthy piles of droppings.

Poor Trail System. Currently, few internal

trails enable patrons to move safely from one activity to another. No trails or walkways exist within the parking areas to ensure safe passage from the cars to any activity areas. The park is not connected to the adjacent neighborhoods by trails. Demand has been expressed for additional trails to include improved nature trails in the eastern part of the park.

Neighbors. The close proximity of existing neighbors particularly on the west needs to be considered when planning any changes to the park. The traffic impact of any new activities needs to be addressed as it concerns the neighbors fronting on Mount Vernon Memorial Highway.

## VII. CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (See Page 21)

### A. Oversight Committee Recommendations on Conceptual Development Plan

A Grist Mill Park Oversight Committee, made up of leaders of nearby homeowners associations, reconvened in October 2000 to provide recommendations to the Park Authority Board for any changes or updates to the current park master plan that was originally approved in October 1976. The purpose of the Conceptual Development Plan (CDP) is twofold. First, it describes elimination of facilities previously planned but not built that are no longer appropriate or needed in the park. Second, the CDP contains descriptions of the concept plan elements, design concerns and a plan that shows the general locations of recommended facilities.

#### 1. Elimination of Previously Master Planned Facilities

The following facilities are recommended for elimination from the previous master

plan for the park:

- Lighting of any Facilities
- 6 Tennis Courts
- Community Center Facility
- Recreation Lake
- Picnic Areas
- Bicycle Track
- Open Play Area
- Skateboard Track
- Lake

### 2. Description of Existing Plan Elements to be Retained on the Master Plan

#### a. Athletic Fields

A total of five athletic fields currently exist at the park. Three are configured as diamond fields and the remaining two fields are rectangular. Lighting had previously been approved for the three diamond fields but was not implemented. The Oversight Committee recommends that lighting be eliminated for all facilities because of the proximity of the neighboring residences.



Enlarging the existing rectangular field areas to provide small size fields adjacent to the existing large fields accommodates micro-soccer use. Area for two U6, 60' X 90', and four U8, 90' X 150', size fields is provided in the expanded rectangular areas. The

existing full size rectangular fields can be subdivided into smaller size fields. However, the users and game schedulers should be aware that the number of parking spaces provided are calculated for the full size fields being scheduled for games that require the large field. Placing multiple small fields on the full size fields will require extra parking that cannot be accommodated on site.

The two existing 60' diamonds should be improved to Level 2 standards with fenced 200' outfields. This size field can be used by youth baseball or fast pitch softball.

Regrading of the existing athletic fields is needed to ensure proper surface drainage. Subsurface drainage and irrigation are recommended for all athletic fields.

### **b. Parking**

The existing 126 space parking area should be expanded to 324 spaces to provide adequate parking for the master planned facilities. The additional spaces are shown to be located to the north and east of the existing parking. A separate 20 space parking area is provided for the Off-Leash Dog Area. Asphalt surface with concrete wheel stops is recommended.

### **c. Multi-Purpose Courts**

The Park Authority's 1995 Strategic Plan indicated that 8 additional multi-use courts were needed in the Mount Vernon District. However, it appears that at this site the courts are not getting excessive use. Therefore, no additional courts have been shown.

### **d. Tennis/Practice Tennis Courts**

The original master plan showed 8 tennis courts and a 2-sided practice wall. 2 courts and a 2-sided practice wall are recommended to serve the local population.

### **e. Restroom Building**

The original master plan showed a Restroom/Concession building. A restroom without concession is recommended to be situated centrally to the park's amenities and having convenient access for maintenance and easy observation for security. The restroom would be of standard masonry design used at other parks and



would have a wall-mounted drinking fountain.

### **f. Playground**

The existing playground at the park serves the community well. No changes are recommended.

### **g. Existing Barn**

The barn will be retained as a visual element with no proposed uses.

### **h. Historic/Nature Trail**

See the Resource Management Area below for a description of the trail. The Historic/Nature Trail surface

# GRIST MILL PARK

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material will be determined based upon site conditions when the trail route is selected. The trail around the north and west sides of the pond is not desired by the community and has been deleted from the plan.

## i. Trails

The 8' wide asphalt trail paralleling Mount Vernon Memorial Highway is a segment of the Countywide Trail Plan. This trail is incomplete and should



be extended to the western edge of the park. Trails connecting the parking and the park facilities should be constructed with asphalt or stone dust.

Additionally, connectors from the Countywide trail into the park and from Stillwell Avenue to the park are desired. The connection from Godfrey Avenue to the park shown on the original master plan has been deleted at the request of the community.

## 3. Description of New Plan Elements

### a. Relocated Park Entrance

The entrance will be relocated to the east, across from Forest Haven Drive. A bus stop that exists at this location provides access to the park for those who choose to



not drive. The two-lane paved entrance road will tie into the parking area on the north side. The existing entrance road should be considered for use as egress only during times of peak park use with the understanding that Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) must review and approve the arrangement prior to implementation.

The park entrance should be developed that would be functional as well as aesthetically pleasing. This can be accomplished through the use of trees, shrubs, groundcovers and possibly other landscape elements.

### b. Shelters

The park has few trees in the active area to provide shade and the facilities are widely separated. Three small (20' square) shelters to provide some shade and a few picnic tables near to a variety of facilities are recommended. These shelters are available for picnicking under both a first come, first served basis.

Large group picnic areas are not recommended because they usually include large shelters. A large shelter becomes a rental facility, which is inappropriate at this site.

### c. Mulch Distribution Area

Although a mulch distribution area exists in the park, it is not a feature on the original master plan. Because the existing facility is well used the mulch distribution area has been formalized and is planned to have a paved surface, walls to contain the mulch, and vegetative screening.



### **d. Garden Plots**

The existing garden plots are also not a feature on the original master plan. Gardening is popular and expansion of the existing 28 - 25' X 30' plots to 34 plots is recommended. These 6 new garden plots will wrap around the barn on the north side. A lane with room to pull off to the side should be provided around the garden plots to allow the gardeners easy access to their plot with their supplies. Water spigots should be provided at a couple of locations.

### **e. Resource Management Area (RMA) (formerly Managed Conservation Area)**

Human impact in this area will be kept to a minimum. Management of the natural and cultural resources will be allowed but degradation of this area shall be prohibited. Potential uses of the RMA shall include trails and trail support facilities, wildlife and habitat management, research, interpretation and education and short-term recreation.

The RMA at Grist Mill Park should provide an interpretive experience that will meet the needs of the local community and park visitors. This can be accomplished through self-guided trails, wayside exhibits and signage. Trail development within the RMA shall be coordinated with the Resource Management Division, the Area Maintenance Supervisor, and the trail coordinator.

### **f. Interior Park Landscaping**

Landscaping primarily with trees should be provided in the active area of the park for screening, shade, visual interest, and

to break up the vastness of the open area.

### **g. Off-Leash Dog Area**

In July 2000 the Park Authority accepted a recommendation to consider an Off-Leash Dog Area in each Supervisory District. A number of possible sites for Off-Leash Dog Areas and a site of first consideration were identified for each district. Grist Mill Park was the site to consider first in Mount Vernon District. Although the minimum size for dog areas is 10,000 square feet (SF) the current recommendation for a dog area is an area of about 1 acre to reduce the wear on the turf. The area shown on the revised Conceptual Development Plan is just under an acre. A 20 space parking area is provided adjacent to the dog area and is included in the parking computations earlier in the report.

## **B. Staff Project Team Recommendation**

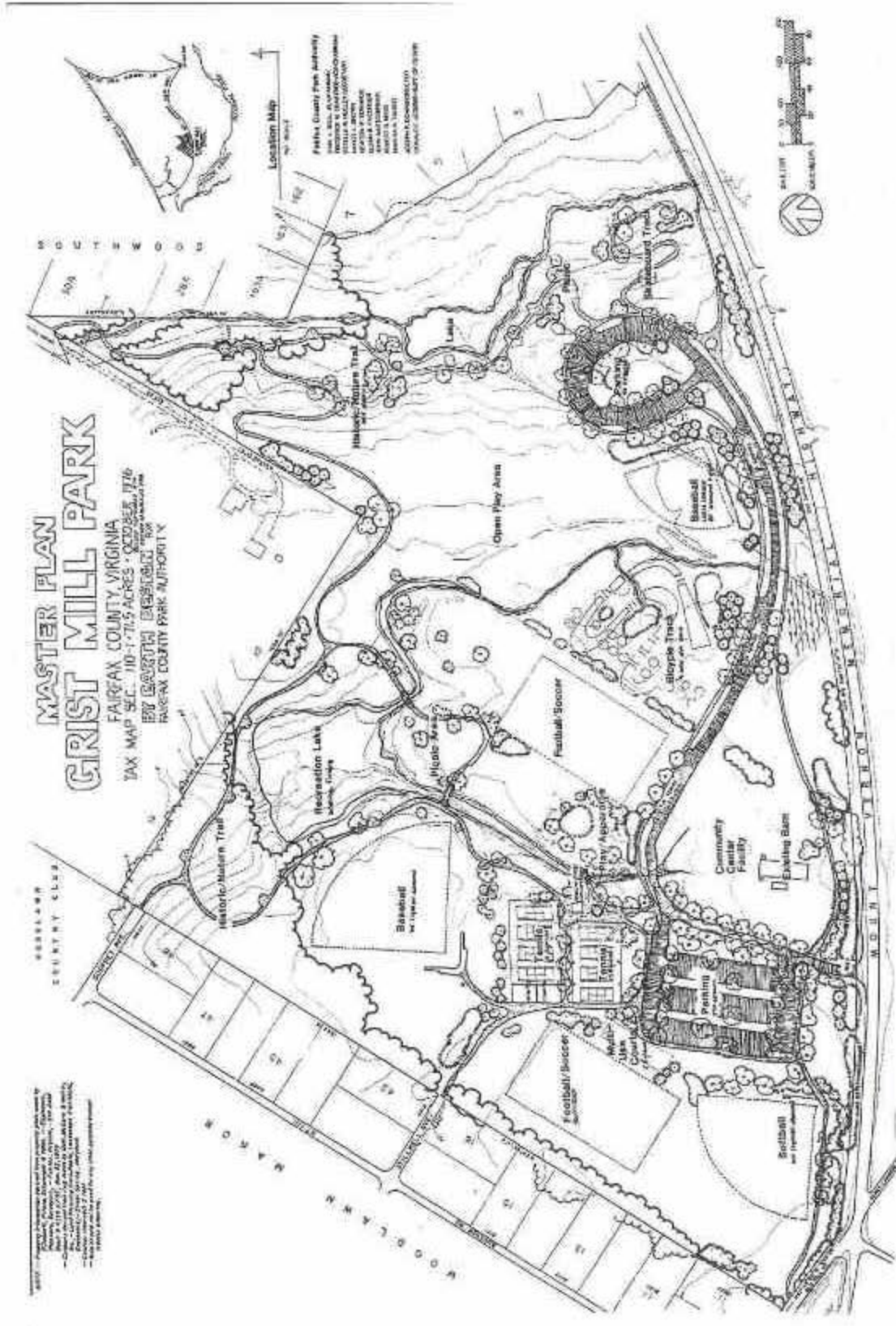
The staff project team and the Grist Mill Park Oversight Committee agree with the facilities proposed in the Conceptual Development Plan with the exception of the Off-Leash Dog Area. The Off-Leash Dog Area was considered a low priority facility and not compatible with the activities in the existing open grassy area of the park. Because the open area of the park is shown as fully developed, the dog area had to be located in the existing treed area of the park. The dog area is shown on the plan to elicit comments and determine the level of support. The development priority will be considered by the project scoping team in coordination with the Grist Mill Oversight Committee in the next phase of development.

## C. Design Concerns:

1. Because of the existence of both historic and prehistoric resources on the park, a systematic professional archaeological survey is underway. Development will need to be sensitive to the archaeological features identified and avoid them.
2. The lack of slope on the site and the poor internal drainage characteristics of the soil will make irrigation and subsurface drainage of the athletic fields a challenge.
3. Include striped crosswalks for pedestrians at the new entrance road to the park on Mount Vernon Memorial Highway to accommodate the bus stop on the south side of the road.
4. After design and construction of the new park entrance road, the existing entrance road should be considered for use as egress only during times of peak park use. Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) must review and approve the arrangement prior to implementation.

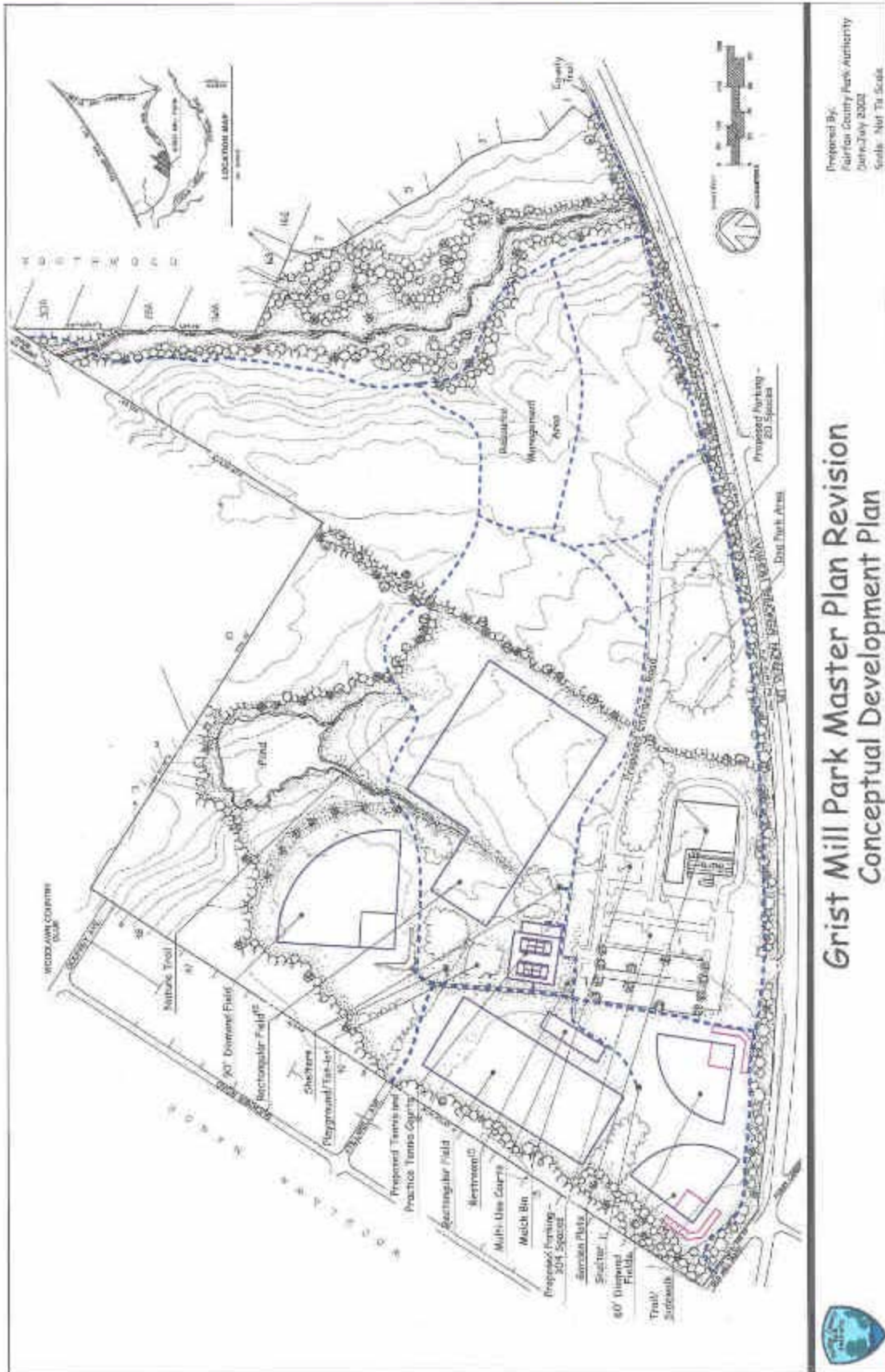


# GRIST MILL PARK





# GRIST MILL PARK



## Grist Mill Park Master Plan Revision Conceptual Development Plan

