

Public Spaces Master Plan Refresh Survey: Frequently Asked Questions

You may receive a mailed paper survey, a postcard, text message, phone call, or you may see social media ads about the [Public Spaces Master Plan \(PSMP\) Refresh](#) survey. Arlington County staff are working with ETC Institute, a nationally recognized survey research firm specializing in county level parks and recreation surveys to conduct a statistically valid survey for the PSMP Refresh.

ETC Institute has mailed surveys to a random selection of households throughout Arlington. The goal is to reach a minimum of 800 household responses, representative of the demographic and geographic characteristics of the County. The responses from the households that have been randomly selected will be included in the PSMP's statistically valid survey report.

Everyone who receives the survey in their mail is strongly encouraged to respond to this survey, as it is different than other forms of engagements and it is the only statistically valid survey that will be conducted as part of the PSMP Refresh process.

All responses will remain anonymous and confidential. ETC will compile and analyze the results, present them to the County, and make the findings publicly available on the [County's website](#).

If you were randomly selected for a survey, you may complete it online at ArlingtonPSMPSurvey.org, by phone at 1-888-801-5368, and in various languages online by visiting ArlingtonPSMPSurvey.org and by phone by calling specific dedicated language lines:

- Spanish: 1-844-811-0411
- Mongolian: 1-844-468-2571
- Arabic: 1-844-247-8190
- Amharic: 1-888-971-6613

Residents who were not randomly selected to participate in the statistically valid survey this fall will have an opportunity to take a similar online engagement on [the PSMP Refresh webpage](#) in early 2026. This online engagement will not be statistically valid, and the results of this online engagement will be reported separately from the statistically valid survey but will be used as an additional data point to inform the PSMP Refresh process.

Some of the common questions asked of staff during the survey period may include:

1. What is the purpose of the statistically valid PSMP Refresh Survey?

The purpose of the statistically valid, county wide needs assessment survey is to gather key data and information needed to address current and future parks, programming, and recreational needs and policies of the County. The survey results will inform the update to

the current [level of service analysis](#) (PSMP, p. 171-195) and will guide future improvements of the public space system. DPR conducted similar surveys in the past, including the last [survey](#) as part of the PSMP update process in 2015. In order to be statistically valid, the survey must include a minimum of 800 household responses that are representative of the demographic and geographic characteristics of the County.

2. How do 800 completed surveys get accurate results for a large County?

Retrieving 800 completed surveys will provide a margin of error of +/-3.5% at the 95% level of confidence. What this means is that if the same survey was conducted 100 times, it would produce the same results 95 out of the 100 times, with a margin of error of + or – 3.5% of the result. This is a very typical practice when it comes to scientific, statistically valid surveys. Because the sample is randomly selected, staff is ensuring the data represents the Census demographics and the sample is geocoded to ensure that there is representation across the Arlington County.

3. I was not sent a survey, but I would like to complete one.

The sample was designed to be as representative as possible of the population of Arlington County, so by sending copies of the survey to people who request a copy, the sample would be skewed and would make the results less meaningful.

All responses received from households that were not randomly selected (for example, by people sharing the survey link), will be reported separately.

In early 2026, all residents will have an opportunity to participate in a similar online engagement – however, this will not be statistically valid. The results of this online engagement will be reported separately from the statistically valid survey and will be used as an additional data point to inform the Refresh process.

4. How will the new statistically valid survey inform The Refresh?

The results from the statistically valid survey will be used in combination with other engagement touchpoints and community feedback to inform the Plan's Refresh. Compared with community-wide feedback at events and through online engagements, the statistically valid survey serves as a more precise tool to prioritize investment, refine current level of service standards, and help to ensure that community needs expressed are representative of resident needs and desires at multiple geographic scales, across Arlington County. The statistically valid survey results will be used to illustrate high, medium, and low priorities for investment, based on community expressed need by the importance residents placed and how many residents have unmet needs for that amenity.

5. Will the results be publicly available?

Yes, the survey results will be shared with the Arlington community through our next series of engagement (planned for spring/summer 2026) as well as on the [County's website](#).

6. How did you get my address?

Your address was sampled at random from a list of all addresses from the Post Office. This is a standard service offered by the Post Office. It is not a county government file, and no household member is named in the file.

7. I received your survey, and while I own the property that it was sent to, I don't live there. What should I do?

Please have the resident of the property complete the survey.

8. Can anyone in my household complete the survey?

You must be 18 years or older to fill out the survey, and only one survey can be completed for each household.

9. If I filled out the survey when I first received it, should I fill it out again now that I have received a second copy?

No, please don't fill it out again. The second copy is distributed as a reminder to all people selected to participate in this survey and sent again for your convenience. Thank you for completing the first survey.

10. How do you ensure the results are representative of the County?

This is the main reason the survey includes demographic questions. This helps with comparing the data received to the recent Census data to ensure the data is representative and scientifically valid.

11. Why is "Hispanic" separate from "Race"?

The goal is to compare the demographic profile of those responding to the demographic profile of the county as presented by the Census. In order to be able to do this, the race and ethnicity questions were asked the same way the Census does. The census designates Hispanic as an ethnicity, not a race.

12. Who is ETC Institute?

The County has selected **ETC Institute**, as part of the consultant team led by WRT, to conduct this survey. ETC is a nationally recognized leader in market research for government organizations, founded in 1982 by Dr. Elaine Tatham. Since 2010, ETC Institute has administered surveys in over 1,000 cities and counties across the United States. To learn more about their work, please visit: <https://etcinstitute.com/about-us/>