

# Natural Landscaping Policy & Application

Department of Public Works and Environmental Services  
*Working for You!*



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# Natural Landscaping (NL) Defined

*A landscaping approach through which the aesthetic and ecological functions of landscapes installed in the built environment can be improved, and through which natural areas can be restored, by preserving and recreating land and water features and native plant communities. Sustainable landscapes are formed which protect and restore natural ecosystem components, maximize the use of native plants, remove invasive plant species, reduce turf grass, reduce or eliminate chemical inputs, protect, create, and maintain healthy soils, and retain stormwater on-site. In natural areas only locally native plant species are used to provide the greatest possible ecological benefits. In built landscapes, most of the plant cover should be composed of native plant species that support wildlife and improve environmental conditions, although non-invasive non-native plants may be selectively used where appropriate.*

*-Fairfax County Draft NL Definition March 2019*



# Fairfax County Natural Landscaping

## Oakton Library (Providence District)



# Where Does NL Fit In?

## Natural Landscaping is Part of Many Related Programs

- Green Infrastructure – US EPA
- Environmental Site Design – VA DEQ - Stormwater Regulations
- Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)
- Envision – American Society of Civil Engineers
- Conservation Assistance Program (CAP) – NVSWCD
- Habitat at Home – Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
- BayScapes – USFWS Chesapeake Bay Program
- Plant NOVA Natives
- Living Buildings
- Ecological Restoration – Society for Ecological Restoration
- Audubon at Home – Audubon Society of Northern Virginia
- VA Master Naturalists
- Habitat Gardening for Wildlife – VA Master Gardeners
- Garden for Wildlife – National Wildlife Federation
- NoVAOutside – School-Age Green Educators



# Major Benefits and Goals of Natural Landscaping

1. Air Quality Improvement
2. Energy Conservation
3. Pesticide/Fertilizer Reduction
4. Water Quality Improvement
5. Stormwater Management
6. Ecosystem Management
7. Resource Use Reduction
8. Aesthetic value
9. Public Education
10. Community Engagement



# Fairfax County Natural Landscaping

Natural Landscaping Area  
King Abdullah Academy (Sully District)



Bioretention  
Laurel Hill Adaptive Reuse Area  
(Mt. Vernon District)



Tree Conservation Award Winning Projects



# Background of 2004-2007 NL Activity

- June 2004: Staff directed to develop plan and guidelines for “Aggressive and widespread use” of natural landscaping on County properties - DPWES, UFMD assigned as lead
- July 2005: Interagency Natural Landscaping Group formed
- October 2007: Interagency Natural Landscaping Committee Presented to BOSEC
  1. Natural Landscaping Guidelines
    - a) Fairfax County Natural Landscaping Manual
    - b) Natural Landscaping Implementation Plan
  2. Draft Policy Plan Amendment
    - a) Draft Policy Plan Text (see handout)



# Background of 2004-2007 NL Activity

## Natural Landscaping Manual

- Defines Natural Landscaping
- Conveys purpose, goals, and importance of natural landscaping
- Provides checklists to help facilitate planning and design
- Is adaptable for retrofitting existing facilities and designing new facilities



University of Virginia  
Residential Courtyard



# Background of 2004-2007 NL Activity

## Natural Landscaping Implementation Plan

- Establishes operational guidelines and identifies major elements to accomplish goals
- Specifies clear lines of communication for identifying, planning, and funding projects
- Ensures projects are monitored for success
  - Achieving natural landscaping goals
  - Collecting quantitative data for annual reports



Surrey Court HOA (Mt Vernon District)



# Fairfax County Natural Landscaping

Bio-retention Swale  
Stringfellow Park & Ride  
(Sully District)



Natural Landscaping  
National Wildlife Federation  
(Hunter Mill District)



# Background of 2018 NL Activity

- Bee-Friendly Board Matter – 2015
- Board Matter – April 10, 2018
  - “...that the Board direct the Park Authority, DPWES, Urban Forestry Division, and FMD to come to a future Environmental Committee meeting to provide a progress report on the implementation outlined in Chairman Connolly’s June 21, 2004 Board Matter.”
- Natural Landscaping Committee Convenes 2018
  - County Executive’s Office
  - Department of Planning and Zoning
  - DPWES – UFMD, SWPD, CAP
  - Park Authority
  - Facilities Management Department
- BOSEC Presentation October 2, 2018
  - Changes to NL definition
  - Proposed Comprehensive Plan Language

Sequoia Park (Mason District)



# NL Next Steps – Comprehensive Plan Amendment

**ADD:** Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2017 Edition, Policy Plan, Public Facilities, as amended through July 25, 2017, page 4:

**Objective 6: Design, retrofit and maintain public facilities and sites in an environmentally-sensitive manner.**

Policy a. Apply, within the design of public facilities and their associated sites, and in consideration of factors including costs, health, safety/security, and the broader context of facility and site needs (e.g., recreational uses), low impact development (LID) practices and natural landscaping methods where feasible to minimize resource consumption, reduce stormwater runoff, decrease life-cycle maintenance requirements, increase the habitat value of each site, and increase soil and plant health.

Policy b. Where opportunities arise in consideration of the factors identified in Policy a above, retrofit and maintain existing facilities and sites with natural landscaping and LID methods/practices.

Policy c. Ensure that natural landscaping and LID practices are monitored and maintained such that they will remain viable over time.

Policy d. Apply green building practices within the design of public facilities.

-Fairfax County Draft March 2019



# NL Next Steps

1. BOS to Authorize a Comprehensive Plan Amendment to the Policy Plan.
2. BOSEC endorsement of budget approach to fund natural landscaping.
  - a. During the budget development process, staff should identify cost-effective natural landscaping retrofit projects that support the county's Natural Landscape Implementation Plan.
  - b. Additional funds shall be included in the county's Environmental Improvement Program (Environmental Initiatives) that would be earmarked to support the Natural Landscape projects.
3. Form a core team of professional staff coordinated by UFMD under Community of Practice.
  - a. County Executive will form a core team of professional staff coordinated by UFMD under Community of Practice detailed in the Tree Action Plan 2.0 to include staff from FMD, DPWES, the Park Authority and NVSWCD.
  - b. They will promote and provide review of natural landscaping and related practices and opportunities.



# Fairfax County Natural Landscaping

## Poplar Ford Park Meadow Restoration (Sully District)



Before



After

# NL Next Steps

- Staff stakeholder meeting April 8, 2019
- Funding for on-going maintenance
- Revision of county contracts and specifications to include consideration for natural landscaping



Green Springs Gardens Park (Mason District)

# Fairfax County Natural Landscaping

## Fred's Oak Rain Garden (Springfield District)



Before

After



# Fairfax County Natural Landscaping

## Government Center Meadow and Tree Planting to Support Pollinators (Braddock District)



# Fairfax County Natural Landscaping



Longfellow Middle School Living Classroom  
(Dranesville District)



Dolly Madison Library Green Roof  
(Dranesville District)

# Fairfax County Natural Landscaping

## Banks Property Stream Restoration (Lee District)



Before



2018

Three years after Restoration



# Fairfax County Natural Landscaping

Great Falls Library (Dranesville District)



Surrey Court HOA (Mt Vernon District)



# Additional Information

## For additional information, please contact

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