

# Prince William County Comprehensive Plan

## Parks

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### INTENT

Prince William County, through the Park Authority, will provide a countywide system of well-maintained and managed parks, containing recreation facilities, natural and cultural areas and public open space that meet a variety of active and passive recreation and conservation needs for county residents of all ages. It is important to recognize that the way the county manages development and change, specifically the balance between protection and conservation of land and historic sites with residential and commercial growth and new infrastructure, will have an immense impact on future generations.

Prince William County is one of a few jurisdictions on the Atlantic Seaboard that cover three geologic provinces, extending from the Valley and Ridge province at Bull Run Mountain to the Atlantic Coastal Plain on the tidal Potomac River. This natural heritage results in a great diversity of plant and animal life found in mountain streams, forests, meadows, tidal marshes, and nearly 30 miles of Potomac River shoreline as well as a rich cultural heritage.

The quality of life for residents of Prince William County is not only linked to the availability of a well-maintained system of parks, recreation facilities, and public open space, but also to the quality of the natural and cultural resources they contain. The county's diverse natural environments as well as cultural landscapes such as farmland and historic sites, influence the way we spend our leisure time, determine whether we have clean air and water, and provide habitat for plants and animals. They shape the character of the community, strengthen the county's economy, preserve links to the past, attract tourists, provide corridors for trails and a non-motorized transportation, and connect key resources.

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Parks in Prince William County are to be provided countywide according to facilities level of service (LOS) standards adopted by the Prince William County Park Authority and the Board of County Supervisors and contained within this Plan. These standards address the kinds and size of parks and facilities needed to meet the conservation and recreational needs of county residents. In addition to county parks, schools provide a variety of active recreation facilities to meet recreational needs of 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 a countywide park system 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 new development.

### DEFINITIONS

**Parks:** Lands set aside for recreation use and/or the preservation and management of natural and cultural resources. Parks are a form of open space. Public parks are those lands owned, leased or secured under easement or use agreement by a political body for the benefit of the citizens and managed for recreation and resource protection purposes. Parks consist of three main components: active recreation, passive recreation, and conservation areas.

**Private Parks:** Privately owned land and/or facilities providing recreation and/or resource protection services.

**Active Recreation:** Uses involving development of a land area and landscape alterations to provide the construction of buildings, fields, courses and other related infrastructure to support the activities. Active recreation also often produces light, noise or visual intrusion on their surroundings. Examples include activities or sports requiring managed fields, courts, swimming pools, tracks, boat launches or piers, or indoor program or classroom space, golf, mountain biking, equestrian facilities, orienteering, hunting, etc.

**Passive Recreation:** Uses that generally require or result in little or no alteration of the landscape and produce little or no light, noise or visual intrusion on their surroundings. Passive uses may require trails, small footprint buildings for rest rooms or visitor centers, parking, etc. Examples may include hiking, jogging, birding, photography, nature study, fishing, canoeing or kayaking (depending on the access needs), biking on designated trails, equestrian trails, etc.

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**Conservation Areas:** Land areas set aside for natural and/or cultural resource protection that are protected by easements, code or ordinance restrictions, or federal, state or county designation. The primary purpose is to protect, research and manage significant natural and/or cultural resources. Passive uses may be allowed within conservation areas. Decisions about the management of conservation areas and what activities are to be permitted within them will be based on site evaluations, research and empirical data to determine whether the proposed practices or uses are compatible with resource protection.

**Open Space:** For the purposes of the Comprehensive Plan, open space is defined as areas of land generally lacking in man-made structures and set aside to preserve natural or cultural resources, provide for passive recreation, employed as cultivated fields or pastures, or existing in a natural and undeveloped state. Open space may include nature preserves, historic sites, farms, parks, forests, floodplains, wetlands, etc., and may include some structures, parking areas, roads, trails and facilities that support the use of the land.

**Natural Resources:** Biotic (living organisms such as plants, animals, fungi, bacteria, etc.) and abiotic components (non-living things such as soils, rock, water, air, light, chemical compounds, etc.) and the communities, landscapes and ecosystems that they make up.

**Cultural Resources:** Physical evidence of any past human activity identifiable through field survey, historical documentation or oral history. These include archaeological sites, man-made objects, historic buildings, structures, objects or districts, cemeteries and the landscapes in which they exist.

**Cultural Heritage:** Cultural resources, history and practices such as floodways, farming, medicinal arts, crafts, industry, social and religious traditions, arts and literature, military traditions and skills, woodcraft and other human activities that help the present generations know and understand the people, places and events that came before them.

### GOALS, POLICIES AND ACTION STRATEGIES

**GOAL 1: PROVIDE A PARK SYSTEM, FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS OF A QUANTITY, VARIETY, AND QUALITY APPROPRIATE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE CURRENT AND FUTURE RESIDENTS OF PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY.**

**PK POLICY 1:** Preserve at least 10% of the total land area of Prince William County in public county-owned park land.

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### Action Strategies:

1. Conduct and maintain an accurate inventory of existing public and private park lands and facilities. In order to be included in the inventory of public park land and facilities, private parks must be accessible to all members of the public under permanent easement and/or irrevocable agreement.
2. Collocate parks and schools to the maximum extent possible to optimize the shared use of facilities. Elementary and middle school parcels should contain at least five contiguous acres dedicated for park use.
3. Acquire lands in areas of high population density to serve current populations.
4. Acquire lands in areas in less populated areas in order to take advantage of remaining larger land holdings and lower acquisition costs.
5. Parkland statistics developed for the purpose of assessing the adequacy of service levels shall include only parks and facilities owned by the county or privately owned properties that are permanently protected and accessible to the public.
6. County owned land designated for public open space or park use shall not be converted to another use or sold. Land may be traded in some circumstances if the replacement land provides an equal or greater resource protection and/or recreation value to the public and/or it offers greater access or connectivity to other park lands, facilities or resources.
7. Land proffered to the county or acquired by the county that is classified as resource protection area (RPA) should be conveyed to the Park Authority.
8. Undeveloped land such as utility or transportation rights-of-way, County property or land intended as open space that meet public park recreation, resource protection or connectivity needs should be conveyed to the Park Authority.
9. Update the Zoning Ordinance to include protection for scenic vistas and natural viewsheds – identified through the Cultural Resources and Environment chapters – and prioritize these areas for incorporation into the county’s parks system and/or open space network, as appropriate.
10. Coordinate park planning efforts with the recommendations of the Virginia Outdoors Plan, the Virginia Wildlife Plan, and the Virginia Natural Heritage Resources Assessment, and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources’ Cultural Resources Inventory.

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11. Coordinate park planning efforts with the plans for Quantico, Prince William Forest Park, Manassas National Battlefield Park, Leesylvania State Park, Conway Robinson State Forest, Bull Run Mountain Conservancy, Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, the Occoquan Bay and Featherstone National Wildlife Refuges and others, as appropriate.
12. Coordinate Park and open space planning with adjoining jurisdictions and with the towns of Occoquan, Quantico, Dumfries, and Haymarket.
13. Coordinate with the Prince William County Area Agency on Aging to ensure that there are adequate park facilities – located in proximity to concentrations of senior citizens – to serve the specialized needs of senior citizens.

**PK POLICY 2:** The county shall encourage the dedication and preservation of private lands for parks and open space.

Action Strategies:

1. Encourage the dedication of land and the use of conservation easements or restrictive covenants – as appropriate – by private landowners to preserve open space, provide park land and to protect natural and cultural resources.
2. Ensure that public uses on private land in developments are guaranteed by easement and/or written into Homeowners/civic (HOA) association covenants so that they cannot be changed without county consent through a public process.

**GOAL 2: ENSURE THE AVAILABILITY OF ADEQUATE FUNDING IN ORDER TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITIES TO ACQUIRE PARK LAND AND DEVELOP APPROPRIATE FACILITIES.**

**PK POLICY 3:** Research and incorporate funding opportunities from diverse sources into efforts to obtain park land as well as for new facilities and programs.

Action Strategies:

1. Maintain current and accurate lists of existing and unfunded needs to be used to secure funding and prioritize spending for land acquisition, facility development and maintenance and recreation improvements.

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2. Seek citizen approval to issue park bonds at least every four years.
3. Prince William County should follow other jurisdictions such as Boulder, CO (.25 cents) and Fauquier County that have used voter referenda to approve special taxes to support parks/recreation/open space.
4. Periodically update 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.
5. Encourage voluntary monetary contributions from developers where land dedications would not meet minimum acreage standards for each park category.
6. Encourage voluntary monetary contributions from individuals, companies and private foundations for park land acquisition and facility development and maintenance.
7. Establish a park foundation to build partnerships, raise funds, grow an endowment, secure grants and support park efforts, projects and programs.

**PK POLICY 4:** Greater creativity and flexibility in seeking and taking advantage of land acquisition opportunities.

### Action Strategies:

1. Update the Zoning Ordinance, including the Rural Cluster component, to encourage donations of protected open space for public uses.
2. The county needs to aggressively seek and take advantage of land acquisition opportunities. This could include utilizing an independent process for acquisition of park land, through organizations such as the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust or others, in order to take advantage of opportunities that require quick action and/or offer unique opportunities to preserve resources or obtain lands for high priority active recreation needs.
3. Secure Merrimac Farm as permanently protected and preserved open space that is available for public use, taking advantage of the matching fund opportunity provided by the United States Marine Corps and others.

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4. Investigate the benefits of establishing a private conservancy fund for the purpose of purchasing privately held lands for preservation purposes and seeking perpetual conservation easements to preserve open space.
5. As part of the rezoning and special use permits process prioritize the donation of developable and sensitive land to satisfy identified recreation or resource protection needs.
6. Prioritize the acquisition of existing publicly owned properties and privately owned properties adjacent to public land that contain sensitive resources. In particular, 5901 Davis Ford Road (Prince William County Service Authority property) should be acquired for park land.
7. Other priorities for park land or access acquisition include the transfer of publicly owned land at Dove's Landing from the Board of Supervisors to the Park Authority for passive recreation uses.
8. Seek opportunities to gain access to water resources for recreation uses to include pursuing discussions with the City of Manassas to provide access to Lake Manassas.

### **GOAL 3: ENSURE ADEQUATE QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF ACTIVE AND PASSIVE RECREATION FACILITIES.**

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

#### Action Strategies:

1. Population data and projections by Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) and others shall be used to determine current and future needs for the county and by magisterial district or other appropriate subdivision. Provide current and updated demographic data relevant to parks and facilities to the Park Authority on a regular and ongoing basis.
2. 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.

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3. At the time of rezoning or special use permit, ensure that new residential development with a density greater than one unit per acre is within one mile of a neighborhood park, or provides such facility within the proposed development.
4. Update the Zoning Ordinance to establish facility standards for publicly accessible Home Owner Association parks to meet the neighborhood park needs.
5. During rezoning and special use permit applications, accept land dedications and/or monetary contributions adequate to offset the impacts of the proposed development on the park system.
6. Update the Policy Guide for Monetary Contributions annually to reflect accurate costs for land acquisition and facility construction.

**REC POLICY 2:** Ensure that active and passive recreation facilities meet the established level of service (LOS) standards and are adequate to carry out an effective park and recreation program.

### Action Strategies:

1. Implement and periodically update baseline LOS standards and criteria for park sites and facilities (see Appendix B) based on industry standards and comparison with those of neighboring and comparable jurisdictions. Such standards shall be applied countywide throughout the development review process.
2. Develop strategies to determine the participation rates and demand for services at county owned and publicly accessible private park facilities for use in future facilities analysis.
3. Develop and maintain an inventory of existing county and publicly accessible private park facilities and other jurisdictional facilities for use in future facilities analysis.
4. Conduct a yearly inventory of facilities to determine current LOS attainment. Include private citizens and individuals from organizations who use those facilities and are knowledgeable in the standards for a given activity type in the inventory and assessment process.
5. Renovate and expand, where possible - in accordance with the guidelines of the Community Design Plan – existing park acreage and facilities to address identified demands and needs.



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6. Ensure that the layout, design and maintenance of facilities provides flexibility, improves playability and meets established the standards and needs of the intended use(s). This can include designing field layouts to allow for rotation and realignment of playing surfaces and improve safety of users and bystanders or passersby, and active aggressive maintenance programs that account for user needs, facilities needs and time seasonal closures to minimize loss of playability and maximize access.
7. Ensure access to scheduled user groups for practice as well as games, especially where uses overlap such as at school facilities.
8. Ensure adequate types, numbers and quality of facilities for practice and games, including outdoor facilities such as playing fields and courts as well as indoor facilities such as gymnasiums.
9. Increase access for boating, fishing, and beach activities along the Potomac and Occoquan Rivers and along other public waters in the county.
10. Assist and support state efforts to locate and develop public fishing access sites in Prince William County.
11. Develop new facilities that serve countywide populations such as dog parks, skate parks, sportsman facilities (archery, shotgun, competition shooting, etc.) and equestrian facilities.
12. Conduct wildlife population control where appropriate and feasible to reduce the impacts of animal activity on natural and recreation resources and to support state and federal initiatives.

**REC POLICY 3:** Utilize innovative means to construct, renovate and maintain parks and park facilities.

### Action Strategies:

1. Encourage the use of public-private partnerships for the purposes of acquiring, constructing and/or operating parks and park facilities.
2. Utilize, where possible, monetary contributions to provide needed facilities to existing park sites.

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3. Allow user groups to establish and maintain recreation uses under park use agreements where appropriate and where those uses are compatible with park master plans.
4. Encourage developers incorporating publicly accessible pools in new developments to construct 25-meter, six-lane community pools designed to meet the needs of community and competitive swimming.
5. Provide for recreation needs wherever appropriate at publicly accessible facilities on private lands or lands owned by other governmental agencies within the county and in neighboring jurisdictions.

### **GOAL 4: NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS - ENSURE THAT ALL PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY (PWC) RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS ARE SERVED BY CONVENIENT, READILY ACCESSIBLE NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS.**

**LP POLICY 1:** Identify and prioritize neighborhoods that do not presently provide adequate accessible playgrounds for children.

#### Action Strategies:

1. Superimpose a map of existing parks (including but identifying publicly accessible private facilities and the communities they serve) onto a population density map of the county to identify underserved communities.

**LP POLICY 2:** Identify and acquire suitable sites for neighborhood parks within underserved developed communities.

#### Action Strategies:

1. Acquire and develop Mini-Parks in underserved neighborhoods.
2. Evaluate opportunities to acquire existing open space and vacant lots within developed communities for use as Mini-Parks.

**LP POLICY 3:** Provide and maintain a variety of accommodations from tot lots to practice fields where maturing youngsters can hone their athletic skills.

#### Action Strategies:

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1. Work with leagues, nonprofit organizations, homeowner associations and individual community representatives to identify local needs.

**LP POLICY 4:** Work with community groups, nonprofit organizations, county agencies and others to provide structure, organized activities and safety at neighborhood parks and facilities.

### Action Strategies:

1. Work with league coaches, concerned parents, church groups, social services, nonprofit organizations and others to provide adult supervision at the neighborhood parks.
2. Establish a park watch program to be coordinated with community policing and neighborhood watch programs where they exist.

## **GOAL 5: IDENTIFY, PRESERVE, PROTECT, AND MANAGE THE SIGNIFICANT NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES ON COUNTY PARK LAND.**

**NCR POLICY 1:** Consider natural and cultural resource stewardship needs at all levels of land use-related decision-making.

### Action Strategies:

1. The county shall inventory current land holdings and potential parcels for acquisition to identify rare, sensitive and high quality natural and cultural resources.
2. Rare, sensitive and high quality resources and connectivity corridors will be identified, preserved, protected and managed on park land.
3. Priority shall be given to acquiring lands that contain rare, sensitive and high quality natural and cultural resources and connectivity corridors.
4. At least 50% of the land area of the park system shall be left undeveloped for resource protection, open space or passive recreation. This percentage can be much higher depending on the resources on site especially in Resource-Based Parks and may be lower in Mini-Parks in urban areas.

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**NCR POLICY 2:** Identify, protect and manage ecological communities and wildlife—especially critical habitats—as well as endangered and threatened species, and species and communities of special concern, as identified in official federal and state lists on county park land.

### Action Strategies:

1. Work with all available agencies, organizations and individuals to identify sensitive and high quality natural communities and species and their habitats on county parkland.
2. Prioritize identified sensitive ecological resources and corridors for acquisition and encourage the dedication of land or easements for such sites by private property owners.
3. Work with all available agencies, organizations and individuals to conduct inventories on all county parkland and research to assess the status of sensitive and high quality natural communities and species and their habitats and to develop management plans for them.
4. Fund and partner with all available agencies, organizations and individuals to ensure that Park Authority includes natural resource management staff, equipment and programs as identified in management plans.

**NCR POLICY 3:** Identify and protect Prince William County's significant historical, archaeological, architectural, and other cultural resources and cultural heritage—including those significant to the county's minority communities—for the benefit of all of the county's citizens and visitors.

### Action Strategies:

1. Protect cultural resources and cultural heritage that are important for documenting or demonstrating all periods of human occupation including the prehistory and history of the county.
2. Identify opportunities to use open space preservation or acquisition as a means of protecting cultural resources.

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**NCR-POLICY 4:** Enhance the awareness of Prince William County's natural and cultural resources and cultural heritage and the importance of the county in the historical development of the Commonwealth of Virginia and the United States.

### Action Strategies:

1. Develop and implement programs and outreach materials to create and foster a sense of ownership and stewardship of natural and cultural resources and cultural heritage among county staff and residents.
2. Develop and implement interpretive programs, independently and through partnerships with nonprofit and other organizations, to educate citizens on natural and cultural resources and to promote a sense of resource ownership and stewardship among residents.
3. Network and partner with other groups and organizations such as the future Virginia science museum at Occoquan, the Marine Corps Museum, the National Park Service, the Bull Run Mountains Conservancy and others to provide resource education and foster stewardship.

### **GOAL 6: PARK LANDS AND FACILITIES SHOULD BE CONNECTED BY CORRIDORS AND MULTIPLE MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESSIBLE TO THE WIDEST POSSIBLE SPECTRUM OF PARK PATRONS.**

**CON POLICY 1:** Ensure that parks with recreation facilities are accessible to the public.

### Action Strategies:

1. Locate, design and construct parks with recreational facilities on existing and planned connectivity and transportation corridors so that they are accessible to the communities and user groups they serve by multiple means of non-motorized and motorized transportation.
2. At the time of rezoning and special use permit, ensure adequate pedestrian access to the nearest neighborhood parks.
3. Coordinate interagency planning efforts to implement a countywide, comprehensive trails and greenways system—including trails for pedestrian, non-motorized vehicles, and horses under saddle and on harness. Connectivity between parks via trails, sidewalks, greenways, and linear corridors shall be encouraged.

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4. Dedications of public park sites and facilities shall be readily accessible to the general public and not just to residents of a proposed development.

**CON POLICY 2:** Plan for and ensure connectivity between parks, connectivity corridors, communities by diverse forms of transportation.

### Action Strategies

1. Provide convenient, well-marked, well-defined entrance points in and near public parks for access to trails within the park and to the countywide trails and greenways system. Where possible, locate these entrance points at activity centers—such recreation centers, nature centers, field complexes, public transit, residential communities—and where such trails and greenways have been provided through voluntary conveyance or are on public property.

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## APPENDIX A

### 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. Prince William County parks fall into the following park classifications:

- A. Neighborhood Parks
- B. Community Parks
- C. Regional Parks
- D. Resource-Based Parks
- E. Linear Parks

This Park Classification System is augmented by state and federal park areas within Prince William 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.

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### NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

#### **Purpose**

This general classification of parks includes parks that serve neighborhoods and mixed use centers in suburban and urban areas of the county. Neighborhood parks primarily offer a variety of active or passive recreation opportunities, or a combination of both, in close proximity to residences and employment centers. Areas designated for natural and/or cultural resource protection may also be included within these parks.

#### **Location and Access**

Neighborhood parks should be located to serve local residential neighborhoods, broader residential communities and/or urban employment or mixed-use centers. Pedestrian, bicycle and/or car access is appropriate depending on the setting and access features. Whenever feasible, locate these parks adjacent to elementary or intermediate schools to maximize co-location of recreation facilities; in mixed-use developments, proximity to retail/office areas is desirable for collocation of parking and minimum impact on residences. Areas designated for natural and cultural resource protection and management may be included within these parks.

- a) Mini-Parks – Small pieces of parkland that are less than five acres and are meant to serve a residential or business area within a one-quarter mile radius. Due to their limited service potential and maintenance inefficiencies their acquisition and development may be limited. Potential areas of importance for the development of Mini-Parks are to provide recreational opportunities, open space and to protect natural or cultural resources in underserved and urban areas and to create pockets of park development along trails and greenbelt corridors. In general these parks serve a passive need and normally do not require vehicular parking. Mini-parks could may provide opportunities to walk, picnic, kick a ball around or could protect isolated resources such as cemeteries.
- b) Neighborhood Parks – Serve a wide range of recreational needs within the community and are sized between five and twenty-five acres. The service area for a Neighborhood Park is one-half mile radius. These parks serve as the recreational and social links within residential communities. Neighborhood Parks should accommodate a wide variety of recreational needs and ages. These parks can supply both passive and active needs within the community Neighborhood Parks should provide both pedestrian access as well as vehicular access and the site is sized so that both passive and active recreation can coexist within the park. These parks should be located outside of floodways and drainage easements, but may be located adjacent to them. Where possible these sites should be located along the trail system and greenbelt corridors.



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### Character and Extent of Development

Neighborhood 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 neighborhood parks may range up to 75 acres. In urban areas, park size is typically less than 5 acres and often less than ½ acre. Visits to neighborhood parks will typically be less than two hours.

The character of neighborhood parks may vary depending on their location within the county. In residential settings, neighborhood parks will generally be larger than in urban parts of the county. Neighborhood parks offer open space to those with little or no yards. Typical facilities may include open play areas, playgrounds, courts, athletic fields, game areas, trails, trail connections, natural areas, picnic facilities and facility lighting. In a suburban setting and depending on the park size and facilities, the neighborhood park service area may be up to 3 miles.

The user experience at neighborhood 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 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 neighborhood parks are appropriate. These publicly accessible urban parks should include facilities that are pedestrian-oriented and provide active and passive recreational opportunities, visual enhancement, a sense of identity, opportunities for 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 Woodbridge, Dale City, the Route 1 Corridor, Lake Ridge, Manassas, Transit Station Areas, Suburban Centers, Community Business Centers and identified "Town Centers" or mixed-use activity centers. Urban parks can be administered by private land owners, the Park Authority, or through joint public and private sector agreements for public benefit.

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

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interactions among users, provide leisure opportunities, and create a visual identity to strengthen sense of place and orientation. Service area is generally within a 5-10 minute walking distance from nearby residences, offices and retail uses. 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. The specific types of facilities to be developed at each Neighborhood Park site is determined by the managing park agency with public participation through its Park Planning and Development process.

### **COMMUNITY 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**

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

Community 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 Community Parks include golf, skating, cultural and holiday events, performing arts, sports play and activities scheduled in recreation centers.

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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 specific types of facilities to be developed at each Community 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.

### **REGIONAL 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 and management will 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**

Regional 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 Community Parks.

Regional 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 Community Parks as well as the facilities unique to Regional 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 include those found in Community Parks as well as

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facilities such as sports complexes, indoor gymnasiums, field houses and lakefront parks. Sensitive environmental areas and cultural resource sites within the parks will be managed as Natural or Cultural Resource Areas.

The specific types of facilities to be developed at each Regional 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.

### **RESOURCE-BASED PARKS**

#### **Purpose**

This classification includes parks that primarily preserve, protect, and interpret natural and/or cultural resources.

#### **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 other organisms; cultural resource protection could include entire landscapes or one small point feature such as a cemetery on a few hundred square feet.

#### **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, passive recreation opportunities and facilities are also appropriate at these parks. 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.

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Stream valleys are a predominant physiographic feature of Prince William County and are protected under the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act as Resource Protection Areas (RPAs). Parks located in and along the stream valleys encompass those segments of RPA 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 may be prohibited if incompatible with the resource needs and where they are allowed they must 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 RPA or other sensitive natural or cultural resources.

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. Visitors may frequent these parks on a regular or occasional basis. Resource-based Parks will allow public use only as it is compatible with resource protection. These parks may be small to encompass a specific, finite resource or large, encompassing entire ecosystems (e.g., forest components are usually best protected in blocks of 100 acres or more to minimize fragmentation and protect functions within a landscape; vernal pools should be protected with the surrounding upland habitats that protect the pools and provide habitat for adult breeding populations of amphibians and salamanders.).

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.

### **LINEAR PARKS**

Narrow parks may be appropriate in some locations and situations in order to establish linear corridors that connect recreational, natural, and/or cultural resources, and/or transportation corridors. The long-term role of such parks will be contribution to a county-wide trail network and connections to surrounding jurisdictions as well as providing protection for natural and cultural resources and movement corridors for wildlife.

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## **APPENDIX B LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS FOR PARKS AND OPEN SPACE**

New development presents demands for 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:

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

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

- The applicant is within the service area of an existing facility that meets the neighborhood park needs of the proposed project, or the applicant has provided facilities within the project that meet the neighborhood park needs of the proposed project; and
- 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 Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. Alternately, 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 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 Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.

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

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### Baseline Level of Service Standards for Neighborhood and Community Park Facilities:

Park Facility	(facility/pop. served)
Rectangle Fields (soccer, football, lacrosse, field hockey and cricket fields)	1 /2,700
Adult Softball Diamonds with Skinned Infields	1 /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
Multi-use Courts	1 court/2,100
Basketball Courts	1 court/5,000
Volleyball Courts	1 court/10,000
Tennis Courts	1 court/10,000
Trails (measured in miles)	Consistent with Adopted Countywide Trails Planning Documents and Goals to Link Trails to Park Facilities
Playgrounds	1 playground/4,000
Reservable Picnic Areas	1 site/12,000
Neighborhood Dog Parks (Typically less than 3 acres)	1 site/86,000



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### Population-based Countywide Service Level Standard:

Regional Dog Parks (Typically more than 8 acres with special event features to include dog training areas)	1 site/200,000
Neighborhood Serving Skate Parks- (Modular/Portable Types)	1 site/106,000
Regional Skate Parks- (Larger Permanent/Fixed Type)	1 site/210,000
Golf (measured by number of golf holes)	1 hole/3,200
Nature Centers	1/100,000
Amphitheaters (stage and seating for approx. 300)	1/100,000
Recreation Centers including Indoor Aquatics, Fitness and other Community Uses	1/100,000
Indoor Gyms	1/35,000
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
Sportsman Facilities (Rifle, shotgun, archery, etc.)	1 site/200,000

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**TABLE 1**

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

Park Type	Standard	Existing Acreage	Proffered Acreage	Other Contributing Acreage	1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr. 2006 Estimated Population 367,466 Additional Acreage Needed	2030 Forecast Population 556,300 Additional Acreage Needed
Neighborhood	5.0 acre/1,000 population	259	75	? [6,629]	1,501	1,835
Community and Regional	13.0 acres/1,000 population	1,923	40	? [838]	2,808	4,771
Resource Based	No standard	?	?	n/a	n/a	n/a
Linear	No standard	270	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
County Totals by Category		?	?	?	?	?
Total Park Acreage Goal:	10% of County Land Area					22,500

Notes:

- (1) Source: PWC Planning Office Employment, Population, and Household 5-year forecasts (2000-2025 Employment, Population, and Household Round 7.0 (staff) forecasts
- (2) Existing acreage reflects only property owned or leased by PWCPA
- (3) Sums have been rounded to the nearest whole number.
- (4) Other contributing acreage includes HOA land in neighborhood parks that is permanently accessible to all members of the public under easement, 733 acres of school land plus 105-acre Signal Hill Park in community parks.
- (5) Projected park land needs for neighborhood parks may be reduced after evaluation of HOA facilities that meet neighborhood park standards and provide perpetual public access under easement.

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## **APPENDIX C**

### **PARKLAND ACQUISITION CRITERIA**

Parkland acquisition opportunities take many forms including dedication, donation, fee simple purchase, lease agreements, partnerships, easements, and use of eminent domain powers. The Prince William County Park Authority Land Acquisition Criteria Policy is as follows:

1. The Park Authority shall establish and implement acreage standards for development of recreational facilities.
  - a. These established acreage standards for Neighborhood, and Community and Regional Parkland are cited in Appendix A above. This amount of land is necessary to accommodate the combination of recreational facilities typically desired by Prince William County residents and identified in the Level of Service Standards outlined in Appendix B above. This acreage standard shall be periodically reviewed and evaluated in conjunction with future Demand Surveys.
  - b. Subject to park classification criteria and site conceptual development plans, identified needs within the service area may be met in various combinations of existing or newly acquired park sites or school sites.
  - c. Publicly accessible acreage of homeowner association common open space, developed with local-serving park facilities, may be applied in determining the adequacy of park and recreation areas to serve that residential development.
  - d. Acreage of Resource-based Parks shall not be applied in meeting this standard.
2. The Park Authority shall establish and implement criteria for acquisition and/or protection of natural and cultural resource sites.
  - a. As a matter of policy, the uniqueness and value of natural and cultural resources, as determined by adopted criteria, are the primary requisites for acquisition and appropriate development and use levels.
  - b. Protection and preservation of these resources shall be achieved through a combination of donation, dedication or acquisition of fee simple property or conservation easements.
3. The Park Authority shall establish and implement criteria for acceptance of gifts of real property.
  - a. Land proposed for donation to the Park Authority is subject to the same standards and procedures for evaluation and inspection as property considered for fee simple purchase, including any potential deed restrictions and conformance with generally accepted professional practices for appraisal, environmental assessment and liability for site contamination.

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- b. Suitability for development and management of the site in accordance with the Park Authority Park Classification System, Program Criteria and Standards and current Needs Assessments also shall be a consideration in decisions to accept donations of real property.