

PARKS AND RECREATION

INTRODUCTION

An integrated park system in Fairfax County is nationally recognized for its quality and diversity of park resources. Within the context of the Comprehensive Plan, these parklands and recreational facilities play a key role in shaping both the landscape and the quality of life through the conservation of natural and cultural resources, protection of environmental quality, provision of public facilities and human services, and management of urban growth.

The integrated park system is administered by a variety of public agencies at the local, regional, state and federal levels of government, including the Fairfax County Park Authority, Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, City of Fairfax, Town of Herndon, Town of Vienna, Fairfax County Public Schools, Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the Commonwealth of Virginia. Since its inception, this long-established integrated parks system has evolved into a diversified mosaic of public open space and recreation facilities, ranging from smaller local-serving parks to extensive, regionally significant land holdings. Together, these public lands account for nearly 20 percent of the county's total land area. Privately managed open space, lands and facilities provide additional components of the open space and recreation system serving county residents. In redeveloping and urbanizing areas of the county, privately-owned but publicly-accessible parks and open spaces are emerging as essential elements of the urban form and serving needs of added residents.

The integrated park system serves as the primary public mechanism for accomplishing two equally important purposes: (1) to protect and preserve environmentally sensitive land, habitat connectivity, and water resources, and areas of archaeological, historical and/or cultural significance; and (2) to provide opportunities for residents, workers and visitors to pursue leisure activities in safe, accessible, and enjoyable parks and community recreational facilities.

Pressures of population growth, changing land use patterns and life styles, and fiscal realities will continue to influence the county's plans and abilities to provide park and recreation services at levels consistent with public needs. The pace of urban development is rapidly foreclosing the availability of land suitable for future parks, while escalating land costs further constrain opportunities for purchase of public parklands.

Additionally, development impacts on park and recreation resources are pervasive and growing. These impacts include placement of road improvements and utility and storm water management facilities or outflow on, or adjacent to, parklands; degradation of streams through siltation and erosion; loss of buffer areas and tree cover; fragmentation of wildlife habitats; and impacts on cultural resources. Park operations may adversely impact surrounding neighborhoods. Park providers should guard against negative neighborhood impacts through careful park planning, site design, management and operations.

A large portion of parkland, that includes a part of the countywide trail system, is collocated within Environmental Quality Corridors (EQC's) establishing an integrated network of stream valleys and associated lands. The purpose of this network is to conserve open space; protect wildlife habitat, biodiversity of species, riparian corridors, water quality and aesthetic values; control flooding and erosion; and provide continuity of non-motorized access between parklands, residential communities, employment and commercial centers and transit areas. The public park system is challenged, now and in the future, with completing the network by acquiring linking lands and public access, and connecting, building and maintaining a continuous network.

Increased use of recreation facilities results in faster facility deterioration and replacement rates, potential crowding, and user conflicts. In addition, diversification of recreational preferences expands the need for new facility types and associated space. As residential densities rise and individual yards become smaller or disappear, the need for public open space, woodlands, trails, recreation facilities, and open play areas increases. This is true for both urban and suburban areas. The provision of needed parks and recreation facilities meets identified needs while adding community, health, and economic value.

Over the next 20 years, opportunities to develop private and public urban-scale parks and recreation facilities as part of mixed-use developments should be planned and promoted in appropriate areas of the county, including Tysons Urban Center, Transit Station Areas, Revitalization Districts, and other designated growth centers. This type of urban open space will be an important element in improving quality of life, promoting good health through exercise and enjoyment of outdoor spaces, supporting placemaking efforts, and providing relief from urban congestion by allowing urban dwellers to enjoy parks and recreation locally.

These concerns necessitate a comprehensive approach to planning and acquisition for an integrated system of parks, recreation, and open space, which utilizes the resources of the public and private sectors to maximum advantage. It is critical that public and private park providers throughout the Northern Virginia region assess current and long range park and leisure needs and coordinate the effective delivery of park and recreation services while protecting significant natural and cultural resources. It is in the best public interest to ensure the efficient use and equitable distribution of resources and services throughout the community to meet the dual goals for protection of significant natural and cultural resources, and provision of sustainable parklands and facilities that serve the increasing demands for a full range of park experiences.

Public policy, regulations, actions and funding influence the private sector's role and responsibility for land stewardship and provision of recreation resources. Collaborative-efforts between the private and public sectors, especially through the land development process, can result in better appreciation, protection, and stewardship of natural and cultural resources, as well as the provision of adequate recreational facilities and amenities to serve residents.

Park planning and land use decisions should be guided by the county goals cited below:

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS GOALS

Environmental Protection - The amount and distribution of population density and land uses in Fairfax County should be consistent with environmental constraints inherent in the need to preserve natural resources and to meet or exceed federal, state and local standards for water quality, ambient air quality and other environmental standards. Development in Fairfax County should be sensitive to the natural setting, in order to prevent degradation of the county's natural environment.

Growth and Adequate Public Facilities - Growth in Fairfax County should be held to a level consistent with available, accessible, and adequate public facilities as well as with rational plans to provide new public facilities to maintain existing public facilities. The county's plans for development should take into account financial limitations associated with increased needs for public facilities.

Culture and Recreation - Fairfax County should provide local systems and participate in regional programs for safe, accessible and enjoyable parks (including active, passive, and historical parks); recreational programs; libraries; and cultural programs and facilities.

Fairfax County should also support and encourage the identification and preservation of its heritage resources for the aesthetic, social and educational benefits of present and future citizens.

Open Space - Fairfax County should support the conservation of appropriate land areas in a natural state to preserve, protect and enhance stream valleys, meadows, woodlands, wetlands, farmland, and plant and animal life. Small areas of open space should also be preserved in already congested and developed areas for passive neighborhood uses, visual relief, scenic value, and screening and buffering purposes.

Objective 1: Identify and serve current and future park and recreation needs through an integrated park system that provides open space, recreational services and facilities, and stewardship of natural and cultural resources.

Policy a: Plan, acquire, develop, and maintain the following types of parks through the Fairfax County Park Authority in conjunction with other public providers and the private sector and in accordance with the Park Classification System as follows: (See Parks and Recreation Appendix 1 for the Park Classification System):

- A. Local Parks including Urban Parks (See Parks and Recreation Appendix 2 for the Urban Parks Framework)
- B. District Parks
- C. Countywide Parks
- D. Resource-Based Parks
- E. Regional Parks

Policy b: Provide a balance of quality recreation opportunities with the protection and preservation of natural and cultural resources.

Policy c: Ensure the provision of parklands and the efficient use of facilities throughout the county is based on user needs and consistent with population distribution and growth patterns.

Policy d: Use the Standards and Criteria for Establishment of Park and Recreation Facilities (Appendix 3) as a guide for the planning and provision of parkland and recreation facilities to adequately serve the county's current and projected population.

Policy e: Enhance existing park experiences and resource protection opportunities through acquisition of lands adjacent to existing parkland, wherever feasible.

Policy f: Extend public investments in parkland acquisition and park development through a combination of public/private mechanisms, such as voluntary dedication and/or donation of land, fee simple purchase, negotiated agreements, public access easements, and other appropriate means.

Policy g: Land acquisition for public park use should be guided by the Parkland Acquisition Criteria included in the Standards and Criteria for Establishment of Park and Recreation Facilities (Appendix 3) to adequately serve the county's current and projected population. Potential public parkland need not require a specific "public park" Area Plan land use designation in order to be acquired or used as a public park.

Policy h: Encourage private landowners to preserve open space and protect ecological and cultural resources through the use of conservation easements, land use valuation, and other land use options, incentives and programs.

Policy i: Acquire those Environmental Quality Corridors (EQC) segments needed to connect and complete the public stream valley network and trail systems. Where land acquisition may not be feasible or desirable, work to obtain use of privately-owned resources through voluntary means such as conservation easements and cooperative agreements.

Policy j: Endorse the efforts of the multi-jurisdictional Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NVRPA) to fulfill its purpose: to carry out a long-range open space plan for Northern Virginia, through a cooperative system of regional parks, to supplement and enhance local park systems in Northern Virginia.

Policy k: Coordinate and cooperate with other county, municipal, regional, state and federal agencies in planning, development, protection and management of all park resources to support the integrated park system.

Policy l: Work cooperatively with private and public landowners to develop and provide trail connections to parkland from existing and planned trails and encourage non-motorized access to parks.

Objective 2: Protect appropriate land areas in a natural state to ensure preservation of significant and sensitive natural resources.

Policy a: Identify and acquire lands with significant natural resources including exemplary natural areas, large natural areas, areas connected to other protected lands, stream valleys and areas that buffer significant resources from disturbance and impacts.

Policy b: Manage and protect significant natural resources throughout the county, in cooperation with other agencies, organizations and partners, by implementing ecosystem management principles, restoring degraded natural resources, linking major resource areas and supporting habitats essential to biological diversity, where possible.

Policy c: Manage wild populations to include vegetative resources and wildlife, including invasive species, through appropriate inventories, monitoring, education, planning, management and restoration to protect and improve the ecosystem function including increasing biodiversity of native species.

Policy d: Protect, monitor, plan, manage and restore wildlife, and wildlife habitat, on parkland to protect the ecosystem function, including increasing biodiversity of native species.

Policy e: Protect, monitor and manage park water resources and stream valleys.

Policy f: Implement best management practices and policies on parkland, as recommended in adopted county policies, objectives, watershed plans, and the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance.

- Policy g: Protect parklands from encroachments and minimize adverse human impacts to natural areas.
- Policy h: Minimize adverse impacts to air quality resulting from park operations and maintenance.
- Policy i: Encourage natural resource stewardship through educational programs and other means that highlight the significance of natural resources.
- Policy j: Minimize adverse impacts of development on water resources and stream valleys.
- Policy k: Minimize the effects of storm water outfalls on parkland.
- Policy l: Site storm water management facilities on parklands only when a benefit to parklands and water quality is demonstrated.
- Policy m: Grant easements or encumbrances on parkland only when a benefit to parklands and water quality is demonstrated.
- Policy n: Minimize impacts of park maintenance and operation practices through the use of environmentally sound methods including Integrated Pest Management.

Objective 3: Protect and preserve significant cultural resources on parklands.

- Policy a: Determine the significance and appropriate preservation options for cultural resources that are proposed for inclusion in the integrated park system in accordance with the criteria for the U.S. Department of Interior National Register of Historic Places and the Fairfax County Criteria for Public Significance (See Objective 2, Policies a. and b. in the Heritage Resources section.)
- Policy b: Protect significant cultural resources, including archaeological sites, historic properties, buildings, structures, districts, landscapes, cemeteries and artifacts from degradation or damage and destruction.
- Policy c: Consider alternatives, in addition to fee-simple acquisition of cultural resources, such as the establishment of protective easements, to ensure preservation, stabilization, restoration and appropriate site planning and development.
- Policy d: Coordinate preservation of significant cultural resources with county, municipal, regional, state and federal agencies to ensure effective and consistent management and protection of these resources.

Objective 4: Provide for current and future park and recreational needs through a combination of development of new and existing sites and the optimal use of all existing facilities.

- Policy a: Ensure that facility service levels are commensurate with sustainable parkland and facility capacity. Service levels should relate to public needs as determined through periodic Park and Recreation Needs Assessments with community input.

- Policy b: Maximize the use of existing public facilities, including Fairfax County Public Schools, for community recreation purposes and provide non-motorized access through coordination among managing agencies of service provision, redevelopment and maintenance of recreation facilities.
- Policy c: Maximize opportunities to include accessible community recreation facilities on properties and in buildings acquired, planned, designed and developed by Fairfax County Public Schools or other public agencies.
- Policy d: Develop a regional and integrated open space and greenway system and provide mutually supportive recreation opportunities in cooperation with other public park agencies.
- Policy e: Ensure that the location, design, development and redevelopment of park resources are accessible for all populations and are adaptable to changing recreational, demographic, and economic trends.
- Policy f: Integrate urban-scale parks into mixed-use developments and designated mixed-use centers, using the Urban Parks Framework as a guide.
- Policy g: Mitigate adverse impacts from park activities on surrounding neighborhoods through careful park planning, site design, management and operations.

Objective 5: Ensure the long term protection, preservation and sustainability of park resources.

- Policy a: Protect parklands from adverse impacts of off-site development and uses. Specifically, identify impacts from development proposals that may negatively affect parklands and private properties under protective easements and require mitigation and/or restoration measures, as appropriate.
- Policy b: Ensure the protection and appropriate resource management of, and public access to, designated stream valleys through dedication to the Fairfax County Park Authority or other park agencies.
- Policy c: Provide compensation for use of parklands for other than park purposes in accordance with adopted policies of the affected park agency.
- Policy d: Protect the public's parkland investment and ensure the safety, quality, and sustainable operation of parklands, facilities, and infrastructure.
- Policy e: Ensure that efficient park facility maintenance and management practices can be achieved to provide for long-term sustainability and preservation of the public investment.
- Policy f: Consider the location of major public facilities, including transportation and utility corridors, and telecommunication facilities, on or through parklands when the proposal meets the following conditions: (a) is consistent with the relevant policies of the managing park agency; (b) the managing park agency determines that the proposed facility is compatible with the existing and future use of parkland, (c) the managing park agency concurs that there is no feasible or available alternative to the use of parklands and (d) the proposal will have minimal impacts on parkland, facilities, resources and user experience.

Policy g: Protect parklands from encroachments and other unauthorized uses.

Policy h: Where appropriate and feasible, apply better site design and low-impact development (LID) techniques in park development to reduce environmental impacts of development.

Objective 6: Ensure the mitigation of adverse impacts to park and recreation facilities and service levels caused by growth and land development through the provision of proffers, conditions, contributions, commitments, and land dedication.

Policy a: Offset residential development impacts to parks and recreation resources, facilities and service levels based on the adopted facility service level standards (Appendix 2). The provision of suitable new park and recreational lands and facilities will be considered in the review of land development proposals in accordance with Residential Development Criteria - Appendix 9 of the Land Use element of the countywide Policy Plan.

Policy b: To implement Policy a. above, residential land development should include provisions for contributions, or dedication, to the Park Authority of usable parkland and facilities, public trails, development of recreational facilities on private open space, and/or provision of improvements at existing nearby park facilities.

Policy c: Nonresidential development should offset significant impacts of work force growth on the parks and recreation system.

Policy d: Ensure that Comprehensive Plan land use amendment proposals for higher densities include recommendations for the provision of parkland and trails to offset the impacts of increased density.

Policy e: Seek dedication of appropriate lands to the Fairfax County Park Authority that meet the criteria for Resource Protection Areas and parkland adjacent to stream valleys as defined respectively by the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance and the Fairfax County Park Authority Stream Valley Policy.

Policy f: Encourage developers to cooperatively develop and maintain publicly accessible urban parks, connective trails, park amenities and active recreation facilities in Tysons and other designated mixed-use centers in accordance with the Urban Parks Framework (Appendix 2).

Policy g: Apply appropriate design standards to all facilities proposed for inclusion in the park system.

Policy h: On development adjacent to park property, encourage designs that minimize the potential for encroachments and adverse environmental impacts on parkland and that augment the natural resource values of the parkland.

APPENDIX 1

PARK CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION

The Park Classification System is a general framework intended to guide open space and public facilities planning, and also to assist in the development of public and private land management plans, by grouping parks according to certain common typical characteristics. The Park Classification System specifically supports Countywide Objective 1, Policy a. by outlining the primary purpose, location and access, character and extent of development for the following park classifications:

- A. Local Parks including Urban Parks (See Parks and Recreation Appendix 2 for the Urban Parks Framework)
- B. District Parks
- C. Countywide Parks
- D. Resource-Based Parks
- E. Regional Parks

This Park Classification System is augmented by state and federal park areas within Fairfax County boundaries.

Park Classifications provide guidance: a) to the Planning Commission for determining whether a proposed park site is in substantial conformance with the county Comprehensive Plan; b) for determining the appropriate geographic location and equitable distribution of varying types of parks; c) to the park planning staff during the park planning and development process; and d) to set public expectations for future park uses. Park master planning, determination of substantial conformance with the county Comprehensive Plan pursuant to Code of Virginia section 15.2-2232 (known as the 2232 process), and capital funding allocations are all public processes that precede development on parkland.

Criteria for each park class are provided in the individual descriptions below. The general areas of consideration are:

1. **Purpose** - indicates the general park use.
2. **Location and Access** - indicates the appropriate location and means of access.
3. **Character and Extent of Development** - indicates the general park size range, typical facility types, the extent of development, the general experience a user may expect and any special considerations. Site-specific facilities and uses are determined through the park master planning process for individual parks. The park master planning process is a public process that provides opportunities for public input and requires approval by the appointed officials of the respective park agency or elected officials of local municipalities.

A. LOCAL PARKS

Purpose

This general classification of parks includes parks that serve neighborhoods and mixed use centers in suburban and urban areas of the county. Local parks primarily offer a variety of active or

passive recreation opportunities, or a combination of both, in close proximity to county residents and employment centers. Areas designated for natural and/or cultural resource protection may also be included within these parks.

Location and Access

Local Parks should be located to serve local residential neighborhoods, broader residential communities and/or urban employment or mixed-use centers. Pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and/or car access is appropriate depending on the setting and access features. In suburban contexts, whenever feasible, locate these parks adjacent to elementary or intermediate schools to maximize collocation of recreation facilities; In mixed-use developments, proximity to retail/office areas is desirable for collocation of parking and minimum impact on residences. In urban contexts, Local Parks should be located within walking distance (1/4 to 1/2 mile) from every residence. In these urban areas, access would be predominantly by foot or bike and the need for parking would be reduced or eliminated; it would be appropriate to provide limited on-street parking.

Character and Extent of Development

Local Parks primarily provide facilities for active or passive recreation, or both; areas for scheduled and unscheduled recreation activities and social gathering places; and serve residential, employment and mixed-use centers. In suburban settings, park size will typically be at least 2.5 acres and less than 50 acres, but some local parks may range up to 75 acres. In urban areas, park size is typically less than 5 acres and often less than 1/2 acre. Visits to local parks will typically be less than two hours.

The character of Local Parks may vary depending on their location within the county. In residential settings, these parks will generally be larger than in urban parts of the county. Local Parks offer open space to those with little or no yards as well as places to informally gather and socialize. Various facility types are appropriate and may include, but are not limited to, open play areas, playgrounds, dog parks, skating features, courts, athletic fields, game areas, trails, trail connections, natural areas, and picnic facilities. Facilities may be lit or unlit. In a suburban setting and depending on the park size, accessibility, and facilities, the service area may be up to 3 miles. In an urban setting, the service area is generally 1/4 to 1/2 mile, or generally within a 5-10 minute walking distance from nearby offices, retail and residences.

The user experience at Local Parks may be casual and informal geared toward social interaction, play and outdoor enjoyment, or may be more structured to support organized sports and park programs. Collocation of a mix of park uses and facilities that support both informal and structured activities is increasingly necessary to meet the county's diverse and varied recreation and leisure needs in an environment where available land is diminishing. To the extent possible, facilities will be planned so that areas that address different needs are compatible.

In urban areas, urban-scale Local Parks are appropriate. These publicly accessible urban parks will include facilities that are pedestrian-oriented and provide visual enhancement, a sense of identity, opportunities for recreation and social interactions, enjoyment of outdoor open space and performing and visual arts. Urban parks are generally integrated into mixed-use developments or major employment centers in areas of the county that are planned or developed at an urban scale. Areas in the county that are generally appropriate for urban parks include Tysons and other designated mixed-use centers. Urban parks can be administered by private land owners, Fairfax County Park Authority, or through joint public and private sector agreements for public benefit.

Primary elements of urban-scale Local Parks are ease of non-motorized access and a location that complements, or is integrated with, surrounding uses. Features may include urban style plazas,

athletic and sports facilities, playgrounds, mini-parks, water features and trail connections, oriented to pedestrian and/or bicycle use by employees and residents. Park architectural characteristics reflect the built environment. Short-term, informal activities and programmed events during lunch hours and after-work hours are intended to foster social interactions among users, provide leisure opportunities, and create a visual identity to strengthen sense of place and orientation. Well-conceived and executed design is critical to the viability of this type of park. To be successful, urban parks need high visibility, easy access, lots of pedestrian traffic, immediacy of casual food service, access to basic utilities, landscaped vegetated areas, ample seating, high quality materials, a focal point or identity, regular custodial maintenance, and an inviting and safe atmosphere. For detailed urban park information, types, and descriptions see Appendix 2, Urban Parks Framework.

The Area Plans element of the Comprehensive Plan delineates the park classifications of all public park sites in the county. The specific types of facilities to be developed at each Local Park site is determined by the managing park agency with public participation through its Park Planning and Development process.

B. DISTRICT PARKS

Purpose

This park classification includes larger parks that serve larger geographic areas of the county and provide a variety of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities and park experiences. Portions of these parks may be designated for natural and/or cultural resource protection.

Location and Access

These parks may be located in most areas of the county. Access should be available by the major arterials and the countywide trail system to encourage pedestrian and bicycle trips; public transit access is also desirable. The service area can range from 3 to 6 miles. Size is typically 50 to 150 acres. Parking must be provided.

Character and Extent of Development

District Parks provide diverse opportunities for passive and active recreation uses. Generally, facilities in these parks are larger in number and scale than at Local Parks and support a longer visit.

District Parks may combine recreation-oriented complexes of developed facilities with areas of the park that are undeveloped. The extent of development will depend on actual site conditions, such as topography, amount of developable acreage, and access. Appropriate facilities include those that support active and passive recreation, often clustered together, areas for programmed activities and gathering places and areas designated for resource protection. Lighted facilities and extended hours of operation are the norm.

These parks offer diverse experiences and activities that typically involve an individual or group for a time period of up to a half day and may attract spectators or participants. Typical recreation activities at District Parks include, but are not limited to, golf, skating, skateboarding, picnicking, classes and camps, child play, off-leash dog exercising, cultural and holiday events, performing arts, sports play and activities scheduled in RECenters. Additionally, woodlands, open space, trails and open play areas are highly desirable features. Sensitive environmental areas and cultural resource sites within the parks will be managed as Natural or Cultural Resource Areas.

The Area Plans element of the Comprehensive Plan delineates the park classifications of all park sites in the county. The specific types of facilities to be developed at each District Park and support amenities, such as parking, lighting and restrooms, is determined by the managing park agency with public participation through its Park Planning and Development process.

C. COUNTYWIDE PARKS

Purpose

This park classification includes larger parks that serve the county and provides a variety of larger-scale indoor or outdoor recreation facilities, or both, and facilities that are unique within the county. Areas designated for natural and/or cultural resource protection may also be included within these parks.

Location and Access

These parks may be located in most areas of the county. Access should be available by the major arterials and the countywide trail system to encourage pedestrian and bicycle trips; public transit is also desirable. The service area is typically larger than 5 miles often including the entire county, or larger, depending on the facilities and location. Park size is typically 150 acres or more. Parking must be provided.

Character and Extent of Development

Countywide Parks provide diverse opportunities for passive and active recreation uses to a wide range of simultaneous users. Generally, these parks provide complexes of intensively developed activity areas. The complexes may include multiple facilities for the same activity, an assortment of different activity focuses in one or more areas of the park, and/or unique facilities found in only one or a few parks within the entire park system. Facilities in these parks are larger in scale than those found in District Parks.

Countywide Parks may combine larger complexes of developed areas with extensive natural areas. The extent of development will depend on actual site conditions, such as topography, amount of developable acreage, access and intensity of adjacent land uses. Appropriate facilities include those typically found in District Parks as well as the facilities unique to Countywide Parks and the support uses necessary for a full day activity such as concessions and restrooms. Formally scheduled community gathering places and areas for large programmed activities and events are also typical. Lighted facilities and extended hours of operation are the norm.

These parks offer diverse experiences and activities that typically involve an individual or group for a time period of up to a day and which may attract large numbers of spectators or participants. Typical activities may include those found in District Parks. Other countywide-serving facilities that are larger scale, broader serving, and distinguished from Local or District serving facilities may include, but are not limited to, group event areas, sports complexes, indoor sport and event facilities, lakefront parks, festival and arts venues. Sensitive environmental areas and cultural resource sites within the parks will be managed as Natural or Cultural Resource Areas.

The Area Plans element of the Comprehensive Plan delineates the park classifications of all park sites in the county. The specific types of facilities to be developed at each Countywide Park and support amenities, such as parking, lighting and restrooms, is determined by the managing park agency with public participation through its Park Planning and Development process.

D. RESOURCE-BASED PARKS

Purpose

This classification includes parks that primarily preserve, protect, and interpret natural and/or cultural resources. Portions of these parks may be designated for recreation purposes.

Location and Access

The location for Resource-based Parks is determined by the location of the specific resources. Size and access can take many forms depending on the setting and type of resources. Access to stream valleys is primarily by trails; however trailheads with parking should be strategically located along trail routes. Management plans should give consideration to the resource and allow public use only as it is compatible with resource protection.

Character and Extent of Development

Resource-based Parks are selected for inclusion in the park system because of their exemplary natural and/or cultural features and are acquired, identified and preserved for stewardship and protection. Protection and stewardship of unique natural and cultural resources provide a variety of public benefits. These parks provide educational and interpretative opportunities relative to environmental and cultural resources. These lands may offer opportunities to restore degraded areas and to protect, increase and restore biodiversity of species that may inhabit these areas. In addition, recreation opportunities and facilities are also appropriate at these parks to the extent they are consistent and compatible with resource management within the park. Development which does not adversely affect resources and which enhances awareness of the resource values is appropriate. Development of public sites should include opportunities for public education and enjoyment. Interpretive (educational) facilities and structures may include visitor centers, nature centers, orientation kiosks, nature watching stations, demonstration areas, preserved buildings and gardens, hiking, biking and equestrian trails as designated. To the extent that they do not adversely impact the resources themselves, support amenities may also be developed such as picnicking areas, restrooms, signs, benches and parking. Trails and trail connections are a significant feature at these parks, especially along stream valleys and often serve as countywide trail connections.

Stream valleys are a predominant physiographic feature of Fairfax County and comprise the core of the county's Environmental Quality Corridor (EQC) system. Parks located in and along the stream valleys encompass those segments of EQCs planned for public parkland and comprise the core elements of a greenway network that links areas notable for significant natural and cultural resources with residential and employment areas throughout the county. They may vary in size and character from steeply sloped corridors with cascading streams to broad floodplains; all are treated as sensitive environmental areas. Trails within stream valleys should be located to be sensitive to environmental conditions. In addition to trails, seating areas, small picnic and open play areas, landscaping and interpretive structures may also be developed, if they do not adversely impact the EQC or ecological functions.

The user experience at Resource-based Parks will be varied. These parks support nature, horticulture and history programs as well as more casual interests such as gardening, nature watching and appreciation of local, regional, state and national history. Settings for quiet contemplation are appropriate in these parks. Recreation uses compatible with resource management may also be appropriate in these parks. Visitors may frequent these parks on a regular or occasional basis.

The Area Plans element of the Comprehensive Plan delineates the park classifications of all park sites in the county. The specific types of facilities and support amenities, such as parking, lighting and restrooms, to be developed at each Resource-based Park is determined by the managing agency with public participation through its Park Planning and Development process.

E. REGIONAL PARKS

Purpose

Regional Parks are lands or facilities administered by the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NVRPA), with region-wide significance that supplement and enhance the county and municipal park systems within the six participating political jurisdictions. NVRPA parks and facilities serve a multi-jurisdictional constituency.

NVRPA's Park Classification System was developed within the context of its mission, goals and objectives: 1) to distinguish regional parks from local, state and federal parks; 2) to provide a concise description of the management functions and responsibilities of the Authority; and 3) to apply to regional parklands and recreational facilities. While the classification system is comprehensive, it is not mutually exclusive, and some parks may fall within more than one classification.

Location and Access

NVRPA owns and protects more than 11,000 acres of public parkland and has developed twenty-five parks in its service area of Fairfax, Arlington and Loudoun Counties and the cities of Fairfax, Falls Church and Alexandria. Facilities within this service area are typically accessible within a 1 to 1.5 hour drive by car and by foot, bicycle and equestrian trails. Eleven Regional Parks consisting of more than 8,000 acres, are located within Fairfax County.

Character and Extent of Development

The character and extent of development for Regional Parks is directed by the NVRPA Park Classification System that contains six categories, each with its own criteria. These criteria identify the park purpose and provide general planning and development guidelines and resource management and use policies. Individual park master plans work in conjunction with the NVRPA classification system to further define use and management of the park as a resource. The general purpose and character of NVRPA's six park classifications are briefly defined below:

Regional Land Bank - This designation provides the NVRPA with an administrative mechanism to hold lands on a temporary basis pending decisions on classification or disposition. Because the land will be held under this designation on a temporary basis, planning for these areas will occur only as required.

Regional Conservation Area - This designation places public ownership or control over regionally significant natural areas or water resources, so as to protect and preserve their unique environmental, cultural, ecological or scenic value. The primary long-term objective is to limit the development of these areas to preserve their "wilderness-like" qualities.

Regional Shoreline Park - These parks preserve riparian lands adjacent to regionally significant water resources, and provide public access for educational and environmental study and water-based recreational and scenic enjoyment. Long-term objectives for these parks vary for natural and recreational areas. Natural areas are limited to development and

use consistent with preserving their natural characteristics. Recreational areas allow for development of facilities consistent with regional needs, with particular emphasis on water access and the creative use of recreational and water resources.

Regional Trail and Greenway Park - Designated as networks of linear corridors or parks that connect recreational, natural, and/or cultural resources, these parks provide regionally significant links to comprehensive regional greenways and open space. The primary long-term objective will be contribution to a regional greenway and open-space plan for Northern Virginia.

Regional Historic/Cultural Park - This designation preserves structures and/or sites deemed significant to the history and culture of Northern Virginia. Long-term objectives include continued development of interpretive facilities on currently held park sites, public education of each park's historic resources, and protecting sites and structures in accordance with sound preservation practices, as funding permits.

Regional Recreational/Special Multi-Use Park - These parks contain specialized recreational and other public facilities or opportunities, which, because of their specialized nature, cost or demand, are not otherwise generally available within local parks, or offered by local park and recreation agencies. The long-term objectives for these parks include pursuing new and innovative park, recreational or other public facilities which avoid duplication of local, state and federal park facilities.

APPENDIX 2

FAIRFAX COUNTY URBAN PARKS FRAMEWORK

The county's Comprehensive Plan envisions concentrating growth in areas designated on the Concept for Future Development as Mixed-Use Centers and seeks a balance between residential and employment uses. These areas, planned for the most intense mixed-use development, include Tysons, Transit Station Areas, Community Business Centers, and Suburban Centers. As a result, over the next several decades, portions of the county will change to a more urban form that takes advantage of the synergy among integrated land uses and enables people to live, work, shop and play in compact areas.

The planned urbanization of the county's growth areas requires that the existing suburban park system in Fairfax County be supplemented by parks that are more suitable for the unique urban context and provide appropriate functions, uses, amenities, visual form, ownership, and accessibility to the variety of users typical in an urban environment. Residents in these areas most likely will have little or no private yards due to more dense residential forms and will rely on publicly accessible open space for leisure pursuits, socializing, exercising, and enjoying natural and designed landscapes. Workers and visitors to these destinations similarly will seek safe and comfortable, publicly accessible spaces for leisure and social activities. Well-defined and innovative urban parks can serve this diverse range of uses and users while also contributing to the placemaking and economic strength of these urbanizing areas.

In the county's park system, urban parks are one type of Local Park. The Park Classification System (Appendix 1) categorizes urban parks as a type of Local Park and characterizes them generally in terms of their relationship to adjacent land uses and orientation, size, access and administration. Urban parks are further defined by features that differentiate them from traditional suburban residential-serving parks. Urban parks can be qualified by their unique park elements, features, design, and means of implementation.

This Urban Parks Framework develops a common terminology that can be used to plan for and develop parks in Fairfax County's urbanizing and redeveloping mixed-use centers. The Framework details urban park design elements and types. In defining and describing design elements and types, this Framework focuses on characteristics and features, allowing room for flexibility as urban and park forms evolve over time. This flexibility also allows the Framework to be creatively applied within the varying contexts of the county's mixed-uses areas; each area is unique, the corresponding urban park systems will also be. The Framework and its urban park typology also serve to clarify expectations for the community decision makers and developers who seek to implement changes to existing development patterns and provide for park and recreation needs in these areas.

A. URBAN PARK DESIGN ELEMENTS

A listing of typical urban park design elements is contained in Table 1 below. These elements describe where urban parks should be located and accessed; how they should relate to their surrounding context and land uses; who may own and operate these parks; how they will function, look, and be used; and what kind of amenities may be found there. Finally, there is a general description of service area and size ranges. Context and location are particularly important for defining urban parks and will greatly influence the choice of the other elements. Collectively, these component elements define what is unique to urban parks in Fairfax County. Several of the county's designated mixed-use centers have urban design guidelines and those adopted guidelines should also be referenced for urban park guidance. Urban design guidelines and specific Area Plan guidance

will also address elements of the urban fabric such as open space and green areas that, while not parks as defined here in the Framework, remain important to the success of an urban environment.

Table 1: Design Elements

Element	Description
Context/Location	Urban parks are generally integrated into mixed-use developments, urban centers, and designated mixed-use centers in areas of the county that are planned or developed at an urban scale. The context and location of the urban park can result in activating public or private uses located nearby and vice versa. Well-conceived and executed design is critical to the viability of this type of park. To be successful, urban park locations need high visibility, easy access, and lots of pedestrian traffic.
Access	A key aspect of the urban park paradigm is the provision of public accessibility, regardless of ownership. Integration into other public and private uses as mentioned above is also important. Accessibility from the public realm, such as streets and sidewalks, extends the public realm into urban park spaces. Access is generally by pedestrian, bicycle or other non-motorized means and universal accessibility should be ensured. Urban parks should be provided in locations that are near transit facilities, trail systems and high pedestrian traffic areas. Connectivity among urban public spaces is also desirable.
Function/Purpose	The purpose and function of urban parks is to provide public spaces for human interaction and outdoor enjoyment in the urban context. Urban parks should include facilities that are pedestrian-oriented and provide visual enhancement, a sense of identity, and opportunities for enjoyment of outdoor open space, varied small-scale recreation spaces and performing and visual arts. Short-term, informal activities and programmed events during lunch hours and after-work hours can foster social interactions among users. From an urban design perspective, urban parks also assist in breaking up the building massing and in creating a rhythm for the development pattern. Urban park functions also include active pursuits related to recreation amenities and central civic space for community building activities.
Ownership, Management and Operation	Urban parks can be owned, managed, and/or administered by private land owners, community groups, public agencies and authorities (such as Fairfax County Park Authority, other governing or managing authorities or organizations), or quasi-public agencies and authorities (such as business improvement districts) or through joint public and private sector agreements for public benefit. Regardless of ownership, urban parks should be publicly-accessible (as described above) and cooperatively programmed.

Element	Description
Amenities	Typical amenities within urban parks include seating, tables, street furniture, public art, trails, visual elements, display space, signage, water features, casual food service, focal points, playgrounds, gazebos, lighting, bike racks, pedestrian connections, special landscaping, transit-oriented amenities, and/or security features. In larger urban parks, amenities should also include recreational facilities such as sport courts, fitness stations, athletic facilities, and/or open lawns (natural or artificial) that can be casually used or programmed for sports or events. Other amenities that may also be provided include off-leash dog areas, community gardens, demonstration gardens, restrooms, parking, food service, amphitheaters, and picnic shelters.
Form/Visuals	Well-conceived and executed design is critical to the viability of urban parks. Generally, urban parks consist of one or more defined spaces. These types of parks are smaller than typical suburban parks and should complement surrounding uses, context, design, natural features, and architecture. These spaces should be constructed of high quality hardscape and landscape materials that are durable and environmentally sound. Urban parks may range from a single to multiple defined spaces in design. Design should be consistent with design guidelines adopted for an area and should support transient, short visits and appeal to a range of users.
General Length of Stay	Depending on the context, surrounding uses and amenities offered, the length of stay will generally be less than two hours, but could last up to all day for special community events or festivals.
Size and Service Area	In urban areas, park size is typically less than five acres and often under ½ acre. The service area is generally within a 5-10 minute walking distance (or ¼ - ½ mile) from nearby offices, retail and residences. New developments generate need at a rate of 1.5 acres per 1,000 residents and 1.0 acre per 10,000 employees. Within urban, mixed-use development areas, a full complement of urban park types is desirable to create robust park networks.

B. URBAN PARK TYPES

Urban park design elements may be combined in various ways to create a range of urban park types. Five distinct types of urban parks emerge from the urban park elements: pocket parks, common greens, civic plazas, recreation-focused urban parks and linear parks (see definitions below). Urban park types range in size from the very small pocket park situated as a by-way on a pedestrian-oriented travel way to a large civic open space that encompasses many acres, contains diverse amenities, and accommodates large community gatherings. The services offered in an urban park can also range widely, from offering active recreation to interpreting cultural and natural resources.

Pedestrian ways and linear connections supplement and, in some cases, link the urban park spaces. Many of these linear spaces are required for development, redevelopment or public infrastructure and are important in connecting and supporting public open space. These connections are designed for both recreational and transportation use by pedestrians, cyclists, and other non-motorized means. Trails and pathways are continuous and range in width to accommodate a variety

of users. The connections may include amenities and/or design features such as trailheads, orientation features, seating, and wayfinding signage.

There are a number of supporting features that may share some common characteristics of urban parks, but which do not in and of themselves constitute an urban park. These features include building entryways, visual amenities, gateway features, landscaped connectors, and streetscape elements. While these features often support the urban park paradigm, they do not in and of themselves constitute an urban park.

The five urban park types span a continuum of purposes, uses, sizes and features that can flexibly accommodate a broad spectrum of recreational and leisure pursuits in urbanizing centers. Ideally, urban areas will contain a variety of urban park types in order to serve local leisure needs and support revitalization goals, and create or enhance an area's sense of culture, liveliness, and identity. The precise number, size and arrangement of the five park types in any given mixed-use center should be determined as warranted by local conditions, adopted plans and in accordance with an urban park implementation process.

It is important to pursue creative solutions to providing open space and recreation facilities in these areas. Creative urban park initiatives may include rooftop parks, unique programming areas, recreation facilities provided within commercial buildings, redevelopment at nearby existing parks and forging new park provider partnerships.

Pocket Park

Pocket parks are small-scale (usually less than one acre), open spaces incorporated into developments and designed for casual use by people working and living in the immediate area. A pocket park is a single defined space designed to provide limited casual open space to enjoy individually or in social interactions. These spaces may consist of hardscape elements or lawn and landscaped areas, seating and visual amenities. Pocket parks should be located so that they can best serve the immediate neighborhood. Pocket parks should be provided in areas of high-volume pedestrian activity, with easy access and high visibility to the street. Pocket parks should be distinct from building entrances and streetscape.

Common Green

Larger than pocket parks, common greens include flexible open spaces with open lawn areas, serving as the recreation and social focus of a neighborhood or larger area. Size will generally depend on the context, function and area, but should be a minimum of one acre. Although a central lawn will be the main focus of this type of park, it may be designed with multiple defined spaces offering a mix of complementary uses and/or large enough to support multiple simultaneous activities. The common green could function as unscheduled open space for uses such as picnicking and unstructured play, or be programmed for athletics, public gatherings, performances and special events. The common green may include facilities such as off-leash dog areas, community gardens, landscaping, water features, shade structures, gathering areas, amphitheaters, space for public art, and/or hardscape areas. Recreational amenities may be incorporated as complementary facilities, but do not predominate. Examples of recreational facilities include tot lots and playgrounds, small skate parks, fitness courses and paved trails, and sport courts. Common greens are often located in the middle of residential or mixed-use neighborhoods. They can serve as a central public gathering space or activity center, and frequently they help define the surrounding neighborhood or community.

Civic Plaza

This type of urban park includes public gathering spaces set aside for civic purposes and supporting commercial activities. Civic plazas are usually located at the intersection of important streets or other significant locations and serve as a focal point and unique placemaking feature. They are often located near office and mixed-use areas, transit, and other high-visibility, high pedestrian traffic areas. Public squares that are surrounded by public streets are also an example of this type of urban park. Flexible, programmable spaces in multiple defined spaces are generally included. Design will include primarily hardscape elements, but may include trees or other landscaping, seating, public art or water features. Size will generally depend on the context, function and area, but should be a minimum of one acre. Depending on size, civic plazas could support open air markets, summer concerts, festivals, outdoor exercise classes or special events. Recreation amenities may be incorporated as complementary facilities, but do not predominate.

Recreation-Focused Park

In urban and mixed-use areas, recreation needs should be addressed with the inclusion of facilities in an urban park setting to serve local residents, workers and visitors. This park type is distinguished by its primary function to provide recreation facilities for nearby residents and workers. Facilities such as athletic fields, multi-use courts, off-leash dog areas, and skate features should be provided. Facilities could be scheduled or casually used. Athletic fields should have synthetic turf and lighting to maximize use. Support facilities and amenities such as trails, seating, tot lots, shade structures, water features, picnic areas, restrooms, landscaping or hardscape should be provided to complement the recreational component. The size of the park should be appropriate to accommodate the recreation facilities located there. Recreation-focused parks should be located appropriately to address concerns of noise and field lighting on adjacent uses with buffers or other mitigation provided, when possible.

Linear Park

Linear parks are characterized by an elongated shape and usually occur in an area between destinations or points of interest and/or along streams and frequently double as connections. These parks can serve many different purposes including providing a variety of recreation facilities (e.g., fitness stations, dog exercise areas). Creation of continuous linear spaces for recreation provides an important amenity that can be linked with pedestrian and bicycle street elements. Linear parks can also provide opportunities for resource protection and can provide natural areas with trails and waysides for a combination of active and passive enjoyment. Linear greenways that utilize urban stream valleys for trails and trail connections are one such form of linear park.

The size and design of linear parks varies and depends on its context, function and area. Again, these parks frequently link other urban elements and may function as a green spine through an urban area. Due to the variety of linear parks, typical facilities will vary but will generally consist of a continuous multi-use trail, waysides and seating, and other active and/or passive recreation components.

APPENDIX 3

STANDARDS AND CRITERIA FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Public park and recreation providers traditionally employ a variety of standards and criteria for determining appropriate levels and areas of service and requirements for protection of significant and sensitive resources. Frequently, those standards may be expressed in terms of the relationships between population and the requisite number of acres of parkland or specific facility types. In the application of such criteria, care should be taken that minimum standards are not translated into acceptable levels of service.

The goal of park and recreation providers is to meet the needs and desires of the public to the extent possible under constraints of land and funding availability and sustainable development, and both the private and public sector will benefit from coordinated planning to achieve this end. If Fairfax County is to achieve its goal of a comprehensive parks, recreation, and open space system, established criteria and standards should be incorporated into both public and private land use decisions for public benefit. The standards represented below are the result of extensive research and analysis of public needs conducted as part of the Fairfax County Park Authority's Needs Assessment conducted in 2003.

The county utilizes two sets of guidelines to accomplish its objectives for the provision of park and recreation services. The first is the Park Classification System, presented in Appendix 1. The second guideline is a set of population-based standards for parkland acreage suitable for recreation and specific types of park facilities. The guidelines described below are countywide standards. Actual service levels will vary across the county depending on the facility type and location and population density in the service area.

A. PARKLAND ACREAGE STANDARDS

To support a balanced park system with diverse park experiences, park acreage standards are established for Local Parks and District and Countywide Parks and reflect distinct park service types:

1. **For Local Parkland in suburban areas, provide a minimum of 5 acres per 1,000 population. For Local Parkland in urban areas, provide a minimum of 1.5 acres per 1,000 residents and 1 acre per 10,000 employees.** In urban areas, Local Parks should be within $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of nearby offices, retail, and residences. In all other contexts (except within rural and semi-rural areas), all residents should live within 1 mile of a Local Park. Applicable acreage includes land suitable for recreation facilities in the following sites:
 - Publicly owned Local Parks
 - Privately owned but publicly accessible Local Parkland

This acreage standard is based on the average amount of land required to develop local-serving active recreation facilities per adopted standards. Generally, a minimum of 2.5 acres suitable for development of active recreation facilities is desirable within the suburban context; minimum acreage within an urban context may be as low as $\frac{1}{2}$ acre. Where additional land is required due to site characteristics, the total acreage required to accommodate these facilities should take precedence over the minimum acreage standards. For additional guidance on provision of Local Parkland within urban contexts, see Appendix 2, Urban Parks Framework.

2. **For District and Countywide parkland, provide a minimum of 13 acres per 1,000 population.** Applicable acreage includes land suitable for recreation uses provided on:
 - Publicly owned District and Countywide Parks
 - Regional, state and federal parks, or portions thereof, that provide District and Countywide-serving recreation opportunities

B. PARK FACILITY SERVICE LEVEL STANDARDS

The following countywide service level standards are established for core park facilities on a population basis. These standards are a starting point for area-specific analysis conducted to determine cumulative localized facility needs for planning purposes and to identify development and growth impacts. For example, in urban and designated mixed-use centers within the county, this analysis will take into account the development form and the demographics and use patterns associated with more urban communities.

Implementation of these standards will take place through the following mechanisms:

1. Public and private park and recreation facility providers should evaluate their contribution percentage levels compared to these standards, determine their respective roles in meeting these standards and plan their park systems or facilities accordingly.
2. Park Master Planning and Long-Range Planning processes
3. Parks Capital Improvement Planning and Programming
4. Seek developer commitments to offset development impact through the county Development Review Process
5. Park Land Acquisition Programs

Countywide service level standards established for park facilities are as follows:

Park Facility	Population-based Countywide Service Level Standard
Rectangle Fields (soccer, football, lacrosse, field hockey and cricket fields)	1 field/2,700
Adult Softball Diamonds with Skinned Infields	1 field/22,000
Youth Softball Diamonds with Skinned Infields	1 field/8,800
Youth Baseball Diamonds with Grassed Infields	1 field/7,200
Adult Baseball Diamonds with Grassed Infields	1 field/24,000
Trails (measured in miles)	Consistent with Adopted Countywide Trails Plan and Goal to Link Trails to Park Facilities
Playgrounds	1 playground/2,800

Park Facility	Population-based Countywide Service Level Standard
Multi-use Courts	1 court/2,100
Reservable Picnic Areas	1 site/12,000
Neighborhood Dog Parks (Typically less than 3 acres)	1 site/86,000
Regional Dog Parks (Typically more than 8 acres with special event features)	1 site/400,000
Neighborhood Serving Skate Parks- (Modular/Portable Types)	1 site/106,000
Countywide Skate Parks- (Larger Permanent/Fixed Type)	1 site/210,000
Golf (measured by number of golf holes)	1 hole/3,200
Nature Centers (measured in building square feet)	0.04 sf/person
RECenters including Indoor Aquatics, Fitness and other Community Uses (measured in building square feet)	1.1 sf/person
Indoor Gyms (measured in building square feet)	2.8 sf/person
Outdoor Family Aquatics Facilities	1 site/570,000
Horticulture/Garden Parks	1 site/350,000
Equestrian Facilities	1 site/595,000
Waterfront Parks	1 site/90,000

C. PARKLAND ACQUISITION CRITERIA

The Park Authority shall acquire land for the stewardship of natural and cultural resources, and the development of recreational facilities. Parkland acquisition opportunities take many forms including dedication, donation, fee simple purchase, lease agreements, partnerships, easements, and use of eminent domain powers. Fairfax County Park Authority Land Acquisition shall take into account:

1. The uniqueness and value of natural and cultural resources to be protected through acquisitions. Acreage of Resource Based Parks shall not be applied in meeting requirements for recreational facilities.

2. The amount of land necessary to meet county residents' needs for recreational opportunities consistent with adopted service level standards for Urban, Local and District/Countywide parkland. Parkland service level standards shall be reviewed and evaluated in conjunction with periodic needs assessments.
3. Identified needs within the service area may be met in various combinations of existing or newly acquired park sites or school sites subject to park classification criteria and site conceptual development plans.
4. Acreage of privately owned common open space, developed with local park facilities, may be applied in determining the adequacy of park and recreation areas to serve that residential development.
5. Maintenance and operational costs of property to be acquired prior to acquisition.

The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority land acquisition policy is to acquire land for the purpose of enhancing its current system of regional parks. Specific land acquisition interests and evaluation criteria include:

- The acquisition of large parcels for regional parks (generally more than 500 acres)
- The acquisition of adjacent lands for the enlargement of existing regional parks and connectivity with other parks, trails and greenways
- The acquisition of additional shoreline and watershed protection of the potable water resources within the region (within Fairfax County and beyond) to include the Potomac and Occoquan Rivers, Goose Creek, Bull Run and the Beaverdam Reservoir
- Opportunity for regional recreational facilities and potential for public use
- Regionally significant natural and historic resources
- Acquisition costs including possible grants, gifts and donations, and purchase cost relative to market value
- Other acquisition opportunities deemed regional in nature"