



Chapter 5

Fairfax Planning District

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GREAT PARKS, GREAT COMMUNITIES 2010 – 2020 Park System Plan

Fairfax County Park Authority

FAIRFAX PLANNING DISTRICT

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FAIRFAX PLANNING DISTRICT

Location & Character

The Fairfax Planning District is located in the center of the county and surrounds the City of Fairfax.

This district is predominantly suburban development, built in the 1950s and 1960s. The northwestern portion is low-density residential, while the center is occupied by the more densely developed City of Fairfax.



Park System Summary

Map 1 depicts the public parkland in the Fairfax Planning District. There are 51 public parks with a total of approximately 1,320 acres in the district. These parks make up about 7 percent of the total acreage of the district. About 65 percent of the public parkland in the district is owned by the Park Authority, and is within Park Authority Maintenance Areas 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7. The City of Fairfax owns almost 225 acres of the public parkland.

The parks in the district include local-serving parks, a district park, resource-based parks, and stream valleys. Facilities include a RECenter, rectangle and diamond ball fields, a golf course, mini golf, tennis and multi-use courts, playgrounds, dog park, garden plots, trails and picnic facilities.

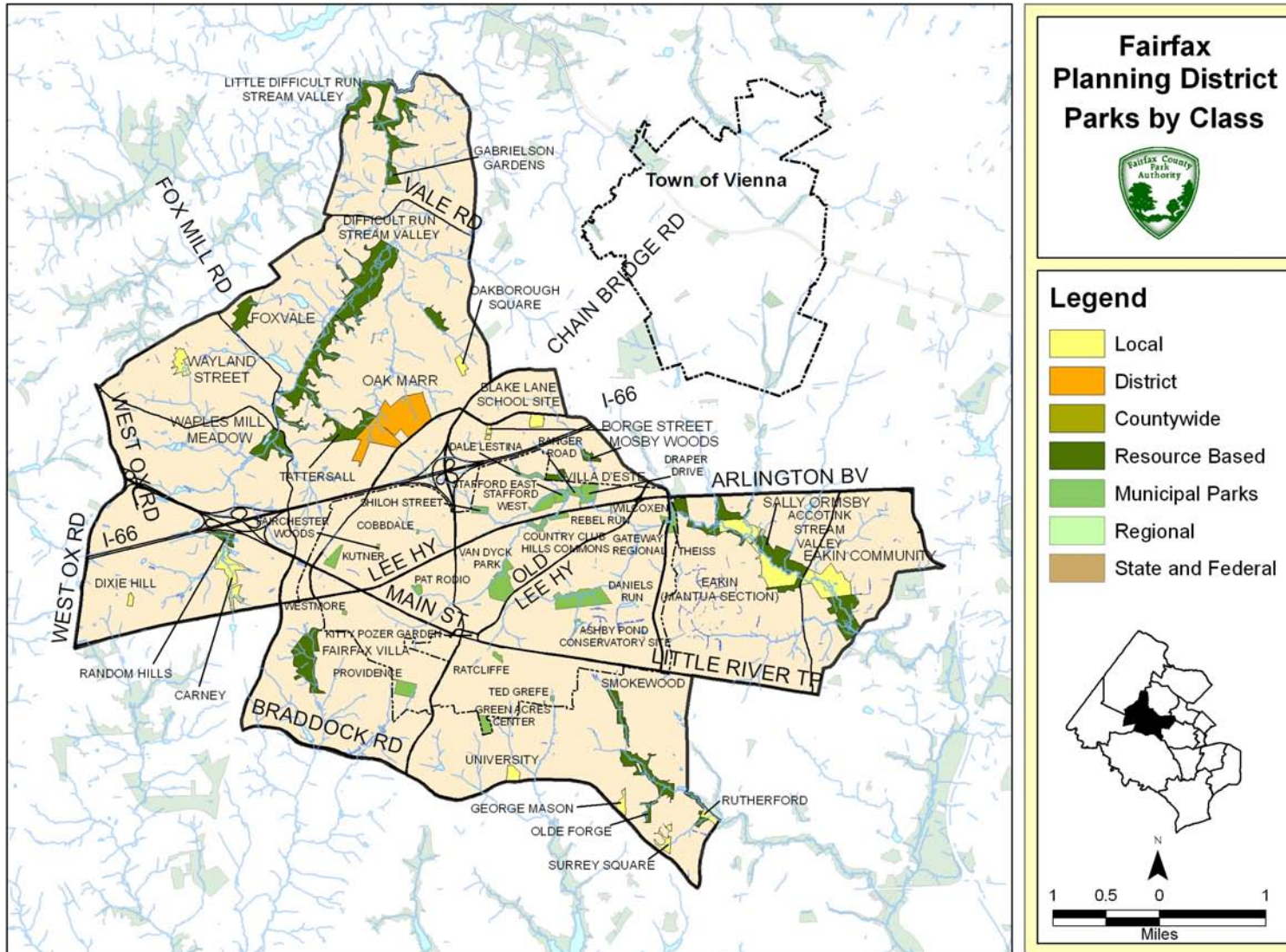
The parks in the Fairfax District protect numerous natural and cultural resources. Examples of this are in Accotink Stream Valley and Fairfax Villa Parks. The northern and eastern parts of the District have stream valleys that are traversed by the 41-mile Cross County Trail. There are a handful of neighborhood parks scattered throughout the District. Oak Marr District Park is a heavily used park, providing a wide variety of recreational facilities, including golf complex (golf course, driving range, mini golf), RECenter, pool, racquetball courts, fitness center, rectangle fields, open play area, picnic tables, multiuse trails and natural and cultural resources.

The natural areas in the District are a mixture of narrow swaths of low-lying lands in stream valley corridors and isolated uplands. The larger parks, including Oak Marr District Park, the Random Hills-Carney Park complex, and Fairfax Villa Park are isolated and contain high-quality resources.

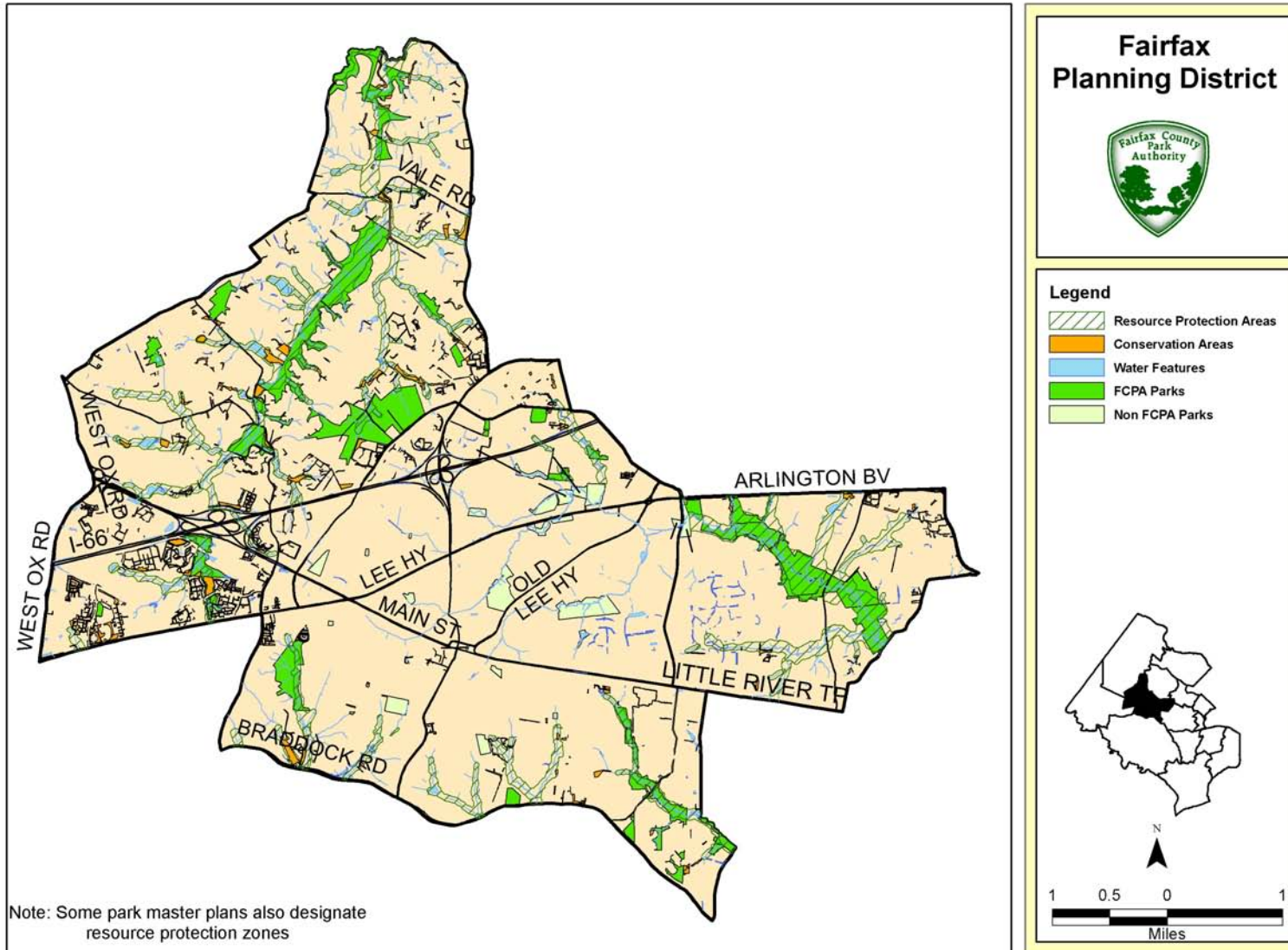
It is anticipated that commercial and residential development will continue at a moderate rate in the Fairfax district. Most significant land use changes will likely occur through redevelopment in areas developed prior to 1985. Opportunities to add to existing parkland in the Fairfax district are limited. Map 2 identifies parkland and areas that contain regulatory or other protections including public park ownership, conservation

easements, and Chesapeake Bay Ordinance designated Resource Protection Areas (RPA).

Map 1: Public Parks by Class in the Fairfax District



Map 2: Protected Land in the Fairfax District



Park Classification

In June 2005, a new Park Classification System was adopted and incorporated into the Park and Recreation chapter of the Countywide Comprehensive Policy Plan. The Park Classification System is a general framework intended to guide open space and public facilities planning by grouping parks according to certain common typical characteristics. The park classification gives an indication of the intended use, general park size range, typical facility types, and the general experience a user may expect at a park:

Local Parks serve surrounding neighborhoods and communities and offer a variety of local-serving recreation opportunities, such as playgrounds, trails, athletic facilities, picnic areas and natural areas. Typically these parks are designed to serve up to a 3 mile radius depending on the facilities and can range from 2 to 50 acres in size.

Local parks may be urban or suburban in character. Urban parks (including pocket parks, civic plazas and common greens) are a type of local-serving park that are generally more compact and located within an urban or transit-oriented setting. These parks generally consist of high quality design and construction, are well integrated into surrounding development, uses and the public realm and primarily serve to define local urban character, support outdoor enjoyment, social gatherings, recreation needs and special events. These parks may be privately or publicly owned and are usually privately maintained.

District Parks are larger parks that serve greater geographic areas of the County (3 to 6 miles) and provide a wide variety of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities and park experiences. Generally, these parks are more than 50 acres in size. These parks typically accommodate visits of up to a half day, longer operational hours and a larger number of users. Many district parks also have extensive natural areas.

Countywide Parks are larger parks that serve the whole County and provide a variety of larger-scale indoor or outdoor recreation facilities, or both, and facilities or resources that are unique within the County. Typically, these parks are greater than 150 acres and provide opportunities for passive and active recreation to a wide range of simultaneous users for experiences of up to a day in length.

Resource-Based Parks have significant cultural and natural resources. These parks support nature, horticulture and history programs, gardening, nature watching and appreciation of local, regional, state and national history. Extensive stream valley parks are part of the resource-based parks network. Typically, trails and interpretative features and facilities are the primary uses. Some resource parks may have separate areas designated for recreation purposes.

Regional Parks are lands and/or facilities administered by the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NVRPA). These parks have region-wide significance that supplement and enhance the County and municipal park systems.

While some parks are Resource-Based, note that all park types may include areas designated for natural and/or cultural resource protection. In addition, many state and federal parks augment local and regional parks and also serve to protect natural and cultural resources within the County. Table 1 lists and classifies the parks in the Fairfax district according to the County parks classification system or by state or federal ownership. Table 1 also includes information about whether and when parks were master planned and if a master planning action (new master plan development or plan update) is needed.

Table 1: Parks in the Fairfax Planning District

Park Name	Acres	Supervisor District	Park Classification	Approved Master Plan Date	Master Plan Action Needed
Accotink S.V. ¹	801.69 ⁺	BR, LEE, MA, MV, PR	Resource-Based	1995	
Ashby Road Conservation	3.71		City of Fairfax		
Blake Lane School Site	10.30	PR	Local	1986	
Borge Street	3.61	PR	Local	1986	
Carney	40.44	SP	Local	1999	
Cobbdale	0.53		City of Fairfax		
Country Club Hills	7.52		City of Fairfax		
Dale Lestina	7.78		City of Fairfax		
Daniels Run	46.72		City of Fairfax		
Difficult Run S.V. ¹	900.68 ⁺	HM, DR	Resource-Based		
Dixie Hill	3.42	SP	Local	1980	
Draper Drive	16.57		City of Fairfax		
E. Calvin Van Dyck	31.18		City of Fairfax		
Eakin Mantua	74.04	PR	Local	1995	
Eakin Community	47.63	PR	Local	1995	
Fairchester Woods	1.00		City of Fairfax		
Fairfax Villa	60.69	BR	Resource-Based	2007	
Foxvale	24.36	SU	Resource-Based	1977	
Gabrielson Gardens	12.08	SU	Resource-Based	CDP date	
Gateway Regional	3.53		Regional		
George Mason	6.01	BR	Local		
Green Acres Rec	9.56		City of Fairfax		
Kutner	10.24		City of Fairfax		
Little Difficult Run S.V. ¹	389.69 ⁺	HM	Resource-Based		
Long Branch S.V. ¹	155.51 ⁺	BR	Resource-Based		
Mosby Road	1.17		City of Fairfax		

Park Name	Acres	Supervisor District	Park Classification	Approved Master Plan Date	Master Plan Action Needed
Mosby Woods	7.11	PR	Resource-Based	1985	
Oak Marr	138.53	PR	District	2009	
Oakborough Square	7.58	PR	Local		
Olde Forge	6.33	BR	Resource-Based	1977	
Pat Rodio	3.97		City of Fairfax		
Pozer Garden	0.37		City of Fairfax		
Providence	16.16		City of Fairfax		
Random Hills	11.44	SP	Resource-Based		
Ranger Road	7.10		City of Fairfax		
Ratcliffe	3.21		City of Fairfax		
Rebel Run	4.45		City of Fairfax		
Rutherford	21.59 ⁺	BR	Local	1971	
Sally Ormsby	39.44	PR	Resource-Based		
Smokewood	13.89	BR	Resource-Based		
Shiloh Street	6.60		City of Fairfax		
Stafford East	9.17		City of Fairfax		
Stafford West	14.05		City of Fairfax		
Surrey Square	9.33	BR	Local		
Tattersall	36.01	PR	Resource-Based		
Thaiss	10.77		City of Fairfax		
University	9.69	BR	Local		
Villa D'Este	9.01	PR	Resource-Based	1985	
Waples Mill Meadow	36.74	PR	Resource-Based		✓
Wayland Street	16.44	SU	Local		✓
Westmore	0.98		City of Fairfax		

1. Resource-Based Stream Valley parks by practice do not have Master Plans.

* This park was dedicated by a private developer and may be subject to a Conceptual Development Plan associated with an approved rezoning that takes the place of a park master plan.

+ A portion of this park lies outside of the Fairfax district.

Acres for non-FCPA parks are estimates derived from GIS.

Park Master Plans

A park master plan is a general guide for appropriate park uses and their approximate location within a specific park site. The plan serves as a long-range vision (10-20 year timeframe) for future development and programming. Issues typically addressed include planned park elements, natural and cultural resource management, and general design concerns. The plan is conceptual in nature and not intended to address detailed issues related to engineered site design or park operations. The plan is just one of many steps in the process that leads to the development of a public park. An archive of park master plans is available at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/plandev/mparchives.htm.

Themes, Issues and Strategies

In early 2008 the Park Authority interacted with citizens at ten *Great Parks, Great Communities* public workshops in all Supervisory districts and at a variety of community festivals and events in the parks to gather input on **long-term planning for the land, facilities and natural and cultural resources of the park system**. In addition, the Park Authority received public feedback on the park system throughout the year via email and the project web site.

Based on the public feedback and staff expertise, staff identified 26 key issues that fit within eight themes relating to the land, resources and facilities of the Park Authority. **The themes are Connectivity, Community Building, Service Delivery, Facility Reinvestment, Land Acquisition, Resource Interpretation, Cultural Resource Stewardship and Natural Resource Stewardship.**

This section describes how the eight themes relate to the park system in the Fairfax District and presents strategies for addressing the issues as they apply to the parks in the district. Some strategies include recommendations for construction of facilities, infrastructure and amenities at parks in the district. As part of the planning process for any proposed construction, the project area should first be assessed for possible impacts to natural and cultural resources.

THEME: Connectivity

Better integrating parks with surrounding land uses (neighborhoods and employment centers) and increasing park-to-park connections within the system will allow for greater access and enjoyment. Strategy suggestions include adding trails, trail connections, bridges, and other forms of improved access to and between parks.

Map 3 illustrates existing and planned connections and points of interest within the Fairfax Planning District. The map depicts high-level, conceptual connections and incorporates elements from the adopted Countywide Trails Plan and Park Authority Trail Strategy Plan. Connections link natural and cultural resources and recreational destinations, supporting recreational activity and frequently offering alternative transportation options.

Issue: The Park Authority should work to improve non-motorized access to parks from commercial and residential areas and to increase connectivity between park sites.

Many of the neighborhood and stream valley parks are accessible by pedestrians from adjacent communities because at the time the communities were developed the parks were embedded within them. They are not readily accessible from major roads and streets. Sometimes there are sidewalks or trails, but often informal paths from yards

lead into the parks, which are not usually connected to the comprehensive countywide trail system.

Heard from the public:
“Consider continuing the trail from Olley Lane through the Long Branch Stream Valley Park up to Fairfax Memorial Park. This extension would provide trail access to many fine neighborhoods in a relatively short distance.”

The Cross County Trail (CCT) is a major trail that crosses the Fairfax Planning District along the Accotink Creek, Difficult Run, and Little Difficult Run Stream Valley Parks. The CCT can be accessed at Oak Marr Park. A major weakness in the trail system in this area is the lack of interconnection between the parks and the greater communities they serve. This is mostly due to patchwork development, and major roadways that stand in the way of potential trail connections.

Strategies:

- F-C-1. Use criteria provided in the Park Authority’s Trail Strategy Plan to evaluate potential new trails, connections and improvements;
- F-C-2. Work with Somerset HOA to create a trail connection to Long Branch Stream Valley. This will allow students in the community to walk to Woodson High School and Old Forge Elementary School;
- F-C-3. The trail along Little Difficult Run should be continued from Stuart Mill to Lawyers Road; and
- F-C-4. A trail should be constructed in Carney Park between two developer-built trails.

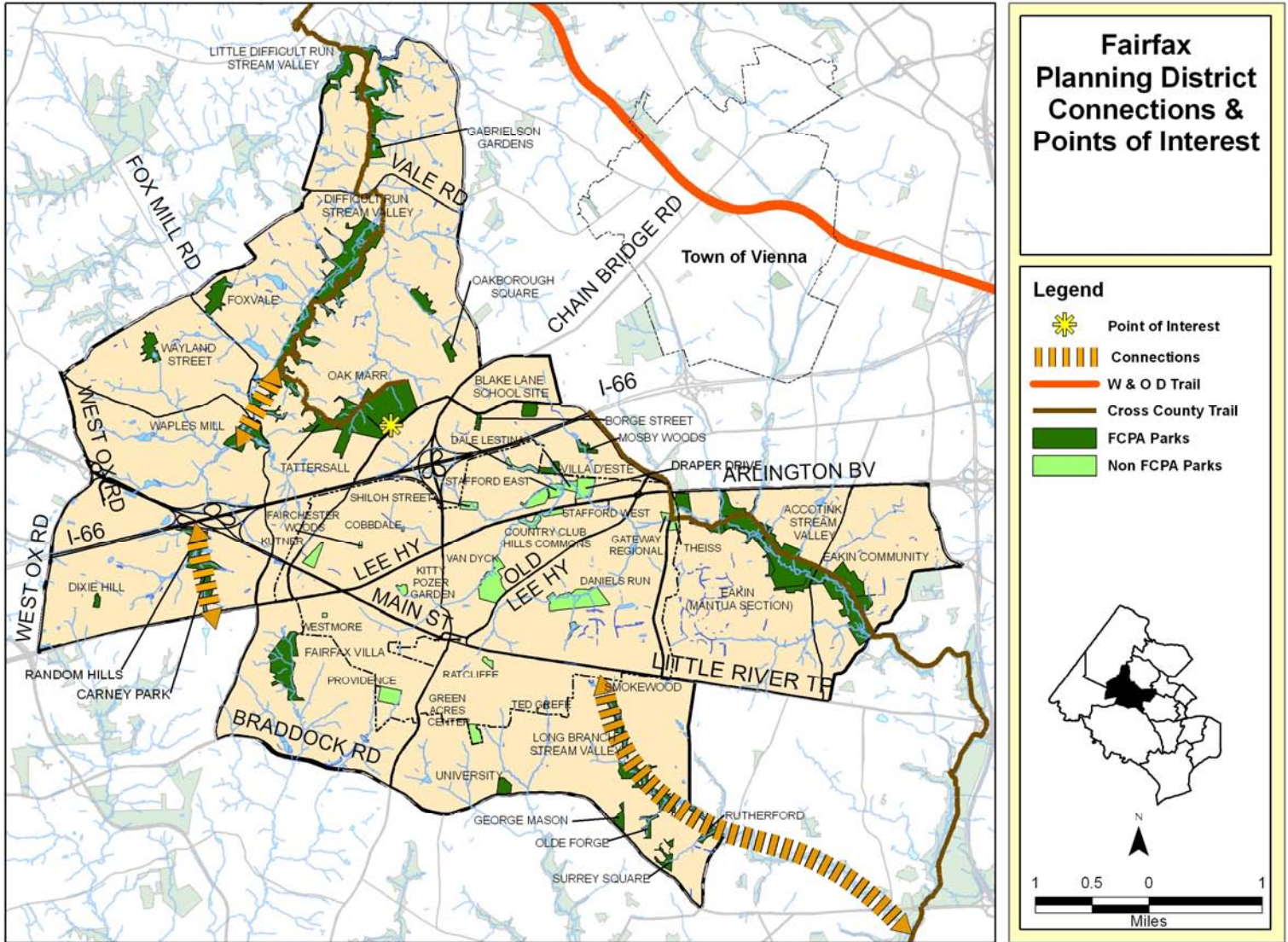
Issue: Multiple, separate park sites located across Fairfax County should be linked through thematic interpretive connections.

Thematic connections, emphasized through elements such as signage, maps, or website information, can foster greater public awareness of important features. Increased knowledge of site features could encourage greater support for stewardship and management activities.

Strategies:

- F-C-5. Consider linking Gabrielson Gardens to a gardening interpretive theme including Green Spring Gardens and other horticultural parks; and
- F-C-6. Include the Difficult Run and Accotink Stream Valleys as significant nodes along a natural areas interpretive trail within the county.

Map 3: Non-motorized Connections and Points of Interest in the Fairfax District



Issue: District and Countywide parks and the Cross County Trail should be served by the public transportation system to provide equitable access to recreational facilities.

Some of the larger community and district parks in Fairfax are located along major roads, which make them accessible by automobile. Due to its location along a major road, Oak Marr Park and RECenter are served by the Metrobus 2B and 2G routes, which provide connectivity to the Vienna Metro station. Oak Marr is also within a half-mile walk of Fairfax Connector bus routes 621, 622, and 623. Bike and pedestrian access to the larger parks in the district is difficult because the roads and heavy traffic can present barriers and there is a lack of interconnecting trails in some cases.

While there is some limited weekend transit service, the majority of the transit in the area is to support morning and evening commuting with flows to and from the Metro stations being a primary goal. Transit supporting commuting times and patterns do not necessarily serve park users who wish to use parks.

Strategies:

F-C-7. Work with the Department of Transportation to improve bus transit service to parks in the Fairfax Planning District, especially Oak Marr Park. This should include coordination with bus stop locations and transit schedules.

Issue: The Park Authority should work to improve access to waterways and promote the use of “water trails” throughout the County.

Since there are no navigable waterways in the district, no district- or park-specific strategies exist for this issue in the Fairfax Planning District.

THEME: Community Building

Local parks are places where people can interact and build community. Well-designed and located parks, park facilities, and programs support greater social interaction. Community-building park facilities and activities include reservable picnic areas, amphitheaters, dog parks, garden plots, farmers markets, performances, and special events. Collocation of facilities with other community uses can also assist in strengthening communities. Strategy suggestions include ways to increase the community-building role of local parks in residential neighborhoods and providing parks and recreation facilities near other civic uses.

Issue: Local and urban parks should include a combination of facilities, amenities and gathering spaces to attract and promote social interaction among community members.

Community-building park facilities within the Fairfax District include one dog park at Blake Lane Park and garden plots located at both Eakin Community Park and George Mason Park. A weekly farmers' market is held at Oak Marr Park from May through October. There are no amphitheaters or reservable picnic shelters within the Fairfax Planning District. The City of Fairfax Parks and Recreation Department supports community building events that supplement the county's offerings and serve this district.

Strategies:

- F-CB-1. Consider adding reservable picnic shelters within the district;
- F-CB-2. Look for opportunities to create more garden plot sites in the parks; and
- F-CB-3. Consider adding playgrounds at local parks in the district.

Issue: *Parks should be collocated with other civic uses (libraries, community centers, senior centers, etc.) to promote social interaction among community members.*

In the Fairfax district, very few parks are collocated with other civic uses. Those that are adjacent to civic uses include Dixie Hill, Mosby Woods, Smokewood, and Long Branch Stream Valley Parks, which are all located next to elementary schools.

Strategies:

- F-CB-4. Add recreational facilities and amenities, where appropriate, to parks in the district that are collocated with other civic uses; and
- F-CB-5. Promote the collocation of parks with schools and other civic uses as the area redevelops and its population grows.

THEME: Service Delivery

The Park Authority provides quality facilities that are well used, but may not be equitably distributed across all parts of the County or accessible to all groups. Countywide and specialty facilities, in particular, may not serve a true countywide service area. Residents desire recreational facilities and opportunities at parks near where they live and for all age groups and socio-economic populations. Strategy suggestions include creating more facilities, better distributing facilities across the County, and reducing barriers to use.

Service level standards for over twenty park facility types were established through the 2004 Needs Assessment (<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/needsassessment.htm>) process and incorporated into the Countywide Policy Plan (<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/comprehensiveplan/policyplan/parksrec.pdf>) in 2005. Facility standards are countywide goals for providing park and recreation facilities that reasonably satisfy community needs. Standards are expressed in units per population, and are based on extensive analysis of citizen demand and preferences compared with the existing public facility inventories. Based on the Countywide adopted facility service

level standards and projected population growth, Table 2 shows the projected surplus or deficit of several key local serving facilities in the Fairfax Planning District for the year 2020. While overall facility needs are quantified in Table 2, the location of needed facilities is determined through the site specific master planning process that considers site conditions, context, resources, and community input. For more detailed information on existing facilities in each park and service levels, please see the Existing Conditions Report.

Table 2: Fairfax Planning District 2020 Local Serving Facility Needs Analysis

		2010 population includes Fairfax City			
		2020 projected population includes Fairfax City			
Facility	Service Level Standard	2010 Existing Facilities	2020 Needed Facilities	2020 (Deficit)/ Surplus	2020 Projected Service Level
Rectangle Fields	1 field / 2,700 people	33.5	35.6	(2.2)	94%
Adult Baseball Fields	1 field / 24,000 people	5.0	4.0	1.0	125%
Adult Softball Fields ⁺	1 field / 22,000 people	3.0	4.4	(1.4)	69%
Youth Baseball Fields ⁺	1 field / 7,200 people	18.5	13.4	5.1	138%
Youth Softball Fields ⁺	1 field / 8,800 people	5.0	10.9	(5.9)	46%
Basketball Courts	1 court / 2,100 people	15.0	45.8	(30.8)	33%
Playgrounds	1 playground / 2,800 people	27.0	34.4	(7.4)	79%
Neighborhood Dog Parks	1 dog park / 86,000 people	1.0	1.1	(0.1)	89%
Neighborhood Skate Parks	1 skate park / 106,000 people	0.0	0.9	(0.9)	0%

⁺ 60 ft and 65 ft diamond fields are assigned to the sport where primarily allocated.

Issue: The Park Authority should provide and equitably distribute facilities to meet established facility service level standards.

The Fairfax Planning District is predominantly suburban, being first developed in the 1950s and 1960s and has been substantially built out since the 1980s. The population of the Fairfax Planning District in 2010 was 93,140, and the population projection for 2020 is over 96,000. It is anticipated that commercial and office development in this district will continue at a moderate rate. Most significant land use changes will likely occur through redevelopment in areas developed prior to 1985.

Strategies:

F-SD-1. Upgrade existing athletic fields at Oak Marr to increase usage capacity; and

F-SD-2. Partner with the City of Fairfax and George Mason University in the provision of recreation facilities that serve both city and county residents.

Issue: *The Park Authority should provide new kinds of parks and facilities and in new ways to meet the needs of the County's changing population.*

No district or park-specific strategies exist for this issue in the Fairfax Planning District.

Issue: *The Park Authority should re-examine park master plans to determine if parks are planned to best serve the needs of Fairfax County residents.*

Most parks in the district are small or constrained and only half of the parks in the Fairfax district have been master planned. Of those that have existing master plans, 80 percent of these plans are more than 20 years old. At these older parks, the master plans have been mostly implemented.

Strategies:

F-SD-3. Create a Master Plan for Waples Mill Meadow Park and Wayland Street Park, possibly in the same planning process given their close proximity.

THEME: Facility Reinvestment

The Park Authority has a great diversity of facilities and resources in various lifecycle stages. Funding and schedules for replacement or reinvestment are inconsistent and adding new facilities has sometimes taken precedence over renewal of existing facilities. Strategy suggestions include repairing, replacing, upgrading, and improving utilization of existing facilities and equipment.

Issue: *Repair, replacement, and upgrading of existing park facilities should be addressed through a system-wide lifecycle replacement program that takes into account changing facility needs.*

There are 24 facilities that are over 20 years old in the Fairfax District that should be reviewed for replacement. There are several muddy trail sections in need of drainage improvements. Existing fields should be upgraded to maximize playability (including adding lights).

Strategies:

F-FR-1. Make repairs and upgrades to the Oak Marr RECenter;

F-FR-2. Consider replacing older facilities at Eakin, and Surrey Square Parks;

F-FR-3. Existing fields should be upgraded to maximize playability, including adding synthetic turf and lights to the fields at Oak Marr Park; and

F-FR-4. Provide bicycle racks and playgrounds in local parks where planned.

Issue: *Parking standards and levels of service should reflect user patterns to minimize impacts on surrounding neighborhoods.*

Strategies:

- F-FR-5. Consider expanding the parking lot at Blake Lane Park;
- F-FR-6. Examine parking lots to determine if temporary facilities such as Port-a-Jons, trash cans and recycling bins may be taking up space that is needed for parking; such as the recycling transfer facility at Blake Lane Park; and
- F-FR-7. If allowed, consider placing new parking lots over utility easements, such as gas or water lines, to save space that can be used for other purposes.

THEME: Land Acquisition

Additional parkland is needed to protect and buffer currently owned natural areas and historic sites, provide room to develop new recreational facilities, and to protect existing private “green spaces” within neighborhoods. Strategy suggestions include continuing to add appropriate land to the Park Authority’s land holdings to expand the park system.

The district is fairly well served by local parks, with the exception of the Fair Oaks / Fairfax Center Area and the Smokewood neighborhood. Both areas are built out and it is not likely that new local parks can be added. Oak Marr and Nottoway are larger parks that serve the district well. The land area of the Fairfax Planning District is 11,160 acres, of which 1,327 acres are parkland.

Service level standards for both local and district/countywide parkland were established through the 2004 Needs Assessment and incorporated into the Countywide Policy Plan in 2005. Parkland standards represent countywide goals for providing land for the two types of parks (Local and District/Countywide) that support service delivery and facility development and are expressed in units per population. Local parks include both suburban and urban park types. Resource-based parks occur where resources are located and therefore do not require quantitative service level standards. Please refer to the Park Classification discussion earlier in this chapter for additional information on park classification descriptions.

Table 3 shows the projected surplus or deficit of parkland in the Fairfax Planning District for the year 2020.

Table 3: Fairfax Planning District 2020 Parkland Needs Analysis

93,140	2010 population includes Fairfax City					
96,237	2020 projected population includes Fairfax City					
11,160	District Size (acres)					
	Parkland/Open Space Type	Service Level Standard	2010 Existing Acres	2020 Needed Acres	2020 (Deficit)/ Surplus	2020 Service Level
Public Parkland	Local Suburban	5 acres / 1,000 people	561	481	80	117%
	Urban	1.5 acres / 1,000 people plus 1 acre / 10,000 employees				
	District/Countywide ⁺	13 acres / 1,000 people	173	1,251	(1078)	14%
	Resource-Based	*	593			
	Parkland Total		1,327			
Private Open Space	Private Recreation		367			
	HOA Property		915			
	Private OS Total		1,282			
Public & Private Total			2,609			

⁺ The District and Countywide Parks that serve this Planning District may be located outside the Planning District and this outlying acreage is not reflected in this table.

^{*} There is no service level standard for Resource-Based parkland. The amount of resource based parkland owned and/or protected is based on the existence and sensitivity of the resources.

Issue: Parkland for recreation should be provided according to adopted service level standards and distributed equitably throughout the County.

The largest land deficit for the Fairfax district is in the larger parks. However, the area is served by District and Countywide Parks outside its boundaries that include Nottoway, Braddock, Burke Lake, and Patriot Parks. In addition, some resource based parks also serve local park needs, such as Fairfax Villa Park. The distribution of local parks in the district is mostly to the east and south leaving gaps in the Fairfax Center area. Land available for active recreation is deficient.

Strategies:

F-LA-1. Seek opportunities to acquire land for new local parks that will support recreation facilities in the Fair Oaks/Fairfax Center Area; and

F-LA-2. Seek opportunities to acquire land for a new Local park that will support recreation facilities in the Smokewood neighborhood.

Issue: Urban parks should be provided in higher density/mixed use areas of the County (i.e. Tysons Corner, Transit Station Areas, Commercial Revitalization Districts).

No district- or park-specific strategies exist for this issue in the Fairfax Planning District.

Issue: *Property acquisition is important for protecting cultural resources in Fairfax County and ensuring their preservation for future generations.*

Strategies:

- F-LA-3. Acquire additional parcels and historic resources adjacent to and in the vicinity of Waples Mill Meadow Park;
- F-LA-4. Acquire additional historic sites in the Fairfax District including Squirrel Hill, adjacent to Wayland Street Park;
- F-LA-5. Encourage new development to create buffers between historic sites and development; and
- F-LA-6. Acquire additional properties that contain significant cultural resources.

Issue: *Property acquisition is an important strategy for protecting natural resources in Fairfax County and ensuring open and natural areas for future generations.*

Strategies:

- F-LA-7. Seek to acquire and/or protect through purchase, donation, development dedications, or conservation easements remaining natural areas in the district, especially large tracts, those connecting to other natural areas and those containing unique or significant natural resources;
- F-LA-8. Seek opportunities to add land near Waples Mill Meadow Park, especially on the western side;
- F-LA-9. Seek opportunities to acquire additional properties adjacent to Fairfax Villa Park;
- F-LA-10. Seek opportunities to expand Long Branch Stream Valley Park;
- F-LA-11. Encourage owners of large private parcels to place easements on their property to protect natural and cultural resources;
- F-LA-12. Encourage the management of utility corridors and other easements with natural resource goals not just utility goals; and
- F-LA-13. Seek opportunities to acquire the several large, relatively undisturbed private parcels that provide important linkages between natural areas and areas with high-quality resources.

THEME: Resource Interpretation

Residents may not be aware of or understand the importance of the vast number of natural and cultural resources the Park Authority holds in public trust. Strategy suggestions include adding to the existing interpretive facilities, signs, and programs.

Roadway and trail waysides permit park visitors opportunities to stop and view interpretive signage.

Issue: *The full range of natural and cultural resources within Fairfax County should be interpreted through facilities as needed.*

The larger parks including Oak Marr, Random Hills-Carney, and Fairfax Villa Parks contain some high-quality resources but are disconnected from larger natural areas and remain under stress due to human activity, invasive species, and deer herbivory. The remaining large parks are in stream valleys, which contain fairly healthy wetlands and habitats that support uncommon plant and animal species. These parks and several adjacent private parcels constitute the best wildlife habitat and stream buffering in the planning district.

Historic sites in county parks in the district reflect different phases of the architectural and agrarian history of Fairfax County during the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. They provide opportunities to interpret the evolution of Fairfax County from colony through the Revolution, Civil War, into the 20th century.

Several interpretive opportunities exist at Fairfax Villa, Waples Mill, Gabrielson Gardens, Eakin, and part of the Accotink Stream Valley Parks. These parks include a 58-acre wooded park providing a unique example of nearly intact native, upland oak-hickory forest, 5,000-year-old Native American sites, old mill remains, a portion of a Civil War campsite, and remnants of the Manassas Gap Railroad.

Strategies:

F-RI-1. Provide interpretive signs at Eakin, Fairfax Villa, Waples Mill, Gabrielson Gardens, and along the Accotink Stream Valley;

F-RI-2. Provide interpretation of vernal pools in the Accotink Stream Valley for park visitors; and

F-RI-3. Conduct an archaeological study of Gabrielson Gardens and use the information to guide preservation and interpretation of the site.

THEME: Cultural Resource Stewardship

Many factors threaten the health, protection and viability of natural and cultural resources on county parkland. Strategy suggestions include focusing on managing threats and actively managing existing natural and cultural resources consistent with guidance provided in the countywide [Cultural Resource Management Plan](#) and [Natural Resource Management Plan](#).

The Fairfax Planning District contains many important cultural resources, including Civil War features such as the Manassas Gap Railroad. There are several 18th and 19th century mills, which are important for understanding early industry, manufacturing of building materials, and food products. The district also contains many Native American

sites that date from the earliest known occupations 12,000 years ago up to European contact, many of which are on parkland.

Issue: *Historic structures should be stabilized, repaired, renovated, and/or restored to ensure their preservation and availability for public viewing and interpretation.*

Strategies:

F-CR-1. A concerted effort should be made to preserve and protect the historic features of this district, particularly the Manassas Gap Railroad and mill sites.

Issue: *Cultural Resources should be identified and evaluated prior to any proposed construction activity.*

Strategies:

F-CR-2. A concerted effort should be made to preserve and protect the cultural features of this district, particularly the Native American sites, the Manassas Gap Railroad and other Civil War sites and mill sites; and

F-CR-3. For any site subject to proposed construction activity, a preliminary assessment of the property will be carried out using GIS and pedestrian reconnaissance. Should potential resources be present, a cultural resource survey will be conducted and mitigation measures will be developed, as necessary.

Issue: *Impacts to National Register eligible cultural resources should be avoided where at all feasible. If impacts cannot be avoided mitigation level documentation or data recovery should occur.*

Strategies:

F-CR-4. Document and record buildings and structures using Historic American Buildings/Historic American Engineering methods (research, measured drawings and archival photographs) and conduct data recovery excavations for archaeological sites, as appropriate.

Issue: *New, expanded, and upgraded facilities are needed to house artifact collections to ensure their preservation for future generations.*

No district- or park-specific strategies exist for this issue in the Fairfax Planning District. This is an issue of countywide concern that should be addressed with centralized facilities.

THEME: Natural Resource Stewardship

The Fairfax district is largely built out with mostly small-lot residential and commercial land uses. The landscape is intensely developed with a suburban and urban character,

leaving few areas of natural open space. A number of stream valleys in the district are protected as parkland, including Accotink Creek, Long Branch, Difficult Run and Little Difficult Run. Fairfax Villa Park is a good example of mature oak-hickory forest, which is the dominant climax forest community type in this area. The relatively undisturbed soils and low levels of invasive plant cover at this park are a sign of a healthy forest that is likely to remain so if managed properly.

Heard from the public:
“Fairfax County has a strong park system with great facilities and wonderful nature areas. Creating a balanced protected nature system which is easily accessible by foot or bike should be a priority.”

Issue: *Natural habitats and the wildlife they support are disappearing due to development and are fragmented from development, trails, easements and utilities. Meadow and upland habitats are especially scarce.*

Existing natural habitat is degraded by the impacts of development – excess stormwater runoff, fragmentation, harmful landscaping practices, and spread of invasive species. Multiple encroachments on park land impact habitat and disrupt corridors. In addition, several key linkages remain unprotected by public ownership or conservation easement.

Strategies:

- F-NR-1. Seek to acquire and protect remaining natural areas in the district especially large tracts, those connecting to other natural areas and those containing unique or significant natural resources;
- F-NR-2. Protect and improve existing corridors, linkages and watersheds;
- F-NR-3. Provide new linkages between remaining public and private natural areas;
- F-NR-4. Manage utility corridors and other easements consistent with natural resource goals, not just utility service goals; and
- F-NR-5. Designate permanent resource protection zones on parkland that define appropriate uses and development.

Issue: *Water resources and stream valleys are degraded due to development and associated stormwater runoff.*

Limited land in a natural condition, dense development with high percentages of impervious surface and very few stormwater controls result in flashy conditions during storm events, which cause considerable erosion and degraded stream conditions, such as cut banks, silted stream bottoms, and low stream fauna diversity. This is evidenced by the frequency of channel armoring and minimal plant and fish diversity present during surveying (Stream Protection Strategy Baseline Study, January 2001).

The Park Authority works closely with the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) on watershed planning and implementation. In the short term, construction of new stormwater controls could be disruptive to natural resources and park activities. However, in the long term, benefits to water quality and in-stream habitat should be significant. Without increases in stormwater management, the quality of preserved parkland is threatened.

Strategies:

F-NR-6. Work with the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) and private land owners to capture and treat stormwater. This could take the form of incorporating Low Impact Development (LID) methods on residential and commercial lots and renovation of larger properties to provide new or enhanced stormwater facilities;

F-NR-7. Encourage private property owners to adopt wildlife and water friendly landscaping practices to improve water quality and habitat; and

F-NR-8. Restore riparian buffers on parkland.

Issue: *The Park Authority does not have an adequate inventory of natural resources on parkland, nor the capacity to actively manage and protect natural resources.*

Significant vernal pools are known to exist along portions of Accotink Stream Valley within this planning district. These vernal pools provide wildlife habitat to several amphibian species and educational opportunities for park visitors. In order to protect and manage these wetlands, inventories must be done to identify their location, extent, and condition.

Strategies:

F-NR-9. Direct development of park infrastructure to areas that, when inventoried, reflect few or poor quality natural resources, unless otherwise incompatible;

F-NR-10. Ensure that natural resources are assessed prior to any park development. Use design principles that minimize natural resource impacts and include monitoring and restoration of impacted natural areas as part of development plans;

F-NR-11. Conduct natural resource inventories and develop and implement natural resource management plans for natural areas; and

F-NR-12. Inventory vernal pools and amphibian species in Accotink Stream Valley.

Issue: *Non-native invasive plants are threatening natural resources by reducing the diversity of native species and impacting wildlife habitat.*

Without control of non-native invasive species, the quality of preserved parkland is threatened. Citizen participation in invasive species removal events has occurred or is planned at five parks within the Fairfax District. Rutherford Park, parcels within the

Difficult Run Stream Valley, and Accotink Stream Valley are being managed as part of the Park Authority's Invasive Management Area pilot program.

Strategies:

- F-NR-13. Educate citizens on the problems associated with invasive plant species. Work with them to eliminate or limit invasives on private property near parks and to prevent new introductions of invasive species; and
- F-NR-14. Expand non-native invasive plant management and habitat restoration on parkland by implementing the Non-Native Invasive Plant [Prioritization Plan](#) and [Assessment](#).

Issue: *The County has a goal to expand tree canopy. The Park Authority should contribute to this goal wherever possible by ensuring existing forested areas are sustainable and expanding canopy where possible.*

Tree cover is low in the Fairfax Planning District, where most of the land is privately held. County goals to increase tree cover identify private land as the primary place to plant new trees to increase and enhance tree cover.

Strategies:

- F-NR-15. Ensure sustainability of tree canopy on parkland by developing and implementing management plans and controlling threats such as non-native invasive plants and deer herbivory;
- F-NR-16. Encourage tree planting and natural landscaping techniques on private land;
- F-NR-17. Incorporate natural landscaping techniques on parkland, avoid tree loss from development and where possible increase tree canopy; and
- F-NR-18. Designate permanent resource protection zones in park master plans that define appropriate uses and development in relation to significant natural resource areas.

Issue: *The Park Authority should utilize innovative practices in construction of recreational facilities and buildings to minimize impacts to the environment and demonstrate stewardship.*

No district or park-specific strategies exist for this issue in the Fairfax Planning District.