

# CHAPTER 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

## A. OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

The County has a strong established system of public spaces. The satisfaction levels from the community are exceptionally high for parks, natural areas, and programs. The real challenge over the next ten to twenty years will be to balance existing resources and programs with new and changing needs. We must strike the right balance as we continue to maintain this quality of service and level of public satisfaction in the future, adjusting to continued population growth, increased demand for programming and natural spaces, and ever changing economics and demographics.

In response to that challenge, this plan sets forth six major objectives to guide policy-making, public investments and County management of public spaces during the next two decades. Within that framework, five key recommenda-



North Tract Park

*This plan sets forth six major objectives to guide policy-making, public investments and County management of public spaces during the next two decades.*

tions should receive special focus as the County's highest public space priorities:

### Priority 1 – Build North Tract (Recommendation 1.1)

The County Board adopted the North Tract Park Master Plan in February 2004. The new 30-acre park is on a spectacular location just north of Crystal City and south of the 14th Street Bridge. It is bounded on the north by the George Washington Memorial Parkway and the Potomac River, on the east by the CSX railroad corridor and the Roaches Run Waterfowl Sanctuary, and on the west by I-395 and the Pentagon. The implementation of the plan will be the largest capital park and recreation project the County has ever undertaken.

The North Tract area will be transformed into a distinctive showplace of environmentally sound redevelopment, with a central expanse of attractive public green spaces and high-quality indoor and outdoor recreation facilities that are accessible to all Arlingtonians, conveniently linked with nearby urban corridors and the Potomac riverscape, and coupled with complementary private redevelopment. The County should:

- ▶ Complete the design and implementation of Phase I of the North Tract Park Master Plan, which includes two lighted synthetic turf fields, multi-purpose center with aquatics and initial fitness components, central public space and open lawn area, support spaces, surface parking and relocation of Old Jefferson Davis Highway.
- ▶ Explore opportunities to fund and construct the remaining master plan components, which include additional fitness space, multi-activity center (MAC), racquet courts, indoor track, two additional synthetic turf fields, access to Roaches Run and railroad overlook, display garden and future opportunity area, multi-purpose and walking trails, structured parking, and support spaces.
- ▶ Forge creative partnerships with private entities, non-profit organizations and other public agencies to complement direct county investments and promote compatible, high-quality redevelopment of adjacent publicly and privately owned sites.



*before demolition*



*after demolition*

### **Priority 2 – Develop a Land Acquisition Policy (Recommendation 1.2)**

During the development of this plan, a detailed review of current land acquisition processes and policies was undertaken. The findings demonstrate the challenges the County faces in continuing to acquire open space in a climate where there is limited availability of land, the strong economy has driven up land prices and competition, and acquisition is more opportunistic than strategic.

There is a clear need for a multifaceted approach to land acquisition that can respond to the impacts of growth and community needs and improve the ability to acquire high priority properties. The County should create an acquisition policy that will:

- ▶ Develop land acquisition goals and give the maximum flexibility to acquire lands that are consistent with those goals. The policy should provide mechanisms that allow proactive practices in securing property, including purchasing options on high priority sites, paying for the first right of refusal, and the use of eminent domain when necessary to secure properties viewed as critical for protection or for public space development.
- ▶ Address the need for natural resource park land that protects sensitive environmental areas and important view sheds. Conservation easements with the Northern

Virginia Conservation Trust or other collaborations are an option for protecting these types of resources.

- ▶ Develop guidelines to foster additional agreements and partnerships with non-profit, regional, state and federal organizations to increase access to open space.
- ▶ Address the impact of new residential and commercial development on the delivery of public space amenities, the potential loss of open space, and increases in demand for recreation. This might include such approaches as fee simple land dedication, privately held land with public access easements, or financial contributions.
- ▶ Determine how transfer of development rights can be used as a tool to consolidate future public open space.
- ▶ Evaluate potential surplus properties and determine if they should be disposed of or incorporated into the County's open space system. Coordinate the disposition of surplus properties between the County and public schools.
- ▶ Address the need to expand green spaces in the urban corridors in order to provide parks large enough to accommodate active recreation. Look for opportunities to make better use of existing public sites, such as the Wilson School/Rosslyn Highlands Park/ Fire Station #10 Site.

### Priority 3 – Emphasize Planning for Four Mile Run (Recommendation 1.3)

Four Mile Run flows along Arlington’s southwest edge, from East Falls Church to the Potomac River. It passes through a series of parks that are connected by trails and, in certain places, reaches further into the County along tributaries. From Barcroft Park downstream, it is channelized and urban, largely lined by residential, commercial and industrial development. From Interstate 395 east to the Potomac River, it forms Arlington’s boundary with the city of Alexandria.

The stream corridor’s scope, landscape character, diversity of activities and accessibility to numerous neighborhoods makes it one of the County’s most important civic assets. The priority is to focus on the “Lower Reach” from Barcroft Park to the Potomac:

- ▶ Complete the Four Mile Run Restoration Master Plan in collaboration with the city of Alexandria, the Northern Virginia Regional Commission, the US Environmental Protection Agency and US Army Corps of Engineers. Develop priorities to implement the guiding project principles – flood protection, environment, aesthetics and design, recreation and urban life, integration and balance, access and connectivity, and education and interaction. Begin implementation.
- ▶ Develop the long-term land use plan for the Shirlington Crescent/ Four Mile Run area. As part of the

plan, and in concert with existing plans to develop Shirlington as a major cultural and arts district, identify opportunities for expansion of public spaces, including both natural areas and arts and cultural facilities.

- ▶ In concert with the long-term overall plan, develop a master plan for the park land and visual and performing arts facilities between I-395 and Barcroft Park, including the existing Shirlington and Jennie Dean Parks and the five key, recently acquired parcels. The master plan should emphasize the development of the area as an important recreational, cultural and environmental resource.
- ▶ Continue to acquire ownership or easements for land adjacent to both sides of Four Mile Run.



*Four Mile Run*



*Extent of Four Mile Run*

**Priority 4 – Create A Natural Resource Policy and Management Plan (Recommendation 2.1)**

The County lacks a county-wide data base of natural resources, including flora, fauna, and habitat evaluations. These resources need to be evaluated, their significance rated, and a management plan developed to guide how to manage and protect them. A Natural Resource Management Plan should be developed to help facilitate the County's ongoing commitment to enhance and preserve its natural resources. The plan's primary goals should be to bring together various plans, practices, programs and options to identify and develop strategies to protect the County's natural resources.

- ▶ Bring together various plans, practices, programs and options that identify and protect the County's natural resources.
- ▶ Develop a classification system of the various types of natural resources. Clarify and define the lines of authority and responsibility for management of the resources among county, regional and federal agencies.
- ▶ Create an additional layer for the County's Geographic Information System to identify and characterize significant natural resource management areas and habitats.

**Priority 5 - Maximize the Partnership with Arlington County Schools (Recommendation 5.1)**

Arlington County and Arlington Public Schools (APS) have a long history of collaboration and joint use of facilities to maximize the community's investment in our public buildings. A variety of memorandum of understandings (MOU) and other types of formal and informal agreements have been developed and are currently in operation for facilities which have joint or shared use. The most recent example is the MOU that has been developed to allow the County to upgrade school athletic fields to synthetic turf grass. Both the County and APS benefit because the County receives increased use of the fields and the schools receive much higher quality fields at no or little cost.

While there is great benefit to both agencies from the current arrangements, the facility resources are currently not fully tapped resources. They present a real opportunity for enhanced community use when they are not being utilized for their primary mission of education. To optimize use of these resources, the County and APS should:

- ▶ Review all existing formal and informal agreements and MOU's and update as necessary. Create evaluation and enforcement guidelines for both agencies.



*Donaldson Run*

- ▶ Review the current policy of the County Board and School Board on joint use (which includes joint development and use of facilities) and update as necessary
- ▶ Explore creating an Inter-Agency Coordination Board.
- ▶ Clarify County priorities for requests for use of school facilities.

These five high-priority action items reflect and advance six broad, long-term policy objectives that form the framework for effective county stewardship of its public spaces. These objectives, and related recommendations, are as follows:

**OBJECTIVE ONE: Balance Acquisition and Development of Public Spaces**

There is a strong documented need for aquatics, fitness, teen center, arts and multi-purpose spaces, along with need for additional outdoor trails, fields and natural areas. The challenge for this plan is balancing all those needs with a realistic sense of what can be accomplished in the near term and what become more long range targets. The County’s priorities focus on two opportunities to undertake development and implementation of a comprehensive recreation plan for two of the few remaining large areas of open space in Arlington, the North Tract and Four Mile Run. While the number of opportunities to replan and redevelop existing public spaces and facilities (e.g. Bluemont/Bon Air/Reeves and Quincy Park) is important, they become

future targets that will not occur until the funding has been appropriated by the County Board for the priority recommendations listed on pages 40-43. Bluemont/Bon Air/Reeves and Quincy Park will be at the top of the list of major parks to be replanned after the necessary funding has been secured to implement the priority recommendations. These priority recommendations should not limit the County Board’s ability to consider other unique opportunities for planning or development of recreation facilities that are cost effective, promote joint use and development with other public or private entities, and consistent with the objectives of this plan. Examples of potential unique opportunities may include partnerships with Arlington Public Schools, NVRPA, NPS, or private development.

**Recommendation 1.1 - Build North Tract (see Priority 1)**

**Recommendation 1.2 - Develop a Land Acquisition Policy (see Priority 2)**

**Recommendation 1.3 - Emphasize Planning and Improvement of Four Mile Run (see Priority 3)**

**Recommendation 1.4 – Focus on Planning for the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor**

Continued focus on this high visibility corridor, its plans, potential increases in public spaces and the connection

of those spaces is crucial. The County should:

- ▶ Develop a master plan for the five “Central Wilson” Parks (Mosaic, Maury, Gumball, Oakland and Herselle Milliken)
- ▶ Continue to achieve major open space through fee simple acquisition or public access easements on privately owned land, with a focus on the civic plaza at Courthouse, public plaza at Rosslyn Central Place and expanding the park in the block surrounding Maury Park.
- ▶ Secure adequate and well-designed corridors for the enjoyment of all who travel through these areas.
- ▶ Integrate the planning for public spaces with the sector plans, ensuring that all development within the corridor helps works towards the vision of the *Public Spaces Master Plan*.
- ▶ Evaluate all site plans with the goal of creating additional opportunities for urban public spaces.

**Recommendation 1.5 – Develop a “Clustering Philosophy”**

Clustering involves establishing service area boundaries that include a group of parks and/or facilities and treating them as a single unit of service rather than individual spaces. Within the cluster, overall community needs for individual components such as playgrounds, tennis courts, athletic courts, arts and cultural amenities, picnic shelters, sports fields, indoor programming space and other desired components is met with-

out duplicating them in each individual space. To develop this clustering philosophy the County should:

- ▶ Determine the service areas for each cluster. Review current service levels and determine areas that are under-served and well served.
- ▶ Based on service level, determine where to reduce duplication of services without reducing the overall quality of service provided to the community.
- ▶ Identify where new replacement or additional components will be constructed and include them in the Capital Improvement Plan.

#### **Recommendation 1.6 – Complete a Detailed Analysis of Indoor Recreation and Nature Centers**

While the County has a good overall coverage of the community for indoor recreation centers, many of these are smaller “neighborhood” type centers. In the recreation industry, research shows that creating larger (60,000 sf or more) multi-purpose centers actually increases usage and cost recovery, ability to program for multiple generations, and user retention. The current average size of 25,000 sf or lower in Arlington County is considered very small for optimal use. The County’s two nature centers are located in former single family residences that have been converted for public use. The County should:

- ▶ Invest in a detailed inventory of its indoor recreation and nature centers and usage/feasibility analysis to determine what the right mix and size of spaces should be

and determine solutions, including increasing the size, combining offerings and programs, and/or closing or re-purposing of some centers, using the clustering philosophy as described above. As part of this effort, the County should assess the need for historic interpretation and environmental education.

- ▶ Include an analysis of “alternative providers” to help determine whether any of the needs are currently being met or could be met by private, public or non-profit facilities or joint use facilities.

#### **Recommendation 1.7 – Optimize Creative Use of Spaces**

Arlington County has limited additional capacity for acquiring more public spaces due primarily to the population density, lack of available land, and high land costs. In light of this and with the continued demand for more public spaces, it is imperative that the County look at opportunities to optimize the use of spaces that are available, including partnering and creative repurposing.

- ▶ Utilize new technologies in synthetic turf and dark sky lighting to obtain maximum use and availability of multi-purpose turf fields and ball fields.
- ▶ Limit, where appropriate, the creation of specific-use facilities that may sit idle during non-programmed times.
- ▶ Consider creating additional usable public space by creating space

over roadways such as I-66, underground parking garages and the rooftops of buildings.

#### **Recommendation 1.8 – Ensure River Access**

Arlington County is a community bordered by a major river, with unfortunately relatively little river access. The Potomac River waterfront is owned and managed by the National Park Service, and the George Washington Memorial Parkway creates a strong physical barrier. The County should strive to increase access for the community, utilizing a variety of strategies and partnerships as necessary to do so. The County needs to work pro-actively with the NPS to find ways to provide these amenities.

- ▶ Develop a boathouse facility, to be located between Theodore Roosevelt Island/Little River and Francis Scott Key Memorial Bridge, to be owned and operated by a nonprofit organization or rowing consortium as recommended by the *Water-Based Recreational Facility Task Force* and adopted by the County Board in May 1996.
- ▶ Coordinate connectivity, creating trail extensions, multi-use trails, bridges and parking as appropriate to allow for human access and wildlife corridor connectivity.
- ▶ Collaborate with the National Park Service to develop a master plan for the Roaches Run and Gravelly Point.
- ▶ Collaborate with the National Park Service to maintain and improve

existing trail access along the Donaldson Run, Pimmit Run, Gulf Branch, and Windy Run streams, including improved maintenance, erosion control, control of invasive species, signage and trail markers.

**Recommendation 1.9 – Provide Increased Access to “Comfort” Facilities**

In the Parks and Recreation Citizen Survey done as part of this plan, the top two improvements the community wanted to see were drinking fountains (34%) and year round restrooms (26%). These amenities help make the experience more comfortable.

- ▶ Retrofit existing restrooms so that the community can use them year round.
- ▶ Install additional drinking fountains near facilities and trails.

**OBJECTIVE TWO – Preserve and Enhance the Environment**

Creating and preserving natural spaces is a high priority, whether building a new park, developing facilities, or acquiring land.

**Recommendation 2.1 – Create a Natural Resource Policy and Management Plan (see Priority 4)**

**Recommendation 2.2 – Enhance Tree Canopies and Natural Buffers**

Arlington County’s tree canopy provides many economic and environmental benefits, including providing habitat for birds and climbing animals. It is County policy to strive to have a sustainable urban forest that contributes to the liv-

ability of an urban community. This should be achieved through best practices in tree planting, preservation and maintenance while fostering a sense of stewardship among residents. A significant portion of Arlington’s urban forest consists of trees on private property. Accordingly, the County should help homeowners to understand the value of tree canopy and native under story plants, and provide incentives for homeowners to plant hardwood tree canopies.

- ▶ Plant native species wherever appropriate.
- ▶ Coordinate professional and volunteer efforts to control invasive plants and monitor the success of these efforts.
- ▶ Make use of available planting spaces on public lands, including school grounds.
- ▶ Promote the planting and maintenance of canopy trees on public and private land.

**Recommendation 2.3 – Preserve and Enhance Existing Natural Areas**

Many parks, including those used primarily for active recreation, contain substantial natural areas. The County wants to preserve existing wooded parks and natural areas. Accordingly, these areas, whether forest or meadows, should not be viewed as “unused” land available for active recreational facilities, but should be maintained as natural areas. Stream valley parks are particularly vulnerable to invasive plant species entering the parks from nearby private properties. If not controlled,

invasive species threaten trees, native vegetation and wildlife.

Many of the County’s natural areas are in stream valley parks. In addition to wildlife corridors, these parks include riparian buffers that shade streams and filter storm water runoff, contributing to the health of local streams, the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay. Under the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance, the County is committed to protecting the watershed and stream buffers. To preserve and enhance existing areas the County should:

- ▶ Provide sensitively-designed trails to provide access for the public to enjoy.
- ▶ Add interpretive signs explaining historical or environmental aspects of an area.
- ▶ Monitor stream valleys on a regular basis to identify needs for improvements to riparian habitats and the stabilization of stream banks.
- ▶ Develop a County-wide strategy to restore the streams and protect them from erosion.
- ▶ Enhance environmental education through opportunities for increased utilization of the nature centers by Arlington Public Schools.
- ▶ Consider the possibility of daylighting, or removing artificial cover from, County streams in public spaces that are currently part of the underground stormwater system.

### **Recommendation 2.4 – Pursue the Use of Easements to Protect Natural Areas and Heritage Resources**

As a complement to fee acquisitions and the land acquisition policy recommended above, the County should actively pursue the use of easements to protect natural areas on private land, using tax incentives where possible. The County should give top priority to easements or, if necessary, purchases that abut existing natural areas or would connect existing “islands” of natural habitat. The creation of protected corridors would aid the movement of wildlife and enable a more expansive system of trails for passive recreation. The County should continue to work with land trusts, such as the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust (NVCT), to secure easements to protect private land from development. This recommendation relates mainly to areas not intended for public access. Additional tools are needed where public use is appropriate.

It is the policy of Arlington County to encourage the use of open space/conservation and preservation easements to implement the County’s goals and objectives for the preservation of natural and heritage resources in private hands, in accord with the County’s Comprehensive Plan, including the following:

- ▶ Promote the use of easements for any purpose allowed by the Code of Virginia, such as the preservation of open space, heritage resources, scenic vistas, environmentally

sensitive resources, and parks and recreation uses.

- ▶ Encourage easements to enhance buffering and screening between uses, such as between a developed area and a park or historic site.
- ▶ Protect public park land and lands already under easement by encouraging easements on adjoining properties.
- ▶ Support easements to help preserve small areas of open space in already developed areas to shape the character of the community; to protect trees and other environmental resources; to provide visual relief; to preserve wildlife habitat; to provide buffering and screening; to establish community gardens; and to otherwise ensure that suburban and urban neighborhoods may retain open space.
- ▶ Prefer perpetual easements as the norm, only accepting a less-than-perpetual easement if it is necessary to ensure the protection of a threatened resource.
- ▶ Back easements where appropriate to establish or connect trails or to protect the view sheds of trails and public roads.
- ▶ Endorse easements as appropriate to preserve woodlands, monarch or notable trees, and/or rare or otherwise significant stands of trees, as identified by the County Urban Forester.
- ▶ Favor the use of easements for the linking of natural areas and parks,

the preservation of wildlife corridors, Resource Protection Areas, and other environmentally sensitive areas such as land associated with the Potomac River and its tributary streams.

- ▶ Urge easements to preserve open space in already developed areas in order to provide natural areas, protect environmentally sensitive resources and preserve wildlife habitat in an urban or suburban context.
- ▶ Preserve heritage resources by the use of easements. Encourage property owners to place easements on their properties, working with the County, a local non-profit land trust and/or a state or national entity authorized to hold easements for the purpose of heritage resource preservation.
- ▶ Work with the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust to develop an inventory of privately owned spaces that should be acquired or protected with conservation easements.

### **Recommendation 2.5 – Manage Natural Areas to Maintain Diverse Habitats**

The County should strive for a sustainable landscape by planting native and some appropriate non-invasive non-native species on all of its properties. Herbicides and pesticides should be used only when absolutely necessary and when effective and practical non-chemical controls are not available.

- ▶ The County should gradually

convert its planting of annuals to native and proven non-native perennial trees, shrubs and flowers, thereby reducing maintenance and watering needs.

- ▶ Set a goal of devoting fifty percent of nursery space to perennials within five years and implement sustainable landscaping practices throughout the County.

### **Recommendation 2.6 – Continue to Move Toward More “Green” Practices**

The County has been very proactive in adopting sustainable environmental practices and should continue to place priority on those practices, including:

- ▶ Decrease the use of impervious surfaces where possible while maintaining accessibility where desired.
- ▶ Narrow street corridors when feasible.
- ▶ Decrease the dependence on herbicides and pesticides.
- ▶ Increase the number of meadow type habitats.
- ▶ Increase the educational opportunities for private property owners.
- ▶ Increase interpretation resources.
- ▶ Provide ongoing resources to control invasive species.
- ▶ Continue to monitor the “Green Industry” for best practices.

### **Recommendation 2.7 – Develop and Implement a Green Infrastructure Plan**

Like the built infrastructure, a green infrastructure system consists of “hubs” — large areas that are vital to the area’s ecology — and “corridors” — linkages that provide protection for the movement of wildlife and plant life across the landscape (ecological corridors), recreational access (trails) and enhancement or restoration of water quality (riparian corridors). Accordingly, the County should develop and implement a green infrastructure plan based on these guiding principles:

- ▶ Embrace green infrastructure as the framework for conservation.
- ▶ Finance the protection and management of green infrastructure as a primary public investment.
- ▶ Design, plan and map a green infrastructure system that functions across multiple landscapes and scales and is grounded in scientific and land planning theories and practices.
- ▶ Provide hubs and corridors both within the County and with linkages to the green infrastructure system in surrounding jurisdictions.
- ▶ Engage the public in defining a green infrastructure plan that stimulates action by people with diverse backgrounds and interests.

### **OBJECTIVE THREE – Improve Access and Usability**

All of the planning and funding in the world means little if the community is not able to get to the spaces to use them. This realization translates into a heavy emphasis on access for all and transportation, working closely among County departments to ensure that any new facility or other public space is walkable, accessible, and usable, has adequate parking, and/or is on major transit lines.

### **Recommendation 3.1 – Make Public Spaces Usable for People of All Abilities**

Arlington County has implemented a strong focus on usability of all public spaces for people of all abilities, but there remain facilities and lands that are not adequately accessible. The County needs to maintain a focus that supports all people’s need for play, leisure time and social interaction. This should extend above and beyond what is required by law, including technical research, design expertise, and citizen input related to creating and redeveloping public spaces that are accessible and usable by all.

- ▶ Renovation projects should continue to incorporate the requirements and guidelines of the US Access Board on Recreational Facilities. The benchmark for Arlington in renovation projects and new construction should go beyond ADA compliance to state-of-the-art model projects commensurate with the County’s world-class commu-

- nity planning and development.
- ▶ Create places for all children to play together with siblings, friends and peers.
  - ▶ Support the right leisure time experience for all.
  - ▶ Consideration should be given to developing the County's first-ever universal design/accessible playground to create a fun place for children and adults of all ages and abilities to recreate in a setting that is accessible to the greatest number of people. Integrate a variety of play experiences and challenges where persons of all ages with physical, sensory or developmental disabilities can interact and socialize with able-bodied individuals.

**Recommendation 3.2 – Update and Implement Trail Systems Management**

Community members want to enjoy Arlington County's "walkable community" attributes. This requires safe connecting trails for walking, biking, jogging and alternative modes of transportation.

- ▶ The County needs to update the GIS system, to include details on length of trails, trail surfaces, connections and accessible locations. The database should include on-street bicycle lanes and key segments of sidewalks as well as off-road trails. This information resource will make future decisions on trail location, land acquisitions, and easements more equitable and easier to justify and manage.

- ▶ Improve access and safety of the Arlington portion of the Washington and Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park in partnership with the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority. This should include improvements to the trail crossing and amenities at Lee Highway and trail head improvements at the Shirlington Road trail terminus.
- ▶ Identify the opportunities to make better linkages to the existing trail network, including natural resource and multi-use trails. This effort should be coordinated with the Bicycle Transportation Plan.

**Recommendation 3.3 – Ensure Good Transportation Access**

The value of the transit system in providing access to park and recreation components is evident. Facilities located near one transit stop are, in effect, located near all transit stops linked by good service. This should be taken into account when locating new components. For example, it may not be necessary to duplicate facilities designed to serve the immediate neighborhood at multiple transit stops. Putting one facility at one transit stop and sizing it with the capacity to serve the cumulative population of several transit stops could serve the needs of all. This may not work for all components (such as Community Canine Areas), but could work fine for facilities such as basketball, tennis and arts facilities. In effect, multiple transit stops can be combined into a single "cluster" as described elsewhere.

- ▶ Locate facilities with a county-wide draw near transit stops and other forms of multi-modal transportation whenever possible.
- ▶ Include transportation planning and access planning for all renovated or new facilities. In addition, the plans should provide an emphasis on walkability, alternative access modes (friendly to bicyclists, skateboards, in-line skating, etc.), and maintaining accessibility for all.

**OBJECTIVE FOUR – Enhance Arts, Culture and History**

Arlington has established itself throughout the region as a community that offers dynamic and unique arts activities and one that provides focused attention to historical preservation. The County's Arts Incubator Program is a national model for innovative public support of the Arts. The Needs Assessment shows strong participation and support for arts and cultural activities. Extensive research shows that, in addition to being a vital means of social enrichment, the arts are also an economically sound investment. The County should maintain its focus on the arts, cultural and historical programs and facilities, and continue to meet and/or exceed the community's expectations.

**Recommendation 4.1 –  
Develop a Major Arts and  
Cultural Center**

There is need, demand and justification for building a multi-use centralized cultural center. Building upon the results of the report prepared by a consultant in November 2004, planning should continue to determine the funding, siting, construction costs, schedule and final programming for this center. The current preferred site is in the Courthouse Plaza area, where a center could be designed in concert with a major underground parking facility and outdoor central plaza.

Preliminarily planned components include:

- ▶ Two theatres
- ▶ Dedicated space for the Visual Arts
- ▶ Core programs focused on serving the Arlington Arts Organizations
- ▶ Space to support arts education activities
- ▶ Flexibility to accommodate a wide variety of ancillary uses

**Recommendation 4.2 –  
Focus on Arts, Cultural and  
Historic Elements**

The County must continue to be creative and proactive in finding ways to incorporate historical and cultural recognition in the development and operation of recreational facilities and areas. Potential ideas for this include:

- ▶ More cultural, historical and arts interpretive signs along walking, hiking and biking trails should be included. New trails should be

evaluated to see if they are appropriate for development around cultural, historical and arts themes.

- ▶ Incorporating public art concepts as outlined in the Public Art Master Plan.
- ▶ Incorporating small exhibition spaces in all recreation and community centers.
- ▶ Increased recognition of Arlington County's cultural diversity, historical heritage, and richness should be designed into recreational facilities and public space areas.
- ▶ When land is being considered for acquisition, County planners should work with historic preservationists early in the process to ensure that historical aspects of the acquisition are identified and that any development of the site respects identified elements.
- ▶ County departments should proactively integrate planning for projects with the goals outlined in this plan, the Public Art Master Plan and the forthcoming Historic Preservation Master Plan.

In addition, facilities for smaller concerts and events should be distributed throughout the urban corridors to encourage local activities with a dynamic flavor to occur close to transit stations and restaurants. This will not only encourage walking as a means of access to these events, it will help build a sense of community within the neighborhoods.

Additional opportunities for cultural experiences should be provided throughout the County as well. This can happen by integrating art and interpretive features into all parts of the County's Public Spaces system. For example, benches, play apparatus, and even utilitarian features such as backstops for softball can become pieces of art with a little extra thought put into their design.

**OBJECTIVE FIVE – Develop and  
Enhance Partnerships**

Arlington County has and needs to continue to create partnerships with Arlington Public Schools and other private, governmental and non-profit organizations. These partnerships help leverage funding and other resources for the community, and will continue to be more and more important as the availability of land lessens or becomes more costly. In order to minimize risk and inefficiencies, and provide for equitable, mutually-beneficial and well-managed partnerships, the County needs to pro-actively plan and set policy for procuring and managing partnerships.

**Recommendation 5.1 –  
Maximize the Partnership with  
Arlington Public Schools  
(see Priority 5 above)**

**Recommendation 5.2 –  
Create and Implement a  
Partnership Policy**

Arlington County needs to formalize all partnerships in a written format.

- ▶ Develop a policy that provides

an outline of what types of partnerships are appropriate for the County, the approval and procurement procedures, steps for partnering, monitoring and evaluation criteria, risk management and exit strategies if for some reason a partnership does not go as planned.

- ▶ Identify a system for tracking and identifying all current and potential partners. A “Sample Partnership Policy” has been provided as part of this planning process.

### **Recommendation 5.3 – Create a Partnership Plan with Managers of Federal Lands**

Arlington County includes 1,052 acres of federal lands managed by the National Park Service and other federal agencies, including the land along the Potomac River and Arlington Cemetery. The Potomac riverfront, in particular, has a great potential for creating additional recreational and natural area access for boating, fishing, wildlife watching and additional trails for Arlington citizens if creative partnerships can be implemented and managed.

- ▶ Initiate relationships with the NPS to create potential partnerships and a plan for development of access and use as feasible for this important riverfront corridor and other federally-owned lands within the County.

### **Recommendation 5.4 – Review and Update all other Agreements**

The County should inventory all other current formal and informal agreements with other governmental, for-profit and non-profit agencies.

- ▶ Agreements should be updated and formalized into writing in accordance with the partnership policy (discussed in 5.1), with an ongoing list kept in a centralized location to help minimize duplications and maximize standardized offerings.

### **OBJECTIVE SIX – Manage Assets Effectively**

The County has become large and somewhat decentralized. This has led to the need for more specific policies, standards and performance measures to help guide the various departments and divisions in reaching their common goals to fulfill the mission and vision for public spaces.

### **Recommendation 6.1 – Evaluate Controls and Methods for Pricing and Cost Recovery**

As the County has grown and evolved over the years, the issues of pricing and the relationship of funding to cost recovery has grown inconsistently across the PRCR Department. While there are some approved fee policies, determination for fees, prices, subsidy levels and cost recovery is varied throughout the agency. In addition, the basis for the supplemental fees budget is dated and insufficiently defined. In order to help remedy these inefficiencies the County should:

- ▶ Create and implement a clear pricing and cost recovery policy, an easily articulated philosophy, and approved pricing formulas.
- ▶ Re-evaluate and clarify the use and expectations of the supplemental fees budget relative to other program areas.
- ▶ Evaluate other potential forms of revenue, including alternative funding, concessions and contracting, impact fees, land dedication requirements, advertising, etc.

### **Recommendation 6.2 – Create a Life Cycle Costing Assessment**

A Life-Cycle Assessment should be compiled in a digital format that will build on current park inventories and add information related to the condition of each facility and the anticipated number of years to major renovation or replacement. The goals of this assessment will be to gain a better understanding of deferred maintenance needs that have gone unmet and develop a strategy for renovating or replacing facilities.

- ▶ Collect and review current capital project data and recent CIP's to determine trends in replacing or renovating facilities.
- ▶ Review current plans being developed on sports fields to determine lifecycle on turf replacement for both natural and synthetic turf surfaces.
- ▶ Review historic data on replacement of facilities and components.
- ▶ Conduct field audits to develop a

condition inventory of all facilities.

- ▶ Review all proposed park plans and determine if on-going capital projects include major replacements or renovations to gather cost estimates for current projects.
- ▶ Establish lifecycle replacement standards and projected costs.

#### **Recommendation 6.3 –**

##### **Create a Technology Investment Plan**

Arlington County should create a technology investment plan related specifically to the public spaces management that would detail the future needs, strategic direction, and business systems analysis to clearly define the County's future needs and required investment for Information Management and Technology.

#### **Recommendation 6.4 –**

##### **Create Alternative Funding Policies and Resources**

In evaluating the potential for additional revenue and cost recovery, there is great potential for a substantial increase from alternative funding sources such as partnerships, grants, and sponsorships. In order to create a positive return on investment for these activities, it is recommended that the County:

- ▶ Create a strategic plan for alternative funding procurement.
- ▶ Centralize the authority for procurement of all sponsorships and grant applications into this function.
- ▶ Centralize the inventory, authority for, and location of all partnership and sponsorship agreements.

- ▶ Create a sponsorship policy that outlines acceptable sponsorship activities, levels, authorities, and approvals.
- ▶ Create centralized processes for grant writing, funding procurement, servicing of partners and sponsors, reporting, evaluation and performance measurement.

#### **Recommendation 6.5 –**

##### **Create Facility Design Standards Guidelines**

The County should create facility design standards that address near and long term operational costs, maintenance costs, utilization of land resources, best management practices, standard construction and replacement materials, compliance with ADA, LEED and National Playground Safety requirements, and other issues. This guideline document should help guide all future planning efforts.

- ▶ Determine the full scope of information to be covered in the guidelines.
- ▶ Initiate the development of design standards.

#### **Recommendation 6.6 –**

##### **Update and Manage all Policies, Guidelines and Maintenance Standards**

As the County has grown, policy and guideline development has occurred on an "as needed" basis. The County should update and manage all policies, guidelines and maintenance standards for management of all parks, trails, natural areas, and facilities. This includes defin-

ing and inventorying all types of facilities and creating consensus on management practices and classifications.

- ▶ Review and inventory the various policy and guideline documents that are in place or have been previously developed.
- ▶ Create a list of the necessary management documents under the County's purview.
- ▶ Develop maintenance standards and staffing levels.
- ▶ Evaluate the current maintenance data base system and determine how to evaluate true costs and resources needs.
- ▶ Allocate resources to update or create needed policy and guideline documents.
- ▶ Implement the updated standards and maintenance management practices.

#### **Recommendation 6.7 –**

##### **Implement a 5-Year Master Planning Schedule**

As an element of the County's Comprehensive Plan, the Public Spaces Master Plan should be updated every five years.

- ▶ Schedule the update to the next 2010 Public Spaces Master Plan by allocating resources to begin the update starting in 2008. The update should include an update to the parks and Recreation Resident Survey and Youth Survey.



Gulf Branch Nature Center

## B. NEXT STEPS

Arlington County is continually striving to keep up with the expectations and needs of the community. The public spaces are heavily used and have numerous positive impacts including encouraging healthy lifestyles, promoting social well-being, providing opportunities and facilities for enjoyment, and enhancing the quality of life.

This *Public Spaces Master Plan* provides a guiding mechanism for continuing to meet existing and future community needs, and expanding the positive impacts of this portion of the County's services. The strengths of this plan stems from the extensive research, community involvement, analysis of needs, and public review that form

the basis for the recommendations it contains. The recommendations of this plan are designed to create goals primarily for the PRCR Department, cultivating:

- ▶ Focus on consistently meeting and exceeding citizen expectations;
- ▶ Using innovative ideas and methods to successfully meet challenges posed by budgetary, facility and staffing limitations;
- ▶ A public space system that benefits residents by increasing services to all age groups and providing diverse opportunities;
- ▶ A stewardship approach to providing high-quality facilities, existing and future, through judicious use of public funds;

- ▶ Cooperation and partnerships among the County departments, Arlington Public Schools, community-based recreational amenities, other national, local and regional governments, and the private sector in providing recreational services and facilities;
- ▶ A proactive planning process guided by community needs and executable strategies; and a process for reviewing and updating this document.

Ultimately, this plan is designed to serve as a planning and decision-making tool facilitating participation for everyone in Arlington County.