

**Natural Landscaping at County Facilities**  
**PA 2018-CW-2CP**  
**Proposed Language**  
**Planning Commission Environment Committee**  
**September 26, 2019**

**Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2017 Edition, Policy Plan, Public Facilities, Amended Through 4-9-2019, Pages 2-4.**

**COUNTYWIDE OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES**

The overall Public Facilities element of the Comprehensive Plan is based on general objectives which apply to the county's public facility planning effort as a whole and specific functional program areas in particular. These objectives therefore should be viewed as the key principles for establishing a facility network which is responsive to the county's ability to pay, community expectations, the public health, safety and general welfare, and neighborhood and land use impacts.

**Objective 1:        Locate new facilities to provide convenient service to the greatest number of people or service consumers and users.**

- Policy a.        Site facilities appropriately to the area they are intended to serve.
- Policy b.        Reduce service area overlap between like facilities, unless overlap is necessary to correct service deficiencies.
- Policy c.        Site facilities in accordance with locational standards that maintain accepted levels of service while reducing duplication or underutilization.
- Policy d.        Ensure that minimum populations or service thresholds are projected to be met before facility construction is undertaken.

**Objective 2:        Construct and maintain facilities in accord with expected levels of service objectives and fiscal limitations.**

- Policy a.        Program the establishment of facilities through the county's Capital Improvement Program. Projects programmed for construction in the CIP should either be 1) identified in the plan text or on the Plan map in accordance with adopted service levels; 2) be demonstrated as particularly urgent to meet public health or safety needs or required service levels; or 3) be supported by a needs analysis reviewed both by the Offices of Comprehensive Planning and Management and Budget and supported by the County Executive's recommendation as evidenced by CIP inclusion.

Policy b. Follow adopted public facility standards to identify facility requirements associated with level of need, appropriate quantity and size, and relationship to population.

Policy c. Ensure adequate maintenance of existing facilities.

**Objective 3: Balance the provision of public facilities with growth and development.**

Policy a. Construct new facilities in size and quantity which is consistent with projected population needs.

Policy b. Ensure that adequate facility space and services are available, programmed in the CIP, or provided by new development, before increasing planned intensities through revision of the Comprehensive Plan.

Policy c. Assess the adequacy and need for public facilities in the rezoning process.

Policy d. Phase increases in development intensity with the establishment of necessary facilities, when rezoning to higher intensities is to occur prior to the establishment or programming of adequate facilities.

Policy e. Designate and reserve future public facility sites that will be required by future growth and development.

Policy f. Ensure that when existing public facility sites are no longer needed for their original use, the land formerly used for that purpose is reserved, to the extent possible and prudent, for other public uses.

Policy g. Acquire, as fiscally possible, sites for public facilities in advance of demand either through purchase or dedication.

**Objective 4: Mitigate the impact of public facilities on adjacent planned and existing land uses.**

Policy a. Locate public facilities in areas of compatible land use, if service efficiency and cost effectiveness can be achieved. Siting facilities in areas of different land uses is acceptable and at times required, to provide centrally located public facilities which are critical to the public interest as long as the integrity of the Comprehensive Plan is not impinged.

Policy b. Co-locate public facilities whenever appropriate to achieve convenience and economies of scale, as long as the integrity of the Comprehensive Plan is not impinged.

- Policy c. Design facilities to promote and enhance the community identity of existing character.
- Policy d. Ensure that public facilities are properly screened and buffered in order to mitigate visual impact on adjacent planned development of a different use or nature.
- Policy e. Ensure that site size and development conforms to all requirements of the Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance and exceeds site acreage requirements, as possible, to achieve maximum compatibility with surrounding land uses.

**Objective 5: Acquire sites which are appropriate for the facility's specific purpose. Apply acceptable criteria when evaluating public facility sites.**

- Policy a. Consider accessibility in siting facilities. In general, public facilities should have access to primary arterial roadways. Exceptions to this locational principle include facilities with a community pedestrian orientation, such as a neighborhood park or an elementary school.
- Policy b. Locate facilities on sites which have adequate acreage for short-term needs, but can also accommodate expansion.
- Policy c. Avoid areas of environmental sensitivity except where site acquisition is in support of open space.
- Policy d. Evaluate engineering considerations, such as slopes and soils and other factors pertinent to knowing the extent of the site's development cost.
- Policy e. Locate, as possible, facilities on sites with public water and sewer.
- Policy f. Locate facilities on sites preferably having mature vegetation, capable of providing a natural buffer and enhancing building design.
- Policy g. Use the 2232 review process to determine the siting suitability and appropriateness of facilities in relation with the Comprehensive Plan.

**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.

**ADD:** Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2017 Edition, Policy Plan, Glossary, as amended through October 30, 2018, page 11:

**NATURAL LANDSCAPING:** A landscaping approach through which the aesthetic and ecological functions of landscapes installed in the built environment are improved, and through which natural areas are restored by preserving and recreating land and water features and native plant communities. Sustainable landscapes are formed by protecting and restoring natural ecosystem components; maximizing the use of native plants; removing invasive plant species; reducing areas of unnecessary grass; reducing or eliminating synthetic inputs; protecting, creating, and maintaining healthy soils; and retaining rainwater 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 is composed of native plant species that support wildlife and improve environmental conditions, although non-invasive non-native plants may be selectively used where appropriate.