



FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY
PROSA STRATEGY

DRAFT

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OVERVIEW



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Bolivian Concert at Ossian Hall Park.

OVERVIEW

Vibrant and inclusive parks and recreation systems make great communities. They improve community health, bolster our economy, and are incredible public spaces for residents to play, enjoy, learn, and recreate in. Parks and recreation are ever evolving. Today's best practices focus on improving the quality of life for everyone so that all residents have access to high quality outdoor spaces.

The Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Access (PROSA) Strategy is a data-driven approach that will help achieve equitable park access throughout the county. This parks and open space system strategy was developed through a multiyear planning process, building on Great Parks Great Communities Parks & Recreation System Master Plan, the Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2019-2023, One Fairfax, Fairfax Countywide Strategic Plan and public input. More specifically, the Park Authority's Strategic Plan guided the Park Authority to 1) develop and implement a sub-county area approach to county park planning and capital projects that considers resource protection, service level delivery, equity, recreation and community needs, and 2) develop an overall open space strategy to comprehensively look at open space, equitable access, connectivity of environmental corridors and cultural resource preservation.

The PROSA Strategy will provide a framework for equitable access to the Fairfax County park system.

Specifically, the PROSA Strategy will provide a countywide roadmap for improved park access, a balance of recreational experiences, bolster habitat connectivity, and prioritize recreation needs and projects with an equity lens to meet the diverse needs of Fairfax County residents. Aligned with the Park Authority's mission, vision, and values, the PROSA Strategy will:

- Improve 10-minute walk access to FCPA parks
- Enhance access to complete park experiences
- Enrich habitat connectivity between environmental corridors
- Analyze and prioritize recreation needs and projects with an equity lens

Furthermore, the PROSA Strategy is a data-driven approach to guide park investments so that all communities have access to a quality park, no matter where you live in Fairfax County. These broad strategies are intended to be a high-level approach to identify and prioritize areas for park investments and improvements. A deeper dive by park site will take place for site specific improvements as well as a context-sensitive analysis. The PROSA Strategy provides a path forward for improved walkable access to parks, access to a balance of recreational experiences, and habitat connectivity countywide, prioritizing projects and park investments with an equity lens.

FAIRFAX COUNTY

Fairfax County, located in Northern Virginia within the Washington D.C. metro area, has a diverse population of approximately 1.17 million people. More than 50% of the population identifies as Asian, two or more races, African American or another race, making it a majority-minority county. The population of Fairfax County is multicultural. In fact, 39.8% of residents speak a language other than English at home. The county is comprised of a mix of urban and suburban development, which contributes to the richness of its park system. Parks and open spaces play a crucial role in promoting the well-being of residents as well as natural and cultural resources, providing opportunities for outdoor recreation, social interaction, and a connection to nature. As the county continues to grow and evolve, it is essential to ensure that all residents have access to these valuable parks and open spaces.

FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY

On December 6, 1950, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors created the Fairfax County Park Authority. The Park Authority was authorized to make decisions concerning land acquisition, park development and operations in Fairfax County, Virginia. The Park Authority's mission is to enrich the quality of life for all members of the community through an enduring park system that provides a healthy environment, preserves natural and cultural heritage, offers inspiring recreational experiences, and promotes healthy lifestyles. As the largest landowner in the county, the Park Authority manages more than 23,500 acres of land spread across 420 park sites. The Park Authority offers a wide diversity of park amenities including over 350 playgrounds, 325 miles of trails, 400 courts, 260 fields, 8 golf courses, swimming pools, recreation centers, nature centers, lakefront parks, as well as natural, historical, and cultural sites and resources.

PARKS IN FAIRFAX COUNTY

Parks connect the Fairfax County community by facilitating a wide range of programmed events and by providing quality recreation experiences.



Park guide showing wildlife to visitors at Huntley Meadows Park.



Anglers at Lake Fairfax Park.



ACCESS TO PARKS



IN THIS CHAPTER

- » A 10-Minute Walk Vision
- » How do We Measure the 10 Minute Walk?
- » How do We Get There?



Bicycle and pedestrian users on the Washington and Old Dominion Trail.

A 10-MINUTE WALK VISION

Parks, open spaces, and trails offer innumerable benefits to Fairfax County residents and businesses. They improve neighborhood health, our local economy, and are community hubs so that everyone can enjoy the benefits of the outdoors. Parks promote regular exercise, reduce the risk of chronic health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and obesity, and improve mental health by mitigating the effects of stress, anxiety, and depression by offering a place for relaxation and mindfulness.

Having a park within a 10-minute ($\frac{1}{2}$ mile) walk from home encourages greater physical activity and fosters healthier lifestyles. Echoing nationwide best practices, walkable park access is an important factor in measuring how parks are serving the community. To provide equitable park access to everyone in Fairfax County, all residents should have safe access to a park within a 10-minute walk from their home. Walkable park access is a quality of life standard and best practice across the United States. The 10-minute walk campaign is a nationwide effort led by communities alike, championed by the Trust for Public Land, National Recreation and Park Association, and the Urban Land Institute, to promote and ensure that everyone is within a 10-minute walk to a park from their home. Several Park Authority and county plans identify as a strategic objective increasing walkable access to park entrances, facility entrances or trailheads so

that residents have no more than a 10-minute walk to nature and recreational experiences, including the Park Authority's Great Parks, Great Communities Parks and Recreation System Master Plan, the Park Authority's Strategic Plan, and the Fairfax Countywide Strategic Plan. Currently, approximately 52% of residents have access to a Park Authority park within a 10-minute walk from their home, while roughly 48% of residents do not as shown in Figure 1 on the following page. Safe, walkable access to parks improves healthy outcomes and lifestyles.

HOW DO WE MEASURE THE 10-MINUTE WALK?

The Park Authority has historically considered the proximity of residents to parkland as an important indicator of how well it is serving the community. Proximity looks at park access as a straight line, or "as the crow flies", from the edge of the park to a given distance (e.g., $\frac{1}{2}$ mile). The Needs Assessment analysis showed 90% of Fairfax County's population lives within $\frac{1}{2}$ mile proximity to parkland. However, today's technology allows us to consider the location of park entrances, as well as surrounding sidewalks, crosswalks, and the street network, to better account for physical walking distance to a park.

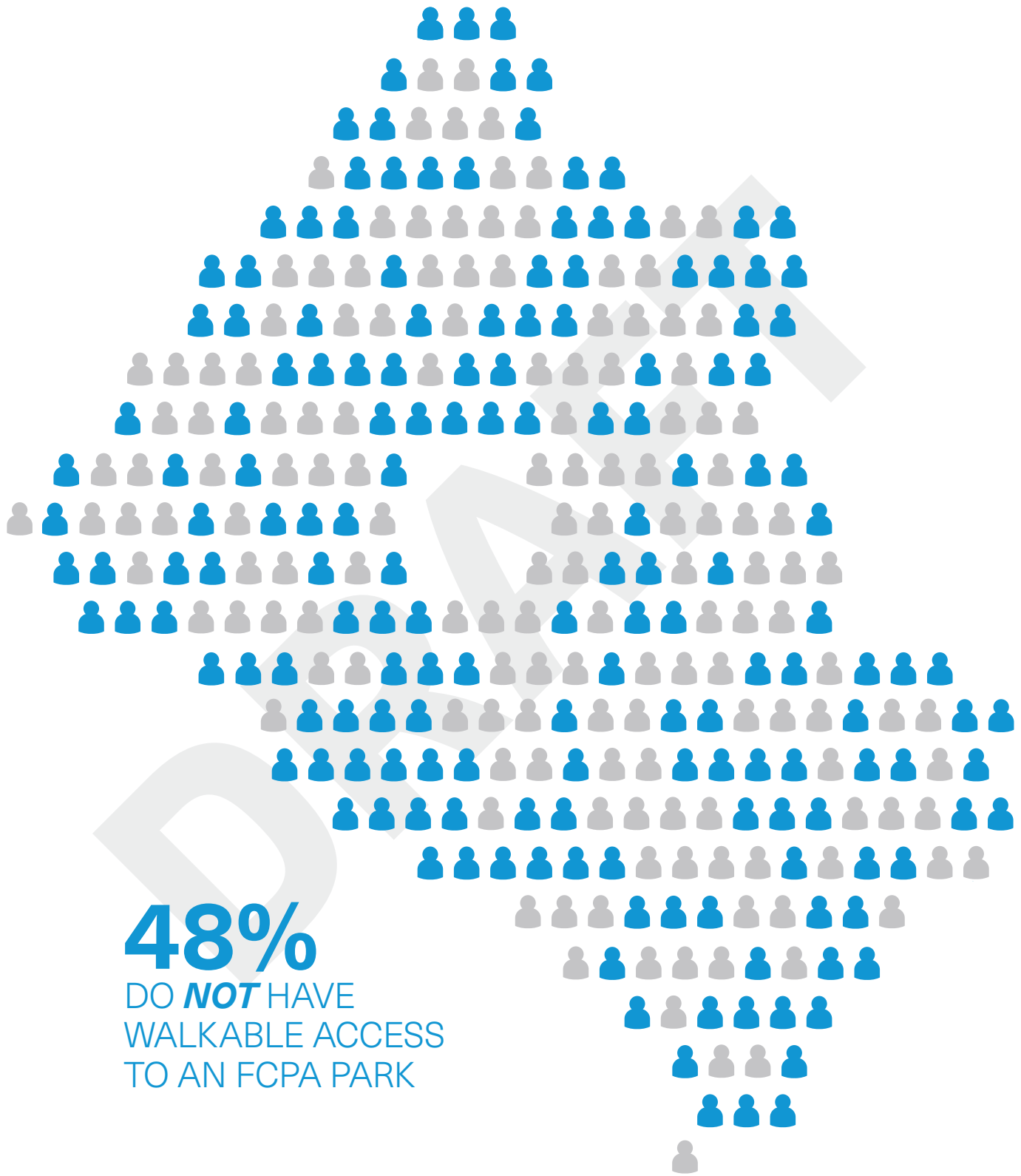


Figure 1: Walkable Park Access in Fairfax County



Hikers enjoying the trails at Burke Lake Park.



Hikers enjoying a walk around Burke Lake.

PARK ACCESS WITHOUT DRIVING

Residents within a 10-minute walk of a park can improve quality of life and experience other health benefits. This vision promotes safe and equitable routes for all Fairfax County residents between parks and their homes.

The Park Authority is measuring access to public park entrances. Park entrance data was developed to comprehensively understand the types of public access points at Park Authority parks. Public park entrances are marked by signage. Informal, community, and social trails are not included in this analysis as they are not authorized or maintained by the Park Authority. The park entrance data indicates whether entrances are for public access or maintenance access at each park.

Additionally, today's technology shows the existing street network, including sidewalks and crosswalks, to further understand whether walkable access is achievable. The street network data was obtained from Esri and walking speed is set to 3.1 miles per hour. Utilizing the public park entrance data, the area that can be reached within a half mile or 10-minute walking distance within the street network surrounding each park entrance is then mapped and the number of residents within the walking network is calculated. This approach provides a snapshot of the current state of walkable access to parks. Park access will be further evaluated at the site level to include other public park providers, such as school fields, privately-owned but publicly accessible parks, and other local, regional, state, and federal governments. While the Park Authority does not have park entrance data for non-Park Authority park sites, these other public park providers will be taken into account when analyzing gaps.

There are a variety of barriers that hinder access to parks. These barriers include large roadways and highways with limited or no pedestrian crossings, an absence of sidewalks and crosswalks, street networks with limited connection points, natural features like a stream or forested area, or a lack of a park or park entrance nearby. Identifying where gaps exist is the first step to providing 10-minute walk access to parks, followed by assessing the types of barriers that prevent such access. Opportunities to remove barriers and improve park access range from adding a trailhead or a new park entrance where feasible, to partnering with an agency to add a crosswalk, or acquiring parkland.



Park visitors at Green Spring Gardens Park.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

Access to parks within a 10-minute walk from home is an essential component of a healthy community and fosters active lifestyles. Improving 10-minute walk access to parks ensures that parks and green spaces are equitably located, serves all residents, and maximizes their positive impact on the overall quality of life for everyone. While understanding these patterns and distribution of parks is the first step to closing the walk gap, improving walk access to parks for all is a long-term goal and interim steps will be taken to get there incrementally. The following strategies are intended to prioritize areas where residents do not have access to a park within 10-minutes from their home:

- Enhance access to existing parks and trails by adding park entrances and trailheads where feasible.
- Infill/develop existing parkland with no park entrances or amenities.
- Collaborate with partners to remove barriers to safely access parks, such as adding sidewalks, crosswalks, stream crossings, or other infrastructure.
- Work hand-in-hand with the private sector to improve 10-minute walk access to privately-owned, publicly accessible park spaces.
- Focus on acquiring parkland in areas that do not have access to a park.



COMPLETE PARKS



IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Complete Parks Vision
- » What are Complete Parks?
- » How do We Get There?



Families enjoying the playground at Clemyjontri Park.



Basketball game at the park.

COMPLETE PARKS VISION

Access to a variety of recreational experiences is crucial for promoting healthy lifestyles. From socializing with friends, family, and others, to finding a serene spot to relax or playing a pick-up game, parks offer a multitude of recreation and activities for everyone to enjoy. However, park access is not only focused on getting to a park within a 10-minute walk from home, but it is also about the recreation experiences you can access and enjoy once you get there. Complete park access looks at the types of activities within parks to provide a balance of recreational experiences within a community. To do so, all residents should have access to a variety of recreational experiences within a 10-minute walk or 5-minute drive from their home.

WHAT ARE COMPLETE PARKS?

The goal of complete park access is to provide a balance of recreational experiences to all residents. Complete park access examines the following major types of recreation to ensure that residents have access to a variety of experiences: active recreation, passive or contemplative recreation, social recreation, and natural/cultural recreation, as shown on the opposite page.

DIVERSE PARK EXPERIENCES

Amenities inform the experience and types of recreation which occur in parks. Providing diverse amenities encourages park use by a broad range of residents. A complete park balances those recreational experiences to all community members.

TYPES OF RECREATION



Active recreation experiences encourage physical activity and play, such as using sport courts, fields, playgrounds, trails, and fitness equipment. These spaces promote regular exercise, contributing to improved physical and mental health, increased energy levels, and a reduction in the risk of chronic health conditions. Additionally, active recreation spaces

and amenities provide opportunities for skill development, team-building, and personal growth, fostering a sense of achievement and enjoyment. Examples of active recreation include playing sports or a pick-up game, running, walking, bicycling, swimming, or other outdoor or indoor exercise.



Passive or contemplative park recreation experiences offer a place for relaxation, reflection, and mindfulness. Park amenities for this type of recreation experience include outdoor seating areas, walking paths, trails, and gardens. These tranquil environments allow individuals to reduce stress and improve personal well-being. By providing opportunities for

introspection and relaxation, passive/contemplative recreation can enhance emotional resilience and promote a greater sense of inner peace and balance. Examples of passive/contemplate recreation include sitting on a bench or on the grass, meditation, gardening, reading a book, or using trails.



Social recreation, such as enjoying picnic areas, community gardening, or going to an event, facilitates community interactions and connections. These spaces encourage people to gather, engage in shared activities, and foster relationships with family, friends, neighbors, and

acquaintances. Social recreation can also contribute to intergenerational and cross-cultural experiences, promoting a more inclusive, vibrant, and resilient community. Examples of social gathering recreation include enjoying picnics and barbecuing, meeting with others, and attending a festival, event, concert, or outdoor movie.



Natural/cultural recreation experiences provide opportunities to connect with the outdoors and nature, as well as present-day and historical heritage, such as enjoying nature trails or wildlife habitats, or visiting historical and cultural landmarks. These experiences cultivate an appreciation of our natural environment and foster environmental stewardship, as well as educate and instill a sense of pride in our history and

culture. By preserving and showcasing these unique features, natural and cultural recreation experiences contribute to a greater understanding of local identity and a shared sense of place. Examples of natural/cultural recreation include enjoying nature, wildlife or bird watching, observing plants and animals, using trails, visiting cultural/historical or archeological sites or programs, learning about local history, or experiencing other values, customs, or practices.

Park Experience Score

COMPLETE PARK EXPERIENCE

Score the park based on the following amenities:



ACTIVE



CONTEMPLATIVE/
PASSIVE



SOCIAL



NATURAL

SCORING

0=No Amenity, 1= Secondary Experience, 2=Primary Experience, Less Than Full Size Amenity,
3=Primary Experience, Full Size Amenity

AMENITY

1. Sport Courts and Practice Fields
2. Rectangle Fields
3. Diamond Fields
4. Playgrounds and Play Features
5. Picnic Facilities
6. Trails
7. Dog Parks
8. Community Gardens
9. Ampitheatres
10. Historic Structures
11. Natural Resources
12. Outdoor Fitness and Recreation
13. Water Recreation

TOTAL

DIVIDED BY PARK ACREAGE



+



+



+



=

TOTAL SCORE

Figure 2: Park Experience Score (Opposite Page)

PROSA uses a metric, called the park experience score, to provide a high-level perspective of different recreational experiences at parks. Local, District, and Countywide parks will be assessed by the park experience score to ensure that all residents have access to a variety of recreational experiences within a 10-minute walk or 5-minute drive from their home, meaning that each park may not have all of these experiences but that residents will be able to access these experiences in one or more parks. While district and countywide parks with larger acreage and regional amenities should offer all four recreational experience types, local parks serving neighborhoods may have a couple of these recreation types. Consequently, not all parks will have each of the four types of recreational experiences due to a variety of factors such as park size, park classification, location of natural and cultural resources, and existing park and recreation facilities. A holistic look at other nearby public park providers will be taken into account during site analysis.

The park experience score will provide a snapshot of the balance of active, passive/contemplative, social, and natural/cultural recreation at park sites. As shown in Figure 2, the park experience score contains common park facilities and assesses them based on primary and secondary benefits by recreation type. These scores will be both a snapshot of core recreational experiences at each park and it will also be a living metric to make data-driven decisions for park needs and investment.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

Complete park access will provide a balance of recreational experiences so that everyone has access to high quality parks. Providing diverse opportunities for physical and passive activities, social engagement, and natural/cultural experiences will transform parks to become more inclusive for all residents. Additionally, access to a variety of recreational experiences is vital for fostering a healthy community and active lifestyles. The following strategies are intended to prioritize the development of complete parks:

PARK EXPERIENCE SCORE

A park experience score is a way to systematically assess each park and determine the most typical recreation experience at each park. The score can be used to ensure diverse recreation opportunities, make decisions on park needs, and inform strategic future investment.



Family hiking through a snowy forest.

- Infill/develop parks with limited recreational experiences to enhance access to other types of recreation.
- Create whole park development so that parks with no existing recreational experiences will provide access to a variety of activities.
- Collaborate with the public sector to provide a balance of active recreation, passive/contemplative recreation, social recreation, and natural/cultural recreation at privately-owned, publicly accessible park spaces.
- Acquire parkland based on size and community needs with specific recreation experiences in mind.



**ENRICHING
HABITAT
CONNECTIVITY**



IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Habitat Connectivity Vision
- » How do We Assess Habitat Connectivity?
- » How do We Get There?

HABITAT CONNECTIVITY VISION

Natural resources play an essential role in providing critical environmental and ecosystem services, as well as offering a high quality of life for residents in Fairfax County. As the county's largest landowner with over 23,000 acres across 420 parks, the Park Authority has a tremendous responsibility preserving Fairfax County's rich natural heritage. Preserving and maintaining high-quality natural areas and habitat connectivity is essential for maintaining biodiversity and ecological health. Habitat connectivity is the degree to which the landscape facilitates or impedes ecological processes and animal movement through the preservation of contiguous, undeveloped habitat. A functional network of connected habitats is essential to the continued existence of diverse species and natural communities. Fairfax County is home to a variety of unique habitats. Looking at a cross section of the county, Figure 3 provides a graphic representation of the three physiographic provinces in Fairfax County, and the richness of habitats, features, and wildlife within each area.

This strategy focuses on preserving and enhancing our natural heritage for the present and future. Improving habitat connectivity is a critical strategy for addressing habitat loss and fragmentation, a top threat to biodiversity. The need for improved connectivity between habitats is growing as natural communities continue to be fragmented, degraded, and lost to development. Without habitat

connectivity, processes like nutrient flow, gene flow, seasonal migration, pollination, and predator-prey relationships are significantly impeded or cannot occur. This natural resources component of the PROSA Strategy assesses tree canopy and habitat quality at parks and is a critical strategy to improve the health of essential habitats for wildlife and plants providing a healthy natural environment through an enduring park system.

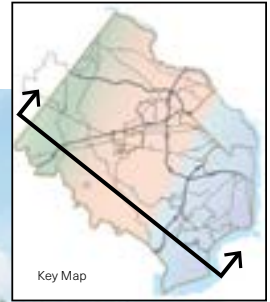


Wildlife at the park.



Fox in the shrubbery.

HABITAT CONNECTIVITY WITHIN PHYSIOGRAPHIC PROVINCES OF FAIRFAX COUNTY



MESOZOIC BASIN

Characterized by low-relief. This region was formed within a rift valley and is underlain by sedimentary and mafic rock. Upland depression swamps and sluggish streams are common due to the relatively flat terrain.

HABITATS

- Piedmont / Central Appalachian Rich Floodplain Forest
- Piedmont / Central Appalachian Floodplain Swamp
- Piedmont Upland Depression Swamp
- Northern Hardpan Basic Oak – Hickory Forest



Rich Floodplain Forest.



Upland Depression Swamp.



Hardpan Basic Oak - Hickory Forest.

PIEDMONT

Characterized by low, rolling hills. In Fairfax County, much of the region is underlain by igneous or metamorphic rock. Upland forests dominate with wetlands largely restricted to the floodplains of streams and rivers.

- Piedmont / Central Appalachian Mixed Oak / Heath Forest
- Northern Piedmont Small – Stream Floodplain Forest
- Piedmont Acidic Oak – Hickory Forest
- Northern Coastal Plain / Piedmont Mesic Mixed Hardwood Forest



Mixed Oak / Heath Forest.



Small Stream Floodplain Forest.



Mesic Mixed Hardwood Forest.

COASTAL PLAIN

This region is characterized by low-relief and terraces which stair-step down to the Potomac River. Underlain by young sedimentary rock. Seepage swamps and depression swamps occur within upland forests which eventually give way to tidal wetlands along the Potomac.

- Coastal Plain / Outer Piedmont Acidic Seepage Swamp
- Coastal Plain Depression Swamp
- Coastal Plain Mixed Oak/heath Forest
- Freshwater Tidal Swamp
- Freshwater Tidal Marsh



Acidic Seepage Swamps.



Fresh Water Tidal Swamp.



Fresh Water Tidal Marsh.

Figure 3: Habitat Connectivity within Physiographic Provinces

HOW DO WE ASSESS HABITAT CONNECTIVITY?

Two primary metrics, tree canopy and overall habitat health, allow the Park Authority to take a closer look at forested areas and provide a high-level habitat connectivity assessment within parks. The habitat connectivity assessment does not include meadows, wetlands, or other types of habitats at this time. As data becomes available, these other habitats will be included in the assessment. With these two metrics at hand, the Park Authority can identify forested areas that are most in need of conservation and habitat restoration, which in turn will improve habitat connectivity across the county.

Tree canopy, including the shade from a tree's leaves and branches, provides an array of environmental and human health benefits. Such benefits include air pollution mitigation, reduced stormwater runoff, and shade for communities which cools air temperatures and mitigates the urban heat island effect. Trees also absorb and store carbon dioxide, help to build and rebuild soil, and improve wildlife habitat among many other benefits. A great portion of the county's forested lands are in public park ownership, and the county's tree canopy policy and tree preservation ordinance have stewardship implications for trees

on Park Authority land. Analyzing the existing natural shade within parks will help identify target areas to expand tree canopy. This strategy will in turn improve environmental and ecosystem benefits, as well as health and quality of life benefits for communities. In addition, using tree canopy as a metric will help mitigate the urban heat island effect in areas in the county where heat is likely to be more intense.

In addition, habitat health will be looked at through the lens of invasive plant species present within forested areas of parkland. Analyzing and understanding the presence of invasive species can help locate and identify the greatest threats to existing native plant species and communities, and prioritize sites for invasive plant control. This effort in turn supports healthy ecosystems and habitat connectivity. The presence of invasive plant species serves as an interim tool to support the habitat connectivity analysis. A countywide, site-specific, and field-verified inventory of all habitat types throughout the park system is currently underway by Park Authority ecologists. Once this multi-year project is complete, the highly robust field-verified inventory will serve as the foundation for the habitat health analysis.



Owl at Cub Run Rec Center.



Great Blue Heron.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

By analyzing habitat health within parks, the Park Authority can identify areas that are most in need of protection, conservation, and restoration, and prioritize accordingly in alignment with the Park Authority's Natural Resource Management Plans and the other PROSA strategies. Ensuring that all communities have access to thriving natural spaces contributes to a more equitable distribution of park and environmental benefits, and helps to preserve local flora and fauna for future generations. The following strategies are intended to prioritize areas with limited habitat connectivity:

- Plant trees during park development and construction projects to bolster areas with lower tree canopy. Tree plantings would not replace meadows and other environmentally sensitive areas.
- Identify existing park sites where habitat health could be improved and prioritize based on the presence of invasive species, and any other site-specific factors in concert with the Park Authority's Natural Resource Management Plan.
- Consider opportunities to improve habitat connectivity within the county when acquiring parkland.

WHAT SPECIES CALL YOUR PARK HOME?

By facilitating a connected network of habitat corridors, Fairfax County Parks create ease of access for critters and community members. A more biodiverse environment creates thriving habitat communities. What creatures have you noticed in your local parks?



Long Branch Stream Valley Park.



EQUITY LENS



IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Equity Vision
- » What is the Park Authority's Equity Lens?
- » How do We Get There?

EQUITY VISION

Fairfax County embraces its growing and diverse population, recognizing it as a tremendous asset, but also acknowledges that racial and social inequities still exist. While Fairfax County is a great place to live, work, play, and learn, persistent disparities predictable by race, neighborhood of residence and other social categories endure in outcomes related to employment, housing, health and more. Disparities in outcomes are in part the result of longstanding inequitable policies, systems, and practices created and maintained by government. In 2016, the Park Authority Board adopted the One Fairfax Policy, Fairfax County’s joint racial and social equity policy, declaring that all residents deserve an equitable opportunity to success, regardless of their race, color, nationality, sex, sexual orientation, religion, disability, income or where they live. The One Fairfax policy and vision informs all other policies and applies to all publicly delivered services in Fairfax County. This policy is a critical step towards achieving racial and social equity in Fairfax County.

Integrating the One Fairfax policy in parks and recreation is essential for a more inclusive, equitable, and thriving community. Through the park lens, One Fairfax ensures that all community members have equitable access to high quality parks, trails, open spaces, and recreation. Equity recognizes that each person has different circumstances and allocates

the resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome. To get there, the Park Authority will take into account racial and social equity and population density when prioritizing park and recreation needs and projects in order to diminish racial and social inequities within our community. These two data-driven approaches will help provide the greatest impact to park and recreation needs in Fairfax County. By prioritizing park and recreation needs with an equity lens, the Park Authority can create a more inclusive, vibrant, and healthy community for everyone to enjoy.

WHAT IS THE PARK AUTHORITY’S EQUITY LENS?

The Park Authority’s equity lens is a composite of the Park Authority Racial Equity Index (PAREI) and population density, which is the number of community members served within a geographical area. This approach will allow the prioritization of park and recreation needs to be based on data informed decisions. More specifically, the PAREI is comprised of the eight indicators from the One Fairfax Vulnerability Index (VI) and population of color as illustrated in Figures 4 and 5.

These nine datasets are geographically arranged by U.S. Census Block Groups. The numeric value of the PAREI ranges from Very Low, to Low, Average, High, and Very High categories. Very Low areas represent

ONE FAIRFAX VULNERABILITY INDEX INDICATORS	
Indicator	Description
Low Income Occupations	Population in occupations making 2/3 or less of the median income
Limited English-Speaking Ability	Percentage of population 5 years or older who speak English less than “Well”
Low Educational Attainment	Percentage of the population 25 years and older who lack a Bachelor’s degree
Median Household Income	Median Household Income
Households without a Vehicle	Percentage of households without a vehicle
Population without Health Insurance	Percentage of population without health insurance coverage
Homeownership	Percentage of households that are homeowners
Severely Cost-burdened Renter	Percentage of households paying more than 50% of their gross income on rent

Figure 4: One Fairfax Vulnerability Index Indicators

PAREI = (75% * Vulnerability Index Score) + (25% * Population of Color Score)

Figure 5: Park Authority Racial Equity Index

the least vulnerable residents and Very High areas represent the most vulnerable residents. Opportunity Areas are identified as the High and Very High areas. Opportunity Areas represent residents that are socioeconomically vulnerable or have average socioeconomics and high concentrations of people of color. Furthermore, the number of people served will be considered in conjunction with Opportunity Areas as the Park Authority's equity lens in order to provide the greatest impact to residents.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

By committing to intentionally consider equity in the prioritization of park and recreation needs, the Park Authority can ensure parks enrich the quality of life for all members of the community. The PROSA equity lens uses a data-driven approach to help guide equitable service delivery and resource allocation. Recognizing opportunity areas, in combination with the number of community members served, will help the Park Authority identify where there may be gaps in the equal provision of park and recreation services and/or where park needs may be greater. The Park Authority can help to address historical racial and social inequities by prioritizing access to parks and park experiences with an equity lens so that all residents have access to high quality parks, programs, and services.



Children and parents playing at Monticello Park.



Hikers enjoying the blooming bluebells at Riverbend Park.



A family enjoying open play at the park.



IMPLEMENTATION



IN THIS CHAPTER

- » How the Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Access Strategy (PROSA) Will Happen

HOW IT WILL HAPPEN

Fairfax County strives to increase the quality of its parks, equitable park access, and diverse park experiences by using data-driven processes implemented through active investment and policy revision.



Bicyclists riding along Burke Lake.



A family enjoying the playground at Martin Luther King, Jr. Park.

The PROSA Strategy will be used as a data-driven, informed decision-making approach to all park and recreation projects, investments, and capital improvements. Closing the 10-minute walk gap, improving access to complete parks, enhancing habitat connectivity, and prioritizing park and recreation needs and projects with an equity lens will make Fairfax County a great park system for everyone today and for future generations. Additional context sensitive site analysis will be conducted when looking at park sites to take into account other public park providers, school fields, and similar factors. Each of the strategies will adapt as needed based on new or emerging data that support the decision-making process.

Effective implementation is critical to achieving equitable park access across the county. Building on the research, data, and analysis, the overall PROSA strategies are intended to ensure that the planning, design, development, and maintenance of Park Authority parks will be applied as a decision-making approach and policy guide. The PROSA strategies will inform and work in coordination with other policies and practices. Likewise, the PROSA Strategy should be the basis for future Comprehensive Plan policies and an update to the park classification system. While the PROSA Strategy will tell us where park investments should be prioritized, the upcoming Needs Assessment will guide the Park Authority as to where things should be located. The next Needs Assessment will include a comprehensive equity analysis in coordination with the PROSA strategies. These long-term, system-wide objectives will be reviewed annually in coordination with the Park Authority's Strategic Plan.

Burke Lake in Autumn.



