

## PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

### Intent

A Countywide system of well-maintained parks, park and recreation facilities, and public open space that meet a variety of the active and passive recreational needs of Prince William County citizens of all ages is an important service the County provides to its residents. These parks and open space also preserve trees and green areas that make the County more attractive to those who live here, those who visit, and those who wish to invest in the County.

Parks and open space in Prince William County are to be provided Countywide according to level of service (LOS) standards adopted by the Prince William County Park Authority and contained within this Plan. These standards address the kinds and size of parks and other recreation facilities needed to meet the needs of County residents.

The LOS standards are based upon existing conditions within the County and on recognized and accepted national, state, and County standards. They also reflect resident demand for these facilities. The LOS standards ultimately quantify monetary costs for providing Countywide parks and other recreation facilities for new residential and non-residential development in the County. These LOS standards are the basis for the County's Capital Improvement Program and for County requests for monetary contributions for park and recreation facilities to serve this new development.

The components of the Parks and Open Space Plan are:

- Intent, Goals, Policies, and Action Strategies
- Baseline LOS standards and criteria guidelines
- Current Park Needs by Park Type (Figure 1)
- Projected Park Land Needs (Table 1)
- Level of Service Standards for Parks and Open Space (Appendix A)
- Map 1: Parks and Open Space Map (fold-out map)

The Parks and Open Space Plan Map is conceptual in nature and does not show the actual alignments of the Class I, Class II, and Class III trails along public roadways and/or publicly owned and/or privately conveyed or donated "greenway" alignments. Individual land features, unsuitable terrain, property ownership, and citizen needs will dictate specific alignments.

The Parks and Open Space Plan Map delineates already dedicated or proposed public walking, biking, hiking, and horse riding trails adjacent to public rights-of way and already dedicated or donated greenways—or linear corridors of open space that connect and protect natural, recreational, and cultural resources in the County. Additions to the Parks and Open Space Plan Map may take place on public property, within the public right of way, or on private property—through voluntary donations by

citizens and through negotiated proffers from landowners and/or the development community, as development occurs. Private property owners are not obligated to participate in the trails and greenways program. Private property immediately adjacent to the proposed trail or greenway shall not be affected by that trail or greenway without consent by the owner of that property.

Implementation of the Parks and Open Space Plan Map shall not negatively affect the environment. Neither the County nor the Park Authority will condemn private property to implement the Park Authority's Greenways and Trails Master Plan, as approved by the Park Authority Board.

**GOAL:** Provide a park system and programs of a quantity, variety, and quality appropriate to meet the needs of the residents of Prince William County.

**GOAL:** Meet established level of service standards to ensure adequate sites and facilities needed to carry out an effective park and recreation program are provided.

**REC-POLICY 1:** Ensure the consistency and coordination of interagency planning techniques to provide for an appropriate quantity, variety, and quality of park sites and facilities.

**ACTION STRATEGIES:**

- 1. Implement baseline LOS standards and criteria for park sites and facilities, as outlined below, based on the characteristics of the development and proximity of park sites and facilities. Such standards shall be applied Countywide throughout the development review process. The standards are as follows:

**ACREAGE STANDARDS FOR PARK SITES:**

**Neighborhood Parks:**

General Definition: Relatively small local parks designed to serve densely populated areas and that include specialized equipment and facilities.

- Acres/1000 persons: ----- 1.0 acres
- Size:----- 5 to 20 acres
- Service Area: ----- 1.5 to 2 miles
- Population served:----- 3,000 - 7,000

**Community Parks:**

General Definition: Larger recreation parks designed to serve urban and rural residents and that include wider range of equipment and facilities.

- Acres/1000 persons:----- 4.0 acres
- Size:----- 20 to 100 acres
- Service Area:----- 2 to 10 miles
- Population served:----- 7,000 - 17,000

**Regional Parks:**

General Definition: Large parks designed to serve a wide geographic area with a diverse range of equipment and facilities.

- Acres/1000 persons:----- 6.0 acres
- Size:----- 100+ acre
- Service Area:----- 10+ miles
- Population served:----- 17,000

**Special Use Parks:**

General Definition: Highly specialized parks designed to serve the entire County with unique facilities and activities, such as marinas, historic areas, recreation centers, golf courses, equestrian facilities, greenway and equestrian trails, and similar facilities.

- Acres/1000 persons:----- 2.8 acres
- Size:----- Dependent on activity/use
- Service Area:----- Countywide/20+ miles
- Population served:----- 25,000+

**Standards for Neighborhood and Community Park Facilities:**

	<b>PWCPA Std. (facility/pop. served)</b>
<b>ACTIVE FACILITIES</b>	
PLAYFIELDS	
Baseball	1/6,000
Little League	1/4,000
Softball	1/4,000
Football	1/15,000
Soccer	1/2,000
COURTS	
Tennis	1/5,000
Basketball	1/5,000
Volleyball	1/10,000
OTHER	
Gymnasium	1/35,000
Fitness/Trail	1 mi./10,000
Playground/Tot Lots	1/5,000
<b>PASSIVE FACILITIES</b>	
Nature Centers	1/100,000
Nature/Greenway Trails	1 mi/500
Amphitheaters (stage and seating for approx. 300)	1/100,000

2. Create and maintain records of participation rates and demand for services for use in future park analysis.
3. Create and maintain an inventory of existing private sector and other jurisdictional parkland and facilities for use in future park analysis.
4. Apply current and future population data by Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) Analysis Zones to determine needs analysis based on individual park LOS, rather than by magisterial district. Provide current and updated demographic data relevant to parks and facilities to the Park Authority on a regular and ongoing basis.
5. Assist the Park Authority in soliciting funding from appropriate governmental agencies for the purpose of acquisition, development, renovation, and maintenance of County parks, trails, open space, and recreational sites and facilities.
6. Coordinate, where feasible, park and facility planning with the recommendations of the *Virginia Outdoor Plan*, to optimize the informational gains and other benefits associated with coordinated intergovernmental planning.
7. Coordinate interagency planning efforts to implement a Countywide, comprehensive trails and greenways system—including trails for pedestrian, nonmotorized vehicles, and horses under saddle and on harness. Connectivity between parks via trails, sidewalks, greenways, and linear corridors shall be encouraged.

**REC-POLICY 2:** Acquire and maintain park acreage and facility development at a rate consistent with population growth and in accordance with adopted standards, through the development process and other means, as appropriate.

**ACTION STRATEGIES:**

1. Update the number of persons/dwelling unit size coefficient within the Design and Construction Standards Manual to reflect figures derived from the Prince William County population forecasts for MWCOG.
2. Update periodically the property value coefficient—upon which the calculation of fair-share contributions is based—to more accurately reflect existing and varying property values throughout the County.
3. Encourage voluntary monetary contributions from developers where land dedications would not meet minimum acreage standards for each park category.
4. Accept only those dedications of public park sites and facilities that are readily accessible to the general public and not just to residents of the proposed development.
5. Encourage the use of conservation easements or restrictive covenants—as appropriate—by private landowners, in order to protect and preserve historic sites and sensitive environmental areas.
6. Encourage the use of public-private partnerships for the purposes of acquiring, constructing and/or operating parks and park facilities.
7. Encourage developers incorporating pools in new developments to construct 25-meter, six-lane community pools designed to meet the needs of community and competitive swimming.

**REC-POLICY 3:** Ensure that park sites are located and designed in a manner that optimizes their accessibility, safety, and usefulness to the populations intended to be served.

**ACTION STRATEGIES:**

1. Locate, where possible, community and regional parks on major collector and arterial roadways, to minimize the potential traffic impacts on residential neighborhoods.
2. Provide convenient, well-marked, well-defined entrance points of access for trails within the Countywide trails and greenways system. Where possible, locate these entrance points at activity centers—such as park locations, public facilities (schools

and libraries), public transit, residential communities, and private businesses—and where such trails and greenways have been provided through voluntary conveyance or are on public property.

3. Utilize the *Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED)* practices of the Prince William County Police Department for points of access to trails and greenways and in trail and greenway designs.
4. Increase access for boating, fishing, and beach activities along the Potomac and Occoquan Rivers and along other public waters in the County.
5. Assist and support state efforts to locate and develop public fishing access sites in Prince William County.
6. Coordinate with the Prince William County Area Agency on Aging to ensure that there are adequate park facilities—located in the proximity of senior citizen centers—to serve the specialized needs of senior citizens.
7. Collocate parks and schools to optimize the shared use of facilities.

**REC-POLICY 4:** Promote and encourage the establishment of a Countywide system of biking, hiking, and horse trails and greenways, consistent with the Park Authority's Parks and Open Space Map and Trails Plan.

#### **ACTION STRATEGIES:**

1. Promote the implementation of the Park Authority's trails and greenways system—with the assistance of citizen groups, the development community, and the Virginia Department of Transportation—in order to link public property and the County's natural/historic/recreational resources, neighborhoods, employment centers, transit facilities, and other public facilities.
2. Include—in planning for the trails and greenways system and working with the various public and private groups assisting the Park Authority in implementing that system all floodways—existing utility and conservation easements, abandoned railroad beds, and other appropriate sites as potential trail and/or greenway segments.
3. Create designated stream valley (linear) parks to be incorporated into the Countywide trails and greenways system, to be provided through voluntary contributions by landowners or through Park Authority purchase of the land within the proposed stream valley park.
4. Coordinate efforts between the Park Authority and the County to establish standards and guidelines for the dedication of land and the acquisition of easements from private property owners for the Countywide trails and greenways

system. Such standards should recognize that the system will provide a variety of benefits—including recreation, environmental protection, economic development and non-motorized transportation. These standards shall address:

- Topographic standards for trail construction, including maximum slopes and drainage.
- Environmental concerns for wildlife, water quality, and plant life.
- Trail destinations and connections.

Such standards should recognize that the system will provide a variety of benefits including recreation, environmental protection, economic development, and non-motorized transportation. Such standards should include, but not be limited to, the following:

- **Consistency**—The acquisition of alignments for additional trails and greenways should be consistent with the County's Long-Range Land Use Plan Map and the standards established for the Park Authority's Parks and Open Space Plan Map.
  - **Connections**—Proposed land or easements to be dedicated should provide connections to existing or future trails or greenways.
  - **Accessibility**—Proposed land dedications and easements should serve multiple needs and be accessible to the general public. Potential sites and easements should be judged on location criteria that include linkages to existing trails, trip origins, service to the greatest number of users, and linkages to public and private facilities.
  - **Maintenance and Liability**—Responsibilities for maintenance and liabilities associated with the type and use of a trail should be clearly defined, prior to construction of each segment.
5. Maintain and update standards governing construction of trails. Standards should consider, but not be limited to, the following factors:
- **Surfaces and Widths**—Trail surfaces and widths should be appropriate to the expected user types, intensity of use, and maintenance levels expected.
  - **Access Points**—Frequency and location of access points should relate to activity centers and transportation facilities.
  - **Lighting**—Adequate lighting should be provided where trails traverse security risk areas and serve users of public transit facilities.
  - **Environmental Conditions**—Trails should be designed and constructed with minimal impact to the County's environmental, cultural, and historic resources.
6. Encourage the use of tax benefits as an incentive for property owners to provide trails and greenways and/or restrictive and conservation easements to promote connections between existing and planned trails and greenways where such facilities are identified on the Long-Range Land Use Plan Map.

7. Cooperate with local, state, regional, and federal planning agencies to seek private donations of land or other voluntary means and conveyance of public property to develop the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail corridor along Prince William County's eastern boundary as a segment of a regional trails and greenways network.
8. Provide—through private donations of land or other voluntary means and conveyance of public property—trails and greenways for passive recreational purposes along the Occoquan Reservoir and Lake Manassas, to provide for passive recreation needs, with the added benefit of protecting the public drinking water supply.
9. Assure the construction of Class I and Class II bicycle trails within the public right-of-way as development occurs and/or as roadways are upgraded. Encourage linkages of these trails with established trails in accordance with the Transportation Plan
10. Promote cooperation with surrounding jurisdictions and regional planning authorities, to provide an inter-jurisdictional trails and greenways system through the cooperation and participation of the private and public sectors.
11. Work with local citizens and private organizations with an interest in trails and greenways, to assist in encouraging private participation in and maintenance of the trails and greenways system.
12. Consider incorporating scenic vistas and natural viewsheds—identified through the Environment Plan—into the trails and greenways system, as appropriate.
13. Encourage developers to collocate—where appropriate—trails and greenways within sewer line easements, utility corridors, utility easements, and buffers alongside stream valleys and roads, to minimize land acquisition and disruption of the natural environment.
14. Encourage the construction and maintenance of trails and greenways within private developments that feed into the Countywide trails and greenways system.
15. Consider conveying to the Park Authority any unused rights-of-way or other unused, abandoned County land.



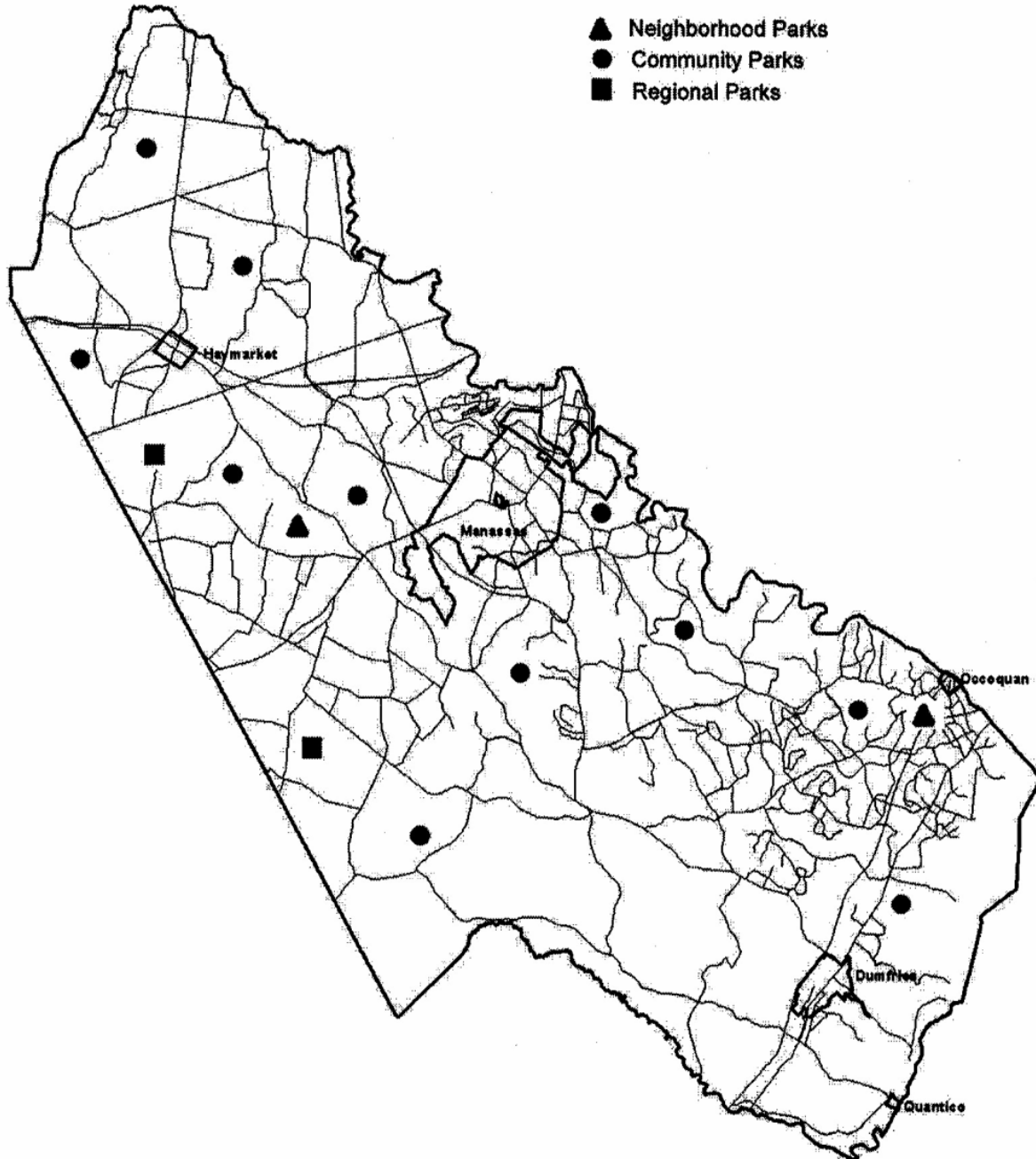
**REC-POLICY 5:** Optimize the use of existing parks and related facilities.

**ACTION STRATEGIES:**

1. Utilize, where possible, monetary contributions to provide needed facilities to existing park sites.
2. Renovate and expand, where possible—in accordance with the guidelines of the Community Design Plan—existing park acreage and facilities to address identified demands.

Figure 1

### Current Park Needs by Park Type



**TABLE 1**  
**PROJECTED PARK LAND NEEDS BY**  
**EXISTING AND PROJECTED POPULATION**

Park Type	Standard	Existing Acreage	Proffered Acreage	2000 Population 280,113 Additional Acreage Needed	2010 Population 363,300 Additional Acreage Needed	2025 Population 416,700 Additional Acreage Needed
Neighborhood	1.0 acre/1,000 population	255	75	26	108	86
Community	4.0 acres/1,000 population	625	40	498	828	1,002
Regional	6.0 acres/1,000 population	1,261	0	424	919	1,239
Special Use	2.8 acres/1,000 population	747	246	40	271	174
Leased	No standard	270	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Total</b>	<b>13.8 acres/1,000 population</b>	<b>3,158</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>987</b>	<b>2,125</b>	<b>2,501</b>

## Notes:

- (1) Source: PWC Planning Office Employment, Population, and Household 5-year forecasts (2000-2025 Employment, Population, and Household Round 6.3 (staff) forecasts
- (2) Reflects only property owned by PWCPA
- (3) Sums have been rounded to the nearest whole number.
- (4) Table assumes that all proffered acreage is part of the Park Authority's land inventory by December 31, 2014

## APPENDIX A

### LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS FOR PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

New development presents demands for Countywide parks and open space facilities. It is important that Prince William County provide both current and future residents adequate recreation services that meet current and future demand according to established levels of service. The future demand for parks, open space, and recreation facilities must be measured, and means must be identified for maintaining the established Countywide level of service for these important services after new development occurs.

All applications for a rezoning or special use permit for residential dwelling units shall contain the following information:

- Number and types of dwelling units proposed.
- Number of new residents anticipated in the proposed residential development.
- Number and type of recreational facilities or number of acres of parkland to be provided on site (i.e., within the proposed development).

The following represents LOS standards for parks, recreation, and open space:

- Service area (i.e., travel time boundaries).
- Facility/population served (size and types).

It shall be determined that LOS standards have been met if the following conditions are met:

- The applicant has provided a monetary contribution in an equitable amount to provide park and recreation facilities, at the established LOS standards contained in the Parks and Open Space Plan. Alternatively, the applicant can dedicate a park site or park sites, dedicate park facilities, provide adequate recreation sites and/or facilities on-site to address the identified shortfall, or provide funding for parks and park facilities, or a combination of one or more of these alternative mitigation measures, so long as that mitigation is acceptable to the Park Authority.

Rezoning and/or special use permit applications that are found by the Prince William County Park Authority to generate a shortfall between the new demand and existing and projected and already funded parks and park facilities without committing to mitigation measures that are acceptable to the Park Authority shall be found inconsistent with the Parks and Open Space Plan.

The methodology for determining equitable monetary contributions for new development is outlined in the *Policy Guide for Monetary Contributions*, Prince William County Planning Office.