Parks & Recreation

PLANNING, DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT

PREPARED BY: Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. W. P. Large, Inc., PROS Consulting, INC., Barth Associates, LLC, Perez Planning + Design, LLC

PARK NEEDS ASSESSMENT & DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

A MASTER PLAN FOR THE PARKS & RECREATION SYSTEM

2024



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

VIRGINIA BEACH PARKS AND RECREATION

VIRGINIA BEACH PARK NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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Report Prepared for:

City Council

Michael Berlucchi – *District 3*

Barbara Henley – *District 2*

Robert W. "Worth" Remick – *District 6*

Dr. Amelia Ross-Hammond – *District 4*

Jennifer V. Rouse – *District 10*

Joashua F. Schulman – *District 9*

Chris Taylor – *District 8*

Rosemary Wilson – *District 5*

Sabrina D. Wooten – *District 7*

David Hutcheson – *District 1*

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Robert P. Hardegen

Clinton Mills

Kathryn N. Moran

Myra Pane

Stephen Rockefeller

Eugene Towler

David Weiner

Debbie Wiggins

Sebastian Johnson

Quinn Zellinski

Parks and Rec Department

Michael Kirschman, Parks and Recreation *Director*

Chad Morris, Planning, Design, & Development *Administrator*

Report Prepared by:

Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc

W. P. Large, Inc.

PROS Consulting, INC.

Barth Associates, LLC

Perez Planning + Design, LLC

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation is nationally recognized as a leader in providing parks, recreation, and open space. The Parks and Recreation Department's focus over the last two decades is shifting towards a well-rounded integrated and holistic approach to park, recreation, and open space, exploring the capacity to positively impact the health and well-being of the community and environment.

The 2024 *Virginia Beach Park Needs Assessment and Development Strategy* is a long-range plan specifically created to develop the City's parks and open space system as one of the foremost in the nation through a 15-year implementation action plan that prioritizes equitable service in a manner that is fiscally responsible, environmentally sound, and responsive to citizen needs. Focusing the development and investment strategy through the lens of equity provides a framework for improvements, prioritization, and spending and funding based on community-wide objectives and shared interdepartmental missions.

Virginia Parks & Recreation Vision, Mission, & Values

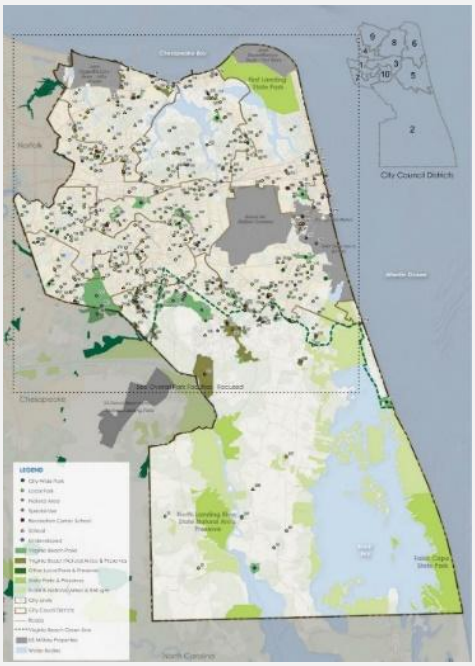
Vision	Mission	Core Values	Community Priorities
To be the national leader in providing enriching and memorable lifelong experiences.	Exceed community expectations in an inclusive, innovative, and sustainable manner.	• Inclusion • Legendary guest experience • Innovation • Empowerment • Sustainable	• Protect the environment • Promote healthy lifestyles • Provide community access • Ensure the stewardship of funds, facilities, and public lands.

Goals of the Plan:

1. Assess existing city parks and open space.
2. Develop equity-based park service standards and metrics.
3. Identify improvements required to meet current and future needs.
4. Prioritize recommendations through the lens of equity.
5. Develop cost phasing and a 15-year implementation plan.

PROCESS

Virginia Beach is the largest and most populous city in the state, and the Department manages an extensive inventory of parks, facilities, and open space areas, including over 250 parks, over 7,000 acres of parks and open space, seven community recreation centers, and numerous trails, playgrounds, water access points, and other recreational facilities. The City strives to be a national leader in park and recreation services, and the investment into public beaches, park redevelopment, and conservation area acquisition has resulted in top-tier recreational opportunities and experiences for residents and visitors. However, quality of park experiences is uneven at sites across the City. The City faces a $30M backlog of deferred park maintenance, not including recreation centers, and the park backlog is expected to climb to over $227M by 2033. There are over 80 undeveloped and underdeveloped park sites across the City, requiring new capital investment to build out. There is current unmet public need for amenities and park types, and increasing unmet public needs forecast in the future.



Map of Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation sites.

The *Virginia Beach Park Needs Assessment and Development Strategy* develops a framework action plan rooted in equity and contextual understanding for how to provide consistent, high-quality parks and open space through strategic investment, management, and operation. The process began with evaluating the current conditions, including park inventory, conditions assessment, related planning documents, and interviews with stakeholders to understand the current opportunities and threats facing the system. Through public survey input, market and recreational trends analysis, demographic assessment, benchmark evaluations, and mapping assessments, standards of service were developed to address equity of access, quality, economic (investment), and environmental services. The recommendations developed in this planning effort for maintaining, improving, and expanding the parks system were prioritized based on equity, feasibility, and impact, to provide recommendations on where to direct resources they are most needed and can have the greatest impact.

Virginia Beach Parks and Facilities Snapshot

7,425 acres Total of park land owned by VBPR

5,772 acres Of this, are developed by parks

1,653 acres are undeveloped city park land

23,017 acres of additional public parkland in the City (school sites, state parks, and federal park land)

Park & Rec Sites:

167 Local Parks (634 acres)

19 City Wide parks (1,002 acres)

36 Special Use Parks (3,153)

22 Natural Areas (902 acres)

7 Recreation Centers (81 acres)

70 School Sites* (1,248 acres)

**Include elementary schools, middle schools, and special purpose schools.*

Park & Rec Facility Highlights:

173 playgrounds

111 tennis and/or pickleball courts

79 diamond fields

64 basketball courts

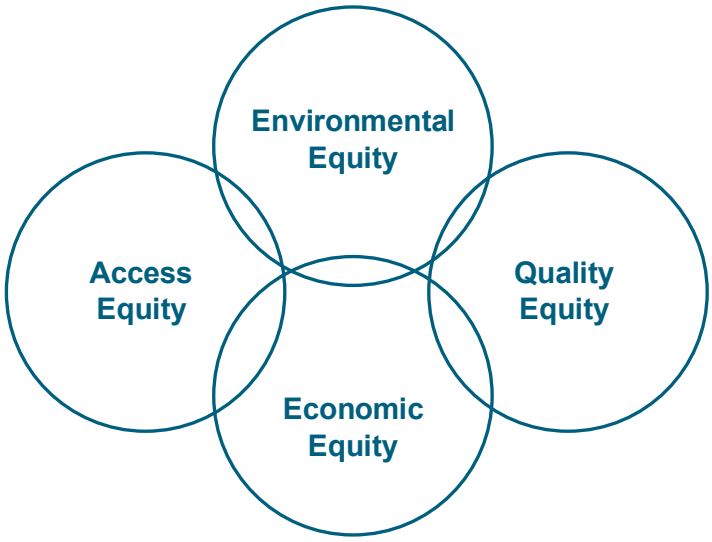
31 miles of trails (paved & unpaved)

13 canoe/kayak launches

4 outdoor stages

LENS OF EQUITY

This report focuses on four areas of equity as the framework for evaluation, investment, and development of the Virginia Beach parks system: access equity, environmental equity, quality equity, and economic equity. Setting clear goals with measurable metrics that address each of these categories of equity brings those aspirations into reality and provides the framework for recommendations and implementation.



The four areas of equity examined in the assessment



The Department provides offers a range of programming types for all ages.

STREAMLINE PARK CLASSIFICATION

Virginia Beach currently defines park land into 16 separate designations. This specificity leads to confusion, overlap, and difficulty with resource analysis and planning. This plan proposes that five categories be applied to the designations. These categories are based on size and use, and applying these definitions will aid in planning, management, and level of service evaluation. The Department may choose to phase out the sub-designations or retain them as data indicators.

RECOMMENDATION THEMES

An extensive list of detailed recommendations was developed to address current needs, projected future shortfalls, address inequities, and improve the park system to reach a world-class level. The following is a summary of key themes from those recommendations.



Park maintenance crews.

Improve existing parks and facilities, including addressing lifecycle replacement and maintenance needs.

Table 0.1 // Proposed Park Classifications

Proposed Park Categories	Current Park Designations
Local Park	Neighborhood Park
	Town Green
	Urban Plaza
City-Wide Park	Signature Park
	Metro Park
	Community Park
Special-Use Park	Special Use
	Linear Park/Linkage
	Eco-Garden
Natural Area	Natural Resource Area
	Open Space Preservation Area
Recreation Center	Special Use – Recreation Center



OnieTonie Seatack Park.

Construct additional amenities to address shortfalls city-wide and by district. Key shortfalls across the city were trails, pickleball, playgrounds, skate spots, soccer fields, and splash pads. New amenity types should be introduced to the system, including nature centers, a cricket field, an archery range, and outdoor pools.



The hill at Mt. Trashmore Park.

Invest in under-developed parks so that they meet development standards of a wide variety of recreational opportunities for all age groups and interests.



Parks maintenance crews manage significant property.

Acquire and develop new park land. The City faces a significant shortfall of City-Wide level regional parks, as well as certain areas of the city facing shortages of Local level parks. Specialty type parks and natural areas are opportunity-based and the City should be prepared to move quickly.



Paddleboarding is a popular water-based activity.

Build out un-developed parks as appropriate for their context and as Local, City-Wide, Special Use, or Natural Areas.



Marshview Trail.

Fund previously planned projects, including the 12-mile-long Virginia Beach Trail

.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

It is understood that resources and funding are limited, so any investment made should have the greatest possible impact for the community. The full set of recommendations were evaluated based on equity needs to develop a priority list of projects and development. The prioritization was developed through quantitative and geographic analysis.

Priorities and projects should be reviewed every five years to reflect budgets, staffing levels, new policies, trends, park use, and citizen needs. As opportunities arise to implement recommendations, priorities may shift.

Improvements to Existing Park Facilities

The highest priority improvements are: increased ADA access and availability of universally accessible design elements, improvements to soft surface trails, addressing safety hazards, increased connectivity between parks or recreational facilities and the surrounding communities and destination points, increased and improved water access, and addressing lifecycle maintenance and replacement. Existing ADA access impediments and safety concerns are few and being addressed through the implementation of the Department's ADA Transition Plan.

New Amenity Construction

The highest priority amenities for new construction are: playgrounds, canoe/kayak launches, soft surface and paved trails, and outdoor pickleball courts.

Develop Un- and Under-Developed Parks

High priority underdeveloped Local parks are Level Green Park, Oak Springs Park, Salem Village Park, and Seatack North Park. Please note that Level Green Park is undergoing a $4.5 million renovation which will transform it into a City-Wide park, based on the type and diversity of amenities that will be constructed in the park.

High priority underdeveloped City-Wide parks are Salem Woods Park, Marshview Park, and Carolanne Farms. High priority undeveloped Local parks are Margate Ave. Park, Amhurst Park, Thalia Trace Oaks Park, and County Haven. There is only one undeveloped City-Wide park located in a high priority area: Woodbridge Park.

It is recommended to focus first on developing City-Wide level parks. Virginia Beach has a greater shortfall of City-Wide type parks than Local type parks, so addressing this need first is a priority. From an impact perspective, City-Wide parks have more amenities, specialty amenities, and reach a larger number of people than Local parks.

Land Acquisition

The report recommends alternative solutions for addressing park land shortfalls, but even by using these alternatives, more land is required. An additional 121 acres of local park land and 992 acres of City-Wide park land will be needed by 2036. Mapping identifies priority areas for acquisition based on a composite analysis of equity metrics.

Water Access

Providing additional water access, such as boat ramps, canoe/kayak launches, boardwalks, piers, fishing access, or scenic viewing, is a priority for Virginia Beach. Mapping identifies priority areas for water access development at current parks and park land based on a composite analysis of equity metrics.

BUDGET AND 15-YEAR IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

An important piece of the plan is to determine how much to budget for the recommended improvements identified in the conditions assessments, the shortfalls identified in the Level of Service (LOS) analysis, and the recommended system-wide improvements. The Department is currently facing an over $30 million backlog of deferred maintenance resulting in declining parks and recreation facilities with an anticipated $227.8 million of lifecycle replacement required by 2033. Further investment beyond this is required to expand recreational offerings within existing parks, to develop new parks and open space to meet the public's needs, and to provide a world-class parks system. A comprehensive assessment of capital investment costs with an achievable implementation plan is essential for CIP planning. The cost analysis in this report shows gross approximate figures based on 2024 dollars and is not intended to be used for specifical financial determinations. The purpose of this analysis is to provide the Department enough information to begin thinking about planning efforts related to funding and priorities.

Phasing Plan

5 Years SHORT-TERM	6-10 Years MID-TERM	11-15 Years LONG-TERM
Recommendations that Address safety, code or access, or could be implemented easily with low cost. • Safety and accessibility improvements Lifecycle replacement and maintenance backlog • The construction of high-priority amenities • The development and investment in priority city-wide parks	• Park appearance • Continuation of lifecycle replacement and maintenance backlog • The construction of high- and medium-priority amenities • The investment in priority local and city-wide parks	*Projects that involve in-depth consideration, compilation of larger funding amounts, and extended demographic shifts or long-range planning.* • All recommendations in the mid-term category • Park land acquisition

Implementing all recommendations within the plan will require significant funding resources. The order of magnitude estimate of probable cost is $837,650,000, calculated in 2024 dollars. Based on inflation, labor costs, material cost variability, and other factors, the actual implemented construction cost will be higher.

PHASED PRIORITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The costs associated with all improvements and recommendations in the plan were calculated to be $837,650,000, in 2024 dollars. It is understood that this is a significant cost, and that an achievable implementation strategy is necessary to begin addressing these needs. To that end, priority projects were identified and then categorized into three phases, short-term (0-5 years), mid-term (6-10 years), and long-term (11-15 years). Projects were categorized based on level of need, feasibility, cost, and health and safety. Total estimated order of magnitude cost for the prioritized projects over a 15-year period is $483,630,000.

Table 0.2 // Virginia Beach Park Recommendations Order of Magnitude Estimate of Total Probable Cost

Recommendation	Cost
Existing facility improvements	$ 18,440,000
Lifecycle Replacement (10-year)	$ 227,810,000
Amenity construction (15 year LOS)	$ 268,410,000
Undeveloped Parks	$ 57,310,000
Underdeveloped Parks	$ 14,130,000
New park land acquisition and development	$ 191,550,000
Planned Project: Virginia Beach Trail	$ 60,000,000
Grand Total Cost of Recommendations	**$ 837,650,000**

Table 0.3 // Virginia Beach Park Recommendations Order of Magnitude Estimate of Probable Cost – 15-year Phased Priority Implementation

Recommendation	Short-Term (0-5 years)	Mid-Term (6-10 years)	Long-Term (11-15 years)
Existing facility improvements	$ 7,090,000	$ 4,460,000	$ 4,090,000
Lifecycle Replacement (10-year)	$ 79,110,000	$ 79,110,000	$ 69,590,000
Amenity construction (15 year LOS)	$ 11,410,000	$ 44,530,000	$ 72,180,000
Undeveloped Parks	$ 5,040,000	$ 11,450,000	$ 16,930,000
Underdeveloped Parks	$ 2,820,000	$ 3,030,000	$ 1,560,000
New park land acquisition			$ 14,230,000
Planned Project: Virginia Beach Trail	$ 10,000,000	$ 10,000,000	$ 40,000,000
Total Cost of Recommendations	**$ 115,470,000**	**$ 152,580,000**	**$ 218,580,000**
Grand Total Cost of Recommendations			**$486,630,000**

Note: VB Trail project cost does not include $15M of federal grand money awarded in 2024

FUNDING STRATEGIES

To continue to build and maintain the Parks and Recreation system, funding should be pursued for capital investments. While numerous funding strategies are available, due to the size and scope of the need, anything other than a general obligation bond, new dedicated funding, or significant federal grants are not going to substantially reduce the need as it exists today.

Funding Strategy Opportunities

Tourism Investment Program

Receives dedicated revenue streams to fund tourism and other economic vitality related operating costs and capital projects

Request General Obligation Bond Referendum

For park and recreation facilities

Increase the percentage of Outdoor Incentive

For park facilities and improvements

Potential Bond Funding Levels:

A **1.28 cent** increase would result in **$100M** in bond funding

A **1.63 cent** increase would result in **$150M** in bond funding



Ribbon cutting at the Marshview Trail.

CHAPTER 1 // INTRODUCTION

Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation (VBPR) is nationally recognized as a leader in providing parks, recreation, and open space. They were selected as the winner for the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) 2023 National Gold Medal Awards for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management, and as finalists in 2021 and 2022. The Parks and Recreation Department has grown over the years to now manage 293 city park sites, more than 7,000 acres of parks and natural areas, seven community recreation centers, a municipal marina, an athletic complex, and several more specialty facilities.

The parks and open space overseen by the Virginia Beach Department of Parks and Recreation provide a great benefit to all city residents and an attraction to visitors. They provide space for recreation and protect the city's biological, cultural, and natural resources. The parks, greenways, and natural areas also serve as areas of watershed protection, water quality enhancement, and open space protection. It will be increasingly important for future facilities to carry forward this idea of multi-function parks, natural areas, and open space facilities as the threat of sea level rise and recurrent flooding impact the Tidewater region.

The Parks System Needs Assessment and Development Strategy evaluates the current conditions and future need and proposes a plan to improve performance and provide equitable service in support of a healthy, active, and resilient community.

VISION STATEMENT

To be the national leader in providing enriching and memorable lifelong experiences.

MISSION STATEMENT

Exceed community expectations in an inclusive, innovative, and sustainable manner.

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

- Protect the environment.
- Promote healthy lifestyles.
- Provide community access
- Ensure the stewardship of funds, facilities, and public lands.

1.1 UNDERSTANDING THE DEPARTMENT

In January 1956, the Board of Supervisors of Princess Anne County established a Recreation Department. When Princess Anne County became the City of Virginia Beach in 1963, the department's name changed to Department of Parks, Recreation and Physical Education. Ten years later, Physical Education separated from the department and became operated by the School Board. Since 1973, the department has been known as Department of Parks & Recreation. The Department's scope of operations has expanded over the years, the magnitude reflected in its nearly 1,400 full and part-time staff and an operating budget of nearly $67 million in total, increasing to $88M in fiscal year 2025.

The Department has been recognized nationally for its quality operations and services, originally achieving the Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) accreditation in 1999, and being reaccredited in 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019 through the National Recreation and Parks Association

(NRPA). Virginia Beach was the first park and recreation agency to be accredited in Virginia, the nineteenth in the United States, and is only one of thirteen agencies in Virginia that are accredited. CAPRA accreditation signifies excellence in operation and service in parks and recreation, and maintaining this notable status demonstrates the commitment of the Department to be a leader in the field. The agency's quality continues to be recognized, being named as finalists in 2021 and 2022, and in 2023 the winner of the National Gold Medal Award Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation for excellence in Parks and Recreation Management by the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration, in partnership with the NRPA.

DEPARTMENTAL OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

One of the most important things that Virginia Beach did for Parks and Recreation was approving a 1988 referendum that provides designated funding to Parks & Recreation for Recreation Centers, sourced as a percentage of property taxes. This funding source was well established and has been protected ever since, and because of it, VBPR has weathered economic downturns, like the 2008 recession and COVID-19 pandemic, better than many other departments.

Another early milestone was the establishment of an Asset Management System that VBPR uses to inventory facilities and amenities and track the maintenance and operations cost associated with each. The Department now has an understanding of the true cost associated with operating the parks system and can accurately allocate funding for lifecycle and replacement costs.

The department created their first comprehensive Design Guidelines for Planning, Design, and Development in 2009, updated in 2016. These guidelines and standards established critical framework for organizing and unifying the quality and aesthetic of parks within the Department. This has been a monumental effort and has immensely improved the ability for all projects to work in one common design language. Unified standards create brand recognition for the parks and recreation system, making the operations easily identifiable by the public and communicating a high quality of services and amenities. From an operations perspective, design standards also streamline maintenance procedures and product repair and replacement. The relatively new park projects perhaps exemplify these standards the most, for example Marshview Park, Woodstock Park, and Kemps Landing Park.



Marshview Park is a recently designed park that exemplifies the VBPR Design Standards

OPEN SPACE PROGRAM

The Department developed an Open Space Acquisition Program in 2001, acquiring and managing tracts of land for environmental preservation, conservation, and stormwater management. Over 2,800 acres were added to the park system between 2001 and 2015. This program is pivotal to the success of VBPR since it allows the Department to acquire and land bank properties for preservation or for improvements to passive and active recreation spaces. These traditional parks and open spaces are classic amenities that remain constantly popular attractions and do not become obsolete the way a special-use facility might, which makes the Open Space Program a sound investment.

SCHOOL INFLUENCE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

The school system has always been a strength for Virginia Beach. VBPR is an active stakeholder in these properties since they maintain all public and school grounds and many of the athletics facilities are shared across the school system.

In 2007 Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS) turned toward sustainable building systems as an effort to systemically cut costs and to exemplify good stewardship to other public and private facilities. The advent of Hermitage Elementary School's LEED Certification was a first for Virginia Beach and it began to set off a sustainability renaissance in the school system. After Hermitage, it became apparent that a "green" prototype elementary school would work, and every school since has remained on a sustainable stewardship trajectory. Campus design and school construction are boldly redefining sustainability standards and 21st century learning models as they evolve with new technology and lessons learned from their predecessors.

VBPR has been intimately involved as key stakeholders in all of these facilities, so it is understandable that they have been influenced by the renaissance sweeping through the schools. It became quickly apparent that the Recreation Centers could also rise to this same level of quality in design and sustainability.

RECREATION CENTERS

When the Williams Farm Recreation Center started in 2010, the same sustainable design considerations from the newer schools were included in the Rec Center design. It eventually became a LEED certified facility and one of the area's top natatoriums. This project heralded much for VBPR as they now had their first modern sustainable building on par with the schools and other top-level facilities in the region. This project immediately set the bar for recreation centers, influencing Bow Creek Recreation Center and Kempsville Recreation Center.

Of the seven recreation centers, four were built between 1990 and 1997. These centers are nearing the end of their projected life for major systems. The Virginia Beach Community Recreation Centers Modernization Study, completed in 2020, addresses the magnitude of costs to replace the major systems in



Williams Farm Community Recreation Center
2012



Bow Creek Community Recreation Center
2015



Kempsville Community Recreation Center
2017

The newest recreation centers in Virginia Beach set new standards for service and environmental sustainability

the aging centers, and recommended renovations to the facility to meet the needs of current and future trends in recreation centers to maintain VBPR's high standard of quality facilities and programs.

COLLABORATION AND MULTI-FUNCTIONAL PARKS

VBPR has been an innovator and key stakeholder in many projects that extend their successes to other departments and organizations. Hampton Roads Sanitation District identified Woodstock Park as an ideal location for infrastructure improvements in their system that would allow the closure of an aging wastewater treatment facility on the Chesapeake Bay in Virginia Beach. The park site was reimagined with VBPR as a high performing recreation and infrastructure facility. The site now includes the HRSD Providence Road Off-Line Storage Facility, which will store up to 5 million gallons of combined stormwater and sanitary flows during heavy rainstorm events. The upgraded recreational park amenities include a 30,000 square foot cutting edge skatepark integrated onto the top of and off two sides of the storage facility. VBPR has played a serious partner-role with HRSD and is helping to solve a regional problem with broad context for future opportunities.

VBPR broke new ground with its partnership with the engineering division on the Bow Creek Stormwater Park, which is converting an aging golf course into a massive stormwater park for the flood-prone neighborhoods of Windsor Woods, Princess Anne Plaza, and The Lakes. These neighborhoods were built in the 1960s on top of the filled Holland Swamp and currently suffer the woes of the completed legacy creeks which tend to resurface with high water tables during heavy rainfall. With the closing of golf facilities throughout the nation, repurposing them has been a trending practice. In this case, VPBR is fully integrating with Public Works-Stormwater Divisions to build the first true stormwater park in the region. The park will provide enough stormwater storage capacity to virtually eliminate the flooding of homes within these three flood-prone neighborhoods.



Concept plan for Bow Street Stormwater Park showing integrated recreation and stormwater infrastructure

CONNECTIVITY

Lack of connectivity or the fragmentation of neighborhoods, trails, bike paths, and park systems is one of the biggest obstacles for VBPR in terms of meeting sustainability and equity objectives. In 2008 the Department set the goal for improving connectivity through bikeways and trails and providing a park within a ten-minute walk from home for every resident by investing in equitable access to park facilities. Due to the nature of the City's suburban land use patterns, addressing the fractured connectivity is a challenge.

1.2 BENEFITS OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Frederick Law Olmsted, considered the father of landscape architecture and the American parks movement in the late nineteenth century, noted that "a park exercises a very different and much greater influence upon the progress of a city in its general structure than any other ordinary public work." Parks and the public realm – which includes streets, civic spaces, conservation areas, trails and greenways, historic and cultural sites, stormwater ponds, and other lands owned and managed by public agencies – can account for up to 50 percent of a community's landmass, and generate significant sustainability and resiliency benefits for a community. Such benefits can range from creating a framework for growth to combating climate change.

Dr. John Crompton, University Distinguished Professor at Texas A&M University, identified nineteen community-wide benefits in particular, seen in Table 1.1.

A case in point is The Trust for Public Land's 2011 study of *The Economic Benefits of the Park and Recreation System of Virginia Beach*. Table 1.2 below estimates an annual value (in 2010) of close to $11M per year in benefits generated by "Revenue-Producing Factors"; over $300M per year in benefits generated by "Wealth Increasing Factors"; close to $376M annually in benefits generated by "Cost-Saving Factors to Citizens" including direct-use and health; and close to $10M per year in benefits generated by "Cost-Saving Factors to City Government", including stormwater management, air pollution mitigation, and community cohesion.

Table 1.1: Community-wide Benefits Generated by Parks and Recreation Systems

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

- Attracting tourists
- Attracting businesses
- Attracting retirees
- Enhancing real estate values
- Reducing taxes
- Stimulation of equipment sales

ENVIRONMENTAL STAINABILITY

- Protecting drinking water
- Controlling flooding
- Cleaning air
- Reducing traffic congestion
- Reducing energy costs
- Preserving biological diversity

ALLEVIATING SOCIAL

- Reducing environmental stress
- Community regeneration
- Cultural and historic preservation
- Facilitating healthy lifestyles
- Alleviating deviant youth behavior
- Raising levels of education attainment
- Alleviating unemployment distress

(John L. Crompton, Community Benefits and Repositioning: The Keys to Park and Recreation's Future Viability, 2007)

Table 1.2: Estimated Annual Value of the Virginia Beach Park and Recreation System (Trust for Public Land, 2011)

Summary: The Estimated Annual Value of the Virginia Beach Park and Recreation System		
Revenue-Producing Factors for City Government	Tax receipts from increased property value	$2,218,740
	Tax receipts from increased tourism value	$8,428,688
	Total	$10,647,428
Wealth-Increasing Factors for Citizens	Property value from park proximity	$10,249,256
	Net profit from tourism	$295,004,054
	Total	$305,253,320
Cost-Saving Factors to Citizens	Direct use value	$337,453,874
	Health value	$38,472,475
	Total	$375,926,349
Cost-Saving Factors to City Government	Stormwater management value	$1,516,239
	Air pollution mitigation value	$4,516,704
	Community cohesion value	$3,954,359
	Total	$9,987,302

Following is a discussion of other economic, environmental, and social benefits generated by parks and recreation systems, including examples from other communities throughout the United States.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

First, cities have become increasingly aware of the economic role of parks and open spaces over the past two decades. Signature projects such as Chicago's Millennium Park, New York City's High Line, Houston's Discovery Green, and Atlanta's Historic Fourth Ward Park have generated extensive economic benefits including increases in downtown visitors, new residents, increased property values, and additional jobs. The $270 million Millennium Park, for example, is credited with generating nearly $2.45 billion in new condominium, office, and hotel construction near the park over the past ten years.

Another well-known example is New York City's High Line, an old elevated rail line that was retrofitted into one of the City's most exciting new destination parks. Constructed at a cost of approximately $153 million, the High Line has brought in an estimated $2 billion in new development. A 2011 post on Smartplanet.com describes the incredible return on the City's investment:

"In the five years since construction started on the High Line, 29 new projects have been built or are under way in the neighborhood, according to the New York City Department of City Planning. More than 2,500 new residential units, 1,000 hotel rooms and over 500,000 square feet of office and art gallery space have gone up."

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

Environmental benefits have been generated through numerous "green infrastructure" projects throughout the United States. The City of Philadelphia's "Green City, Clean Waters" program, for example, is focused on reducing stormwater pollution currently entering the city's combined sewer system. The city is adding green space to its parks, streets, schools, and other elements of the public realm to create "living landscapes" that slow, filter, and consume rainfall in order to reduce the stormwater pollution of its waterways by as much as 85 percent.

Another notable green infrastructure project is the City of Atlanta's seventeen-acre Historic Fourth Ward Park, designed as a stormwater detention basin to increase storm sewer capacity, reduce the burden on the city's aging infrastructure, and minimize downstream flooding and property damage. It was also designed as a central gathering space to help stabilize the surrounding neighborhoods. In addition to addressing flooding and stormwater issues, the project has significantly increased surrounding property values; stabilized surrounding neighborhoods; attracted thousands of residents and visitors for fitness, recreation, socialization, and special events; and saved the city more than $15 million over the original plans to build a traditional stand-alone stormwater facility. According to the Landscape Architecture Foundation's Landscape Performance Series, environmental benefits of the park have been:

Table 1.3: Scientifically Supported Policies Directly Related to Benefits Generated by Parks, Recreation, and the Public Realm

- **Activity Programs for Older Adults -** Offer group educational, social, or physical activities that promote social interactions, regular attendance, and community involvement among older adults.
- **Community Fitness Programs -** Offer exercise classes (e.g., yoga, Tai Chi, cycling, etc.) and fitness program support in community centers, senior centers, fitness, and community wellness centers.
- **Community-based Social Support for Physical Activity -** Build, strengthen, and maintain social networks that provide supportive relationships for behavior change through walking groups or other community-based interventions.
- **Complete Streets and Streetscape Design Initiatives -** Enhance streetscapes with greater sidewalk coverage and walkway connectivity, street crossing safety features, traffic calming measures, and other design elements.
- **Exercise Prescriptions -** Provide patients with prescriptions for exercise plans, often accompanied by progress checks at office visits, counseling, activity logs, and exercise testing.
- **Extracurricular Activities for Social Engagement -** Support organized social, art, or physical activities for school-aged youth outside of the school day.
- **Mixed-Use Development -** Support a combination of land uses (e.g., residential, commercial, recreational) in development initiatives, often through zoning regulations or Smart Growth initiatives.
- **Outdoor Experiential Education and Wilderness Therapy -** Support outdoor pursuits that emphasize inter- and intra-personal growth through overcoming obstacles (e.g., challenge courses, wilderness excursions, etc.).
- **Places for Physical Activity -** Modify local environments (e.g., parks) to support physical activity, increase access to new or existing facilities for physical activity, or build new facilities.
- **Public Transportation Systems -** Introduce or expand transportation options that are available to the public and run on a scheduled timetable (e.g., buses, trains, ferries, rapid transit, etc.).
- **Rain Gardens and Other Bioretention Systems -** Establish bioretention systems (e.g., rain gardens, bioretention cells, green roofs, planter boxes, bioswales, etc.) to make city landscapes more permeable.
- **Safe Routes to Schools -** Promote walking and biking to school through education, incentives, and environmental changes; often called SRTS.
- **Traffic Calming -** Modify the built environment to affect traffic speed and patterns via speed bumps, pedestrian refuge islands, roundabouts, etc.

(Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Policies and Programs That Can Improve Health, 2018)

- Reduces stormwater peak flow by 9.6%, or 44 million gallons per day, in trunk sewer flows for a 10-year storm.
- Provides flood protection in extreme rain events for adjacent properties. There was no flooding at neighboring Ponce City Market during 3 days of intense rain in July 2013 totaling 5.3 inches, as compared to catastrophic flooding of the market during 3 days of intense rain in September 2009 totaling 8.1 in.
- Sequesters 6.3 tons of atmospheric carbon and intercepts approximately 19,200 gallons of stormwater runoff annually in 203 existing and newly-planted trees.

Additionally, the economic benefits of the park have included:

- Increased the number of homes gaining value in the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood by 118%. By comparison, within the Atlanta metropolitan area, the increase was 82%.
- Contributed to a 56% increase in median property tax revenue in the surrounding census tract from 2009 to 2016, compared to a 0.27% decrease in median property tax revenue for Fulton County as a whole.
- Catalyzed more than $2 billion worth of investment in the 6 blocks adjacent to the park, and developers are projected to spend more than an additional $1 billion in the area in coming years.
- Contributed to a 60% increase in the number of occupied housing units in the surrounding census tract from 2009 to 2016, compared to an 8% increase for all of Fulton County.

SOCIAL AND HEALTH BENEFITS

Community leaders have long been aware of the social and health benefits generated by parks. The modern parks movement in the U.S. evolved from the sanitary reform movement in the mid-nineteenth century, which arose in response to the health needs of urbanizing communities. Sanitarians agreed that cities should be designed as airy, verdant places free from excessive crowding and congestion; there should be abundant parks and trees to refresh the air and to provide opportunities for outdoor exercise; and there should be a pure water supply and a fully developed sewage system.

More recently, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute compiled a ranking of health-related policies, based on the degree to which there is scientific support for their effect on factors that drive health outcomes. Policies and programs proven to generate health benefits through parks and the public realm can be seen in Table 1.3.

For example, the Miami-Dade County “Fit2Play” program, a park-based afterschool health and wellness program promoting healthy weight and cardiovascular health, has improved the health of several thousand children from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Through an academic partnership with the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, this team-science approach produced evidence-based results that show participants aged 6-to-14 were able to maintain healthy weight and blood pressure, improve body composition, fitness levels, as well as nutrition knowledge over one school year. These effects were amplified with additional years of participation.

CREATING HIGH PERFORMANCE PUBLIC SPACES (HPPS)

In 2013 Dr. David Barth developed the concept of "High-Performance Public Spaces (HPPS)" to identify parks and recreation spaces that generate the types of benefits outlined above. He defined HPPS as "publicly accessible spaces that generate economic, environmental, *and* social sustainability benefits for their local community. An HPPS can be a park, trail, square, green, natural area, plaza, or any other element of the public realm that generates all three types of benefits." To be considered a HPPS, a park or public space must meet 80% of the criteria shown in Table 1.4.

Dr. Barth's premise is that every park and public space has the potential to generate at least some of these benefits; and that a parks and recreation system comprised of HPPS can contribute significantly to community livability, sustainability, and resiliency.

The HPPS evaluation method will be used during the Needs Assessment and Development Strategy process.

Table 1.4, Criteria for High-Performance Public Spaces that Generate Multiple Economic, Environmental, and Social Sustainability Benefits

ECONOMIC CRITERIA

- The space creates and facilitates revenue generating opportunities for the public and/or the private sectors
- The space creates meaningful and desirable employment
- The space indirectly creates or sustains good, living-wage jobs
- The space sustains or increases property values
- The space catalyzes infill development and/or the re-use of obsolete or under-used buildings or spaces
- The space attracts new residents
- The space attracts new businesses
- The space generates increased business and tax revenues
- The space optimizes operations and maintenance costs (compared to other similar spaces)

ENVIRONMENTAL CRITERIA

- The space uses energy, water, and material resources efficiently
- The space improves water quality of both surface and ground water
- The space serves as a net carbon sink
- The space enhances, preserves, promotes, or contributes to biological diversity
- Hardscape materials were selected based on longevity of service, social/cultural/historical sustainability, regional availability, low carbon footprint and/or other related criteria
- The space provides opportunities to enhance environmental awareness and knowledge
- The space serves as an interconnected node within larger scale ecological corridors and natural habitat

SOCIAL CRITERIA

- The space improves the neighborhood
- The space improves social and physical mobility through multi-modal connectivity – auto, transit, bike, pedestrian
- The space encourages the health and fitness of residents and visitors
- The space provides relief from urban congestion and stressors such as social confrontation, noise pollution, and air pollution
- The space provides places for formal and informal social gathering, art, performances, and community or civic events
- The space provides opportunities for individual, group, passive and active recreation
- The space facilitates shared experiences among different groups of people
- The space attracts diverse populations
- The space promotes creative and constructive social interaction

(David L. Barth, Parks and Recreation System Planning: A New Approach for Creating Sustainable, Resilient Communities, 2020)

1.3 NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The Department's focus over the last two decades has been to implement an integrated and holistic approach to park, recreation, and open space, exploring the capacity to positively impact the health and well-being of the community and environment. The Department has implemented many best practices and industry-leading procedures, but still faces several challenges to reaching peak potential.

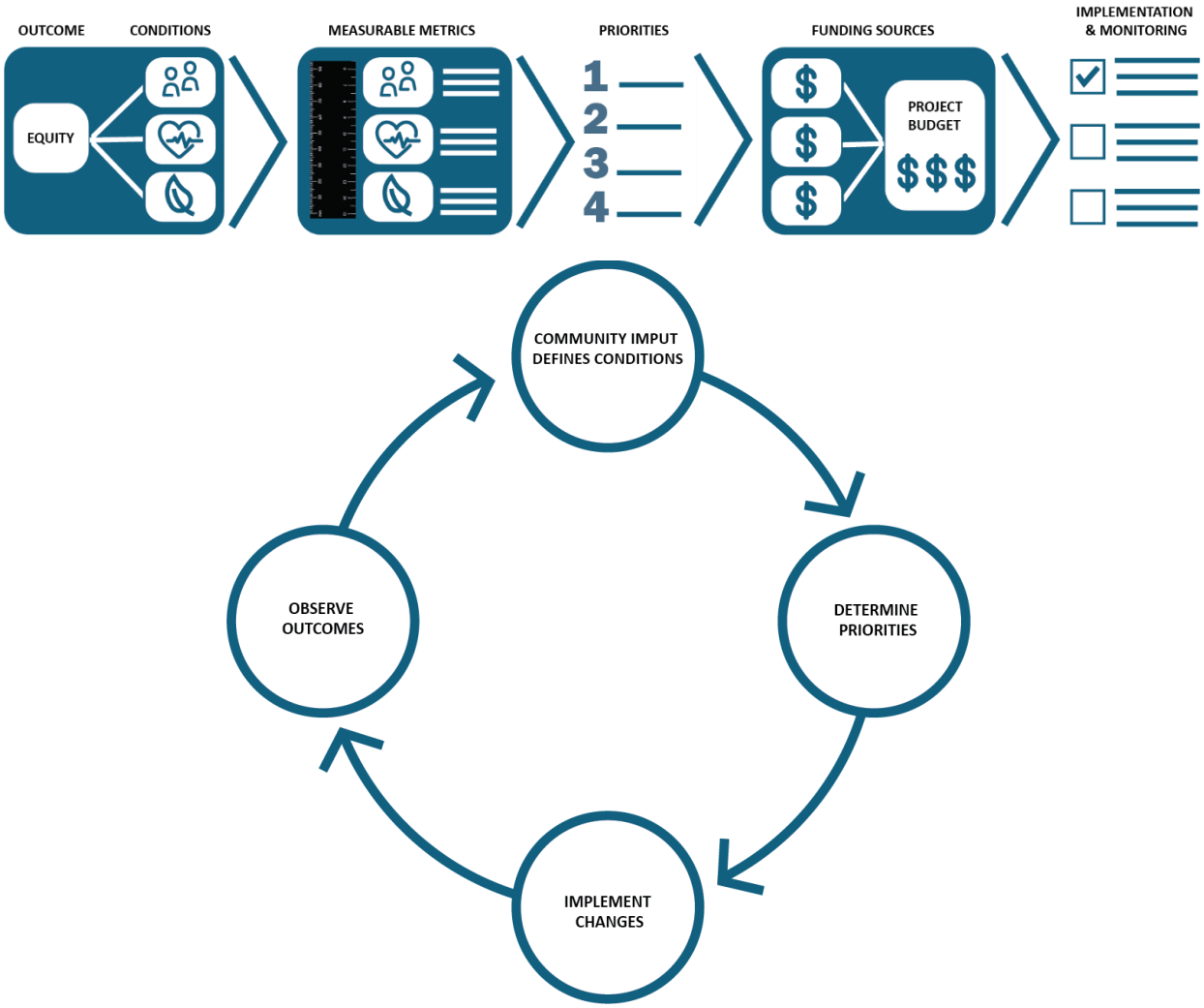
Two key issues VBPR has consistently faced are how to manage their extensive park infrastructure and identifying and keeping pace with recreation trends. The Department's backlog of deferred maintenance in parks and recreation facilities is over $30M and climbing. VBPD also has over 40 park properties that have been acquired but not yet been developed, and over 40 more properties that are underdeveloped. Another persistent obstacle is ensuring community connectivity to park resources and other destination zones.

Ultimately, the assessment and development strategy will define a much more sustainable and integrated approach to delivering parks and recreation infrastructure. The resulting strategies will create the framework for prioritization, spending, and funding based on community wide objectives and shared interdepartmental missions. These strategies will set the tone for future collaboration, management, prioritization (focus) and implementation.

The assessment and strategy development will occur in the context of understanding the VBPR system in terms of its service and benefits to the community, economy, environment, infrastructure, and social equity, as well as other definable metrics. The assessment will consider the Department's ethos, responsibility, and core objectives in related programs, functions, and activities. Clear and present connections to interdepartmental/agency cross benefits, functions, and responsibilities related to core municipal objectives will be highlighted in the report. Park related projects can also help meet existing and emerging local, state, and federal regulatory (environmental, EMS, resiliency, infrastructure) requirements, and these benefits will be outlined. The development strategy will conclude with an enhanced and new set of vision-related goals related to key long-term objectives that provides the framework for departmental focus. Achievable implementation steps to reach the goals and objectives will show a clear path for how the VBPR and system will be better positioned to serve the community.

Table 1.5 on the following page diagrams the process for the assessment and strategy development. The process for achieving success continues beyond the timeline of this project. The key for assessing the success of implementation priorities is to monitor the metrics that indicate the achievement of the desired conditions and regularly updating the strategies in place to achieve those conditions, as well as periodically restarting the cycle by reevaluating the desired future conditions, the indictors of success, and the strategies to achieve.

Table 1.5, Assessment and Development Strategy Process



This needs assessment is an opportunity to investigate the needs, gaps, and barriers to achieving VBPR's vision of being "the national leader in providing enriching and memorable lifelong experiences" and then identify opportunities, strategies, and standards to achieve an inclusive, innovative, and sustainable park system that exceeds community expectations. Understanding first where Virginia Beach's Park and Recreation system is now, and then identifying where it wants to be in 15 years, this Needs Assessment and Development Strategy charts implementable steps and standards to reach this vision.

CHAPTER 2 // PLANNING CONTEXT

Virginia Beach has been diligent in developing planning documents for the long-term vision of the City. To ensure that this Parks Needs Assessment and Strategy complements other directives, key planning documents were reviewed and analyzed to highlight how those documents relate to this planning effort and recommendations have been made for how the documents could be revised or updated to align with current goals and practices.

2.1 CITY PLANS AND STANDARDS REVIEW

Key current planning documents that have been authored or used by Parks & Recreation were reviewed to determine their purpose and function within the Parks & Recreation system. Other City Departments and private sector entities also reference these documents for various planning and development purposes. The key points of the documents have been summarized along with several critical points about the role each document plays. Recommendations for each document are provided relative to this Needs Assessment.

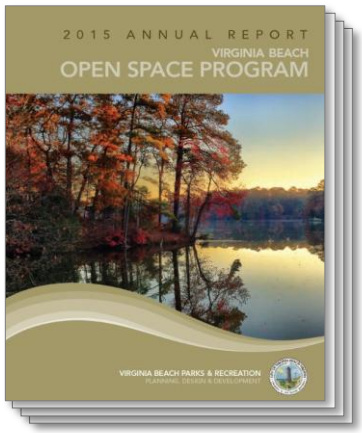
List of documents reviewed:

- Virginia Beach Open Space Program, Annual Report, 2015
- Virginia Beach Outdoors Plan, 2016
- Virginia Beach Parks & Recreation Design Standards, 2016
- Virginia Beach Recreation Centers Modernization Feasibility Study & Master Plan, 2020
- Active Transportation Plan, 2021
- Parks & Recreation Capital Improvement Projects



Planning Document Covers

VIRGINIA BEACH OPEN SPACE PROGRAM, ANNUAL REPORT, 2015



Cover

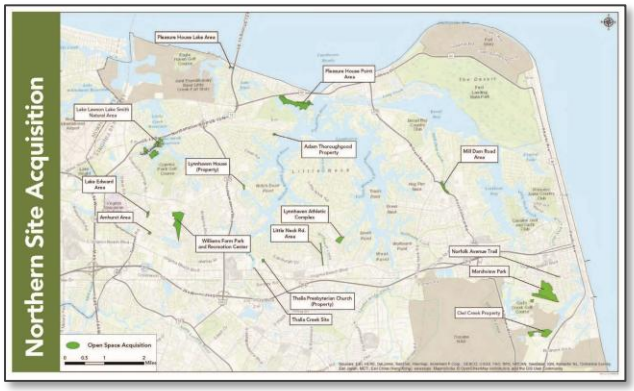
The 2015 Open Space Annual Report emphasizes benefits provided by open space properties. This report was generated by the Open Space Advisory Committee who reports to the Parks & Recreation Commission and City Council. Acquisition suggestions are funded through the Department of Parks & Recreation Capital Improvement Program. A draft 2020 report was started and reflects the acquisition of 2 new properties in 2015 and another in 2017 bringing the current total to 28.

Key Highlights

- Details history of open space assets since program inception in 2001.
- Cites the Advisory Committee's role in updating the Outdoors Plan and related coordination with the City's Comprehensive Plan.
- Demonstrates Open Space Properties & Features in table format. This table includes Open Space Site (and date acquired), Voting District, Total Acres, Land Cost, Stormwater, Public Recreation, Conservation, Scenic Buffer, Urban Forest Benefit, Water Access, and Trail Connectivity.
- Cites, as of 2015, 2,829 acres have been acquired, 380 acres were developed with public access improvements, and 30.9 acres were potential acquisitions.
- Cites acquisition of an additional 32.4 acres on the 2020 draft report.
- Details 11 Open Space Program benefits by profiling specific locations and existing amenities.
- Suggests some Department Core Values within Benefits and Properties & Features text.

Recommendations for Next Open Space Program Update

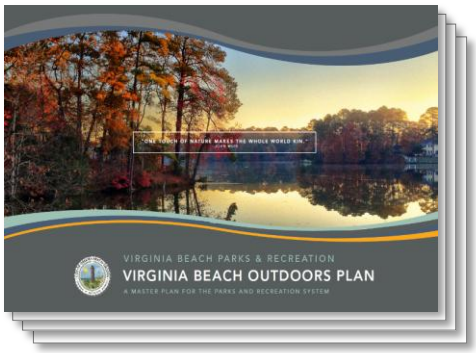
- Include benefit summaries within each of the 11 Benefit descriptions (not specific to location) to capture core intent behind the benefit.
- Review necessity of the Stormwater and Urban Forest headers within the Open Space Properties and Features table. These categories may be omitted and described elsewhere, possibly as core benefit descriptions under the Open Space Program Benefits section. This provides an opportunity to cover the City's Urban Forest goals.
- Demonstrate proximity of Virginia Beach neighborhoods to the acquired properties through GIS layers that illustrate walking times or develop color-coded maps emphasizing open space assets and surrounding neighborhoods.
- Make a deliberate attempt to illuminate Department Core Values within the text. Core Values most relevant to property acquisition are inclusion, guest experience, and sustainability.



Northern Site Acquisition Map

VIRGINIA BEACH OUTDOORS PLAN, 2016

The Outdoors Plan serves as the master plan for the Parks & Recreation system. The Plan was updated to quantify the need for new parkland and to develop guidelines for identifying and prioritizing land for acquisition. The primary goals are to improve connectivity through bikeways and trails and to provide a park within a 10-minute walk from every home. The Outdoors plan was updated in conformance with the 2014 National Accreditation Standards of the Commission for Accreditation of Parks & Recreation Agencies (CAPRA).



Cover

Key Highlights

- Updated in concert with the Virginia Outdoors Plan, the City's Comprehensive Plan, the City's Sustainability Plan, the Envision 2040 Report, the Department of Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan, the City's 2011 Bikeways and Trails Plan and the City's Urban Forest Management Plan.
- Includes guidance for renovation of recreation centers and other support facilities.
- Describes and promotes sustainable principles, policies and practices, management, and maintenance of our park system for better decision making.
- Identifies the continuing need for funding to acquire and develop new parklands and to renovate current parks.
- Identifies the size and diversity of the park system as its greatest strength and considers providing a safe and equitably dispersed park system to be a core service.
- Identifies the importance of public/private partnerships to assist with system growth.
- Cites that over one-third of park acreage was acquired through the Open Space Acquisition Program between 2001 and 2015. Natural Area and Open Space Preservation account for 45% of the total acreage of the system.
- Cites the adoption of the Complete Streets policy requiring planners to develop new bike lanes, share-use paths/sidewalks. Most trail systems in the City follow major roadways.
- Cites multiple historic and cultural park assets which include archaeological surveys, monument dedication, historic preservation, and cultural event planning.
- Identifies the Virginia Beach Park & Recreation Foundation (VBPRF) as the 501(c)(3) engaged in raising funds, accepting gifts, and strengthening Department programs.
- Cites the Community Needs Survey conducted in 2012. Also describes how Outreach was achieved between 2014 and 2016 using electronic survey and public sessions & workshops.
- Identifies economic benefits of the park system to include adjacent property values, tourism (athletic & ecological), tree canopy, and offsets to recurrent flooding.
- Reports that in 2010, the park system provided the City with resident savings of $375 million in avoidance of health care costs.
- Cites Level of Service Per Capita standards (for key facilities) were established in the 2008 Plan. A related chart captures those key facilities providing feedback on the possibility of a 2040 surplus.
- Identifies the (now outmoded) Parkland classification system and corresponding land area.
- Cites the need for athletic fields to service the population through 2040.

- Identifies the Park system as having a key role in supporting the City's Comprehensive Plan as it pertains to accessible parks, open space recreation facilities, expanding green infrastructure, and cultivating arts and culture.
- Identifies trends in technology through the implementation of LED lighting, creation of mobile apps, and expanding wireless/broadband in support of education, inspections, and program/event scheduling.
- Acknowledges Green Infrastructure in mitigation of flood impacts, providing clean air/water, and the encouragement of wildlife habitat.
- Details the development and renovation of various park properties and facilities (Administration building, recreation centers, maintenance yards, various parks).
- Responds to future amenity needs: ADA transition plan (phased plan for barrier removal), athletic facilities (development of athletic venues and new play fields), dog parks, pathways for play (multigenerational activity), skate parks, and tree canopy/meadow enhancement.
- Reiterates the goal for future parkland acquisition in support of community access (parklands for strategic growth areas, water access, and neighborhoods).
- Details the core functions of a sustainable park system (acquisition, lease, or sale/standards for new construction).

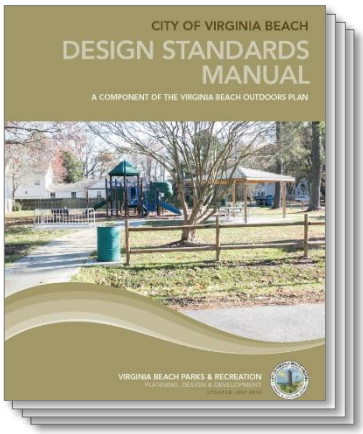
Recommendations for Next Outdoors Plan Update

- Provide clarification that the Vision and Mission statements apply to the publication and not the Parks & Recreation Department as a whole.
- Update future Outdoors Plan (and other resources) with newly adopted Parkland classifications.
- Communicate the relationship of this document to all other system-wide documents. Consider a diagram showing the relationship of documents within and outside the park system.
- Ensure better public and private planning integration by incorporating the document elements into the City-Wide GIS platform. Major headings can be developed as metadata for public or staff use.



Map of Water Access Sites

VIRGINIA BEACH PARKS & RECREATION DESIGN STANDARDS, 2016



Cover

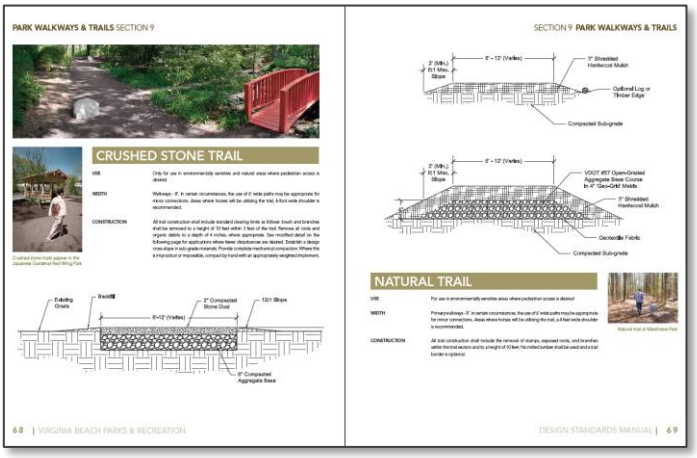
This manual was developed to establish a unique identity for the entire Virginia Beach park system. It covers park elements, systems, materials, and installation practices meeting three objectives: The development and utilization of a single standard document by all Parks & Recreation Divisions, the establishment of a pattern of common elements and identifiable quality throughout all parkland, and the utilization of consistent, safe, sustainable, and cost-effective materials that are easily maintained and managed.

Key Highlights

- Identifies standard elements, materials, product information, specifications, and implementation practices. These items are represented by the numerous standard conceptual details and proprietary specifications.
- Exemplifies Park system standards through element photos and typical park settings. These photos may provide clarification on the character of a natural area or the layout of a dog park, for instance.
- Identifies the (now outdated Parkland classification system, provides examples of each, and illustrates associated features (Open Space preservations areas, Linear parks).
- Covers Park development standards, specialized facilities, buildings, parking lots, planting design, fields, playcourts, playground systems, park walkways & trails, shelters, lighting, fencing, signage, and site furnishings.

Recommendations for Next Design Standards Manual Update

- Update future Design Standards Manual (and other resources) with newly adopted Parkland classifications.
- Update the design features to include new technologies such as smart trash receptacles, trail sensors, wifi abilities and alike.
- Update the details to show color and 3-dimensional cross-sectional views.
- Provide details and specifications to design consultants as editable downloads for customization. Per this document, details are not for construction. Providing them as digital files will assist planners in developing them as construction level document details.
- Communicate the relationship of this document to all other system-wide documents. Consider a diagram showing the relationship of documents within and outside the park system.



Trail details and example imagery

VIRGINIA BEACH RECREATION CENTERS MODERNIZATION FEASIBILITY STUDY & MASTER PLAN, 2020



Cover

The primary purpose of this document is to provide the masterplan recommendations for a 15-year Recreation Center modernization program that puts Virginia Beach on the national forefront of providing memorable experiences for the citizens of Virginia Beach. This study embarks on a modernization program that will update the older recreation facilities to provide relevant and equitable recreation programs and levels of service consistent with the newer centers. This will create enhanced recreational opportunities and increased levels of participation leading to greater opportunities for cost recovery.

Key Highlights

- Establishes secondary objectives to include a focus on healthy lifestyles, improved program utilization, operational efficiencies, energy efficiencies, and sustainable / energy use strategies.
- Establishes a need to increase citizen participation, provide tiered levels of service, and meet cost recovery targets. The stated strategy is to continue to align programming to changing demographics.
- Offers guidance on three levels of modernization/replacement: Preferred modernization improvements (the must-haves identified by staff including a cadre of other elements at various locations), Minimum modernization improvements (the must-haves identified by staff including 15-20 years of capital renewal replacements), and Capital Renewal replacements only (lifecycle replacements necessary to maintain current services).
- Aligns the document's goals with the Parks & Recreation Department's strategic plan goals and objectives.
- Illustrates market and demographic analysis citing citizen driven questionnaires on the topics of level of importance, what households have a need for, are those needs being met, most important facilities, reasons those households use recreation centers, what's preventing use of recreation center, top priorities for investment (recreation centers are ranked #4), demographic analysis (gender, marital status, level of education, and age), and current recreation center usage analysis (by card scans at the 7 locations).
- Cites trends in recreation centers such as wellness centers, yoga, e-sports, collaboration with other government services, cross fit, multigenerational activities, and creative/performing arts.
- Demonstrates the results of Department staff driven visioning workshops. A list of must-haves was developed emphasizing items such as curb appeal, aquatics wow factor, and dedicated daycare. The same exercise was conducted for "out-of-the-box", unique ideas.
- Illustrates a data collection section comprised of a series of floor plans, precedent imagery, and aerial photographs as they pertain to future possibilities at each of the recreation centers.
- Provides assessment on facility conditions (using system condition index and facility conditions index scoring) and capital renewal replacement budgeting.
- Provides 7 scenarios for facility modernization program enhancement.
- Provides space allocation comparison matrix by program element (interior spaces).

- Provides facilities modernization conceptual design scenarios for each recreation center.
- Provides 7 scenarios for budget estimates on facility modernization program enhancement.
- Recommends sustainable strategies to include maximizing passive design, community design, reducing potable water and energy consumption, indoor pollutant control, support facilities in alternative transportation, green cleaning products, integrated pest management, and recycling.
- Narrates modernization master plan recommendations.
- Provides an appendix on a Covid-19 response.

Recommendations

- Communicate the relationship of this document to all other system-wide documents. Consider a diagram showing the relationship of documents within and outside the park system.



Bayside recreation center improvement recommendation

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN, 2021

This document proposes the critical infrastructure necessary to link all parks & recreation areas through greenways, blueways, and other multi-modal bike and pedestrian corridors. The plan's intent is to provide a complete active transportation network to connect people to places throughout Virginia Beach.



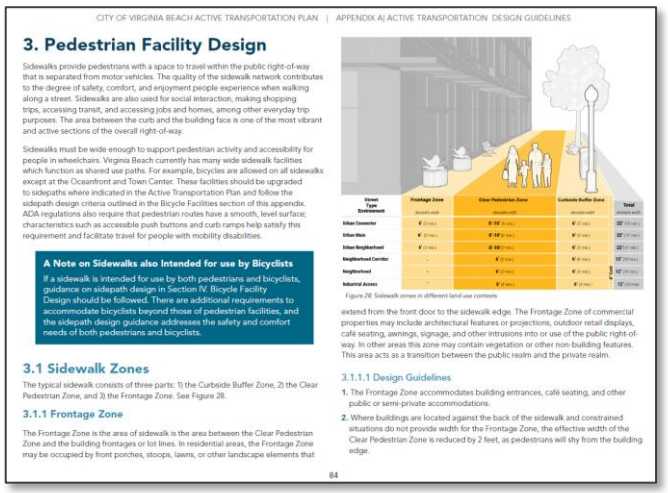
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Key Highlights

- Enhances the existing Transportation Master Plan which largely focuses on automobiles.
- Sets road, trail, and travel-way typologies and suggests design standards for each in support of the Public Works Design Standards Manual.
- Cites local and national trends such as preference for modes of transportation other than automobile.
- Describes community engagement visioning approach in the categories of goals, connectivity, safety, economic vitality, technology, and health.
- Describes the public process including stakeholder meetings, evaluation of public participation, and approval. This is followed up with a description of feedback and related demographics.
- Describes the proposed active transportation network allowing routes to all parts of Virginia Beach.
- Emphasizes blueways and associated water access points.
- Describes implementation strategies realized through partnering, facility selection through transportation guidelines (Appendix A), and funding programs.
- Provides cost estimation for low and high-cost scenarios.
- Provides progress measurement by tracking performance indicators pertaining to 5 goals (connectivity, safety, economic vitality, technology, and health).

Recommendations for Next Active Transportation Plan

- Cross-reference with Parks & Recreation Design Standards document.
- Communicate the relationship of this document to all other system-wide documents. Consider a diagram showing the relationship of documents within and outside the park system.


CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN | APPENDIX A| ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION DESIGN GUIDELINES

3. Pedestrian Facility Design

Sidewalks provide pedestrians with a space to travel within the public right-of-way that is separated from motor vehicles. The quality of the sidewalk network contributes to the degree of safety, comfort, and enjoyment people experience when walking along a street. Sidewalks are also used for social interaction, making shopping trips, accessing transit, and accessing jobs and homes, among other everyday trip purposes. The area between the curb and the building face is one of the most vibrant and active sections of the overall right-of-way.

Sidewalks must be wide enough to support pedestrian activity and accessibility for people in wheelchairs. Virginia Beach currently has many wide sidewalk facilities which function as shared use paths. For example, bicycles are allowed on all sidewalks except at the Oceanfront and Town Center. These facilities should be upgraded to sidepaths where indicated in the Active Transportation Plan and follow the sidepath design criteria outlined in the Bicycle Facilities section of this appendix. ADA regulations also require that pedestrian routes have a smooth, level surface; characteristics such as accessible push buttons and curb ramps help satisfy this requirement and facilitate travel for people with mobility disabilities.

A Note on Sidewalks also Intended for use by Bicyclists

If a sidewalk is intended for use by both pedestrians and bicyclists, guidance on sidepath design in Section IV. Bicycle Facility Design should be followed. There are additional requirements to accommodate bicyclists beyond those of pedestrian facilities, and the sidepath design guidance addresses the safety and comfort needs of both pedestrians and bicyclists.

3.1 Sidewalk Zones

The typical sidewalk consists of three parts: 1) the Curbside Buffer Zone, 2) the Clear Pedestrian Zone, and 3) the Frontage Zone. See Figure 28.

3.1.1 Frontage Zone

The Frontage Zone is the area of sidewalk is the area between the Clear Pedestrian Zone and the building frontages or lot lines. In residential areas, the Frontage Zone may be occupied by front porches, stoops, lawns, or other landscape elements that

Figure 28: Sidewalk zones in different land use contexts

extend from the front door to the sidewalk edge. The Frontage Zone of commercial properties may include architectural features or projections, outdoor retail displays, café seating, awnings, signage, and other intrusions into or use of the public right-of-way. In other areas this zone may contain vegetation or other non-building features. This area acts as a transition between the public realm and the private realm.

3.1.1.1 Design Guidelines

1. The Frontage Zone accommodates building entrances, café seating, and other public or semi-private accommodations.
2. Where buildings are located against the back of the sidewalk and constrained situations do not provide width for the Frontage Zone, the effective width of the Clear Pedestrian Zone is reduced by 2 feet, as pedestrians will shy from the building edge.

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Page from Appendix A ('Active Transportation Plan, 2021') discussing pedestrian-oriented design

PARKS & RECREATION CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

The Capital Improvement Project review involved the analysis of the consolidation of Parks & Recreation's yearly Capital Projects Expenditures (2007-2020) contributing to the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR). Each of these 14 reports captured key initiatives presented in the financial report for a particular year. These reports were scanned and consolidated for the purposes of this analysis. Identical initiatives were grouped together in yearly order. This arrangement provided insight regarding the progress of one-off initiatives and identified those initiatives with yearly fund renewals.

Key Highlights

- All initiatives are either active or have reached a level of completion. This conclusion is based on the percentage of budget remaining and schedule of budget remaining.
- All initiatives facilitate and support current city goals and objectives.

Recommendations

- Review active initiatives for program continuity, guest quality, market price shifts, mutually beneficial tasks, and general efficiency. Active projects may be those initiatives with significant budgets remaining and were started within or had significant activity in the last 1-3 years.
- Refine the detailed project tracking spreadsheet for more accurate results. The data source(s) generating this analysis could be augmented in several ways. Blank fields that would otherwise be populated with legitimate data / designation will yield better results. Recommend a review of the project type currently assigned to each initiative to ensure consistent long-term tracking and analysis.
- Recommend establishing a definition for each project type attribute for consistent, future use.
- Suggest a review of the detailed project and expenditures list by senior personnel for accuracy.

SUMMARY

The Virginia Beach Parks & Recreation set of planning documents function well as a collection of discoveries and underlying standards serving to execute the Department's mission and vision. Each document sufficiently accomplishes its stated goals and objectives. All of them partially contributing to the Department's vision, mission, and community priorities relegated through the framework of the document's focus.

The stated purpose of the Virginia Beach Outdoors Plan 2016 Update is to serve as the master plan for the parks and recreation system. It is a comprehensive account of subjects relevant to the system so naturally this will be used as the basis for future master planning efforts. Other planning documents can augment topics found in the Outdoors Plan in support of these efforts. Goals in acquiring parkland property and citing open space benefits can be taken from the Open Space Program Annual Report. The implementation strategies found in the Parks & Recreation Design Standards could inform a future master plan under a constructability heading. The Design Standards document, however, should respond to master plan updates to achieve the stated goal to establish a pattern of common elements. The Recreation Center Modernization Study is also a master plan which summarizes specific master plan recommendations. Workshop summaries contain feedback on park system aspects that are not facility specific and do speak to exterior environments through level of importance ranking. The Active Transportation Plan's contribution to a master plan is the existing and proposed network of pedestrian routes throughout all parts of Virginia Beach and the plan for their incorporation. This document also has a significant design standards component which should be reviewed in response to master plan updates. The review of Capital Improvements will supply trends in spending under the headings of project category, parkland typology, and within 5-year time spans.

Future documents could do more to precisely spell out the Department's Vision, Mission, and Core Values and how the document addressed them. This was accomplished partially in most documents but could be illuminated within each publication as a marker for document success.

The separate components (chapters/major headings) will benefit from being analyzed against each other outside the confines of any single document. This analysis may reveal gaps and overlaps in support of future document preparation. Ahead of document updates, this analysis may present operational benefits by reminding staff of findings pertinent to current Department initiatives.

Of key importance to the Parks & Recreation system is the establishment of the 10-minute walk from the home of every resident to a park or recreation center. This topic was covered within several documents but may be holistically captured through the development of mapping. This map may be one-dimensional to demonstrate the geographic relationship between each neighborhood and near-by parklands via the current network of trails and sidewalks. It may be GIS-based to show current and prospective trails and Department parcels along with travel times and amenity for each parcel.

Table 2.1 // Summary of Planning Documents Reviewed

Doc. Number	Plan Title	General Context	Purpose of Document	Relevance to Park Development Strategy	Notes
1	**Open Space Program 2015 Annual Report**	- Property potential for Open Space - Pulls target sites from Outdoors Plan	- Find properties to preserve as Open Space - Highlight benefits of Open Space properties	- Inventories properties targeted for acquisition - Preservation of Natural Resources - Connections to Bike & Trails systems - Land Banking for future use	- 2014, no properties acquired - 2015, 4 properties with funding reserved for acquisition and 6 other properties under review but not funded
2	**Virginia Beach Outdoors Plan A Master Plan for the Parks and Recreation System**	- Response to Strategic Growth Area Plans - 2.9 M Annual Park Visitors - Succeeds 2008 Virginia Beach Outdoors Plan - Component of the Comprehensive Plan - Plan has an outlook to 2040	- Master Plan for the Parks & Rec System - Target areas with existing infrastructure - Serve all residents within a 10-minute walk	- Encapsulates the total P&R strategy - Fill in gaps in the P&R system - Restore Open Space Acquisition Funding - Modernize Rec Centers - Inform $130 Million CIP Spending	- Parks cited as top reasons for living in VB - Over 7,000 acres of land managed by VBPR - Over 2,800 acres added between 2001 and 2015
3	**Virginia Beach Community Recreation Centers Modernization Feasibility Study & Masterplan Recommendations**	- Part of Sustainability Renaissance - Recent successful Rec Center Modernizations (Wms Farm, BowCreek, Kempsville)	- 15-yr Rec Center Modernization Program - Set the bar nationally for Rec Centers - Unify quality for all Rec Centers	- Rec Centers as neighborhood hubs - Provision of unique services in P&R system - Modernization of some Rec Centers - Total Replacement of others	- 3 tiers of investment: Preferred modernization Minimum modernization Capital Renewal Replacements
4	**City of Virginia Beach Design Standards Manual A Component of the Virginia Beach Outdoors Plan**	- Succeeds the 2016 Design Standards	- Single standard document for all P&R Assets - Unifies improvements and quality level	- Identifies Property and Asset Typology - Ties together all P&R Assets - Controls and predicts improvement costs - Identifies P&R assets for public	- Asset classification is cumbersome - Few municipalities have such standards
5	**City of Virginia Beach Active Transportation Plan The Bikeways & Trails Component of the Comprehensive Master Plan**	-Illustrates links between site assets through greenways, blueways, and active transportation within Rights-of-Way.	-Identifies linking infrastructure between P&R assets -Promotes greenways, blueway, multimodal, and pedestrian corridors	-Presents multi-modal, non-vehicular accommodation possibilities for differing development scales	-Cross-reference with Parks & Recreation Design Standards Document. -Communicate the relationship of this document to all other system-wide documents.
6	**Last 15-years of Parks & Recreation Capital Improvement Plans**	-Capital Improvement Project Descriptions and associated expenditures	-Provides metadata for trend analysis	-Provides indicators on fund distribution	-P&R should consider populating blanks and reconciling/defining park types and their associated initiatives.

2.2 REVIEW OF PLANNING DOCUMENTS NOT FULLY IMPLEMENTED

In addition to reviewing the planning documents discussed in the previous section, four unimplemented site master plans were reviewed. The list of unimplemented master plans was supplied by the Department and described as unimplemented but of current interest to the parks system.

The partially implemented documents listed below were reviewed for their origins, objectives, and recommendations to determine their level of completion. All four plan documents were found to be at least partially implemented. A common theme was that physical improvements were more readily constructed rather than the implementation of larger planning recommendations of an intangible nature. The construction of physical places and amenities seemed to better meet visitor expectations, and field observations reflect that people are using these spaces. Implementing the larger planning recommendations will positively influence the City's vision for itself, including enhancing community cohesion, increasing quality of life, and creating inspiration.

Planning recommendations such as monitoring, restoration, and preservation initiatives account for the least implemented components within each of the documents, particularly where these initiatives pertain to costly measures or coordination with outside entities. A more precise determination can be made by Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation with respect to current goals and initiatives.

List of unimplemented Parks & Recreation Plans reviewed:

- Management Plan for Stumpy Lake Natural Area, 2006
- Lake Lawson and Lake Smith Natural Area Master Plan, 2010
- Pleasure House Point Management Plan, 2012
- MarshView Park Master Plan, 2013

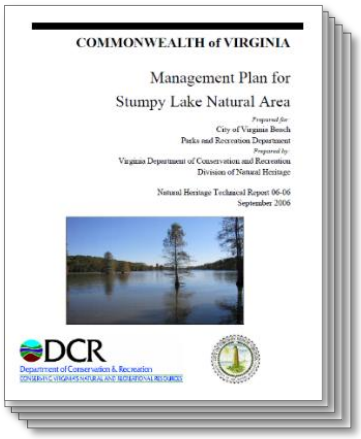


Unimplemented Plan Covers

MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR STUMPY LAKE NATURAL AREA, 2006

Plan Context

This Management Plan was developed in 2006 with considerations for the following five years. Bordering the City of Chesapeake, the Stumpy Lake Natural Area is a 1,422-acre site serving as the headwaters for the North Landing River. Stumpy Lake was created in 1910 as an emergency drinking water reservoir for Norfolk. It is surrounded on the east, north, and west by urban and suburban development. Gum Swamp lies to the south. Indian River Road borders its eastern edge. Related documents include the Master Land Use & Management Plan for Stumpy Lake Natural Area from 2003.



Cover

Plan Goals

- Maintain the area for public recreation and education.
- Enable local control of drainage and stormwater runoff.

Plan Key Objectives

- Protect and preserve plant and animal resources with special emphasis on rare species and rare natural communities.
- Implement specific practices to ensure ongoing stewardship.
- Ensure vitality as a quality wildlife habitat.
- Maintain requirements for operation of the golf course.



Stumpy Lake Natural Area and Golf Course Boundaries

Plan Recommendations

- Review management practices at the golf course.
- Implement controls on invasive plant communities if they present a threat to resources.
- Prevent degradation of rare hardwood tree community on interior of site.
- Maintain tree canopy to shade out and prevent spread of invasive species.
- Make final determinations on compatibility of specific public uses, such as mountain biking and geocaching to manage guidelines should these uses become allowable.
- Consider scenic and open space preservation easements.
- Consider increased staffing in support of stewardship.

Project Status

Project Implementation Status

Stumpy Lake Natural Area has been improved with significant amenities for public access and recreation, but unimplemented plan items pertain to the more intensive research and preservation efforts outlined in the Plan Recommendations.

Barriers to Project Implementation

- Lack of funding.
- No stewardship to manage the plan recommendations.
- Potential for limited public interest due to use restrictions.
- Insufficient and incomplete data for continued research.

Project Relevancy to current Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation Priorities

This natural area is a large contiguous land tract with well-preserved ecological resources and significant passive recreational uses. The property remains essential as a reservoir, but its lesser-known qualities as a high interest site for archaeological study and as a critical habitat for rare and endangered plants and animals provides uniqueness within the Parks and Recreation system and for academic and volunteer organizations interested in research.

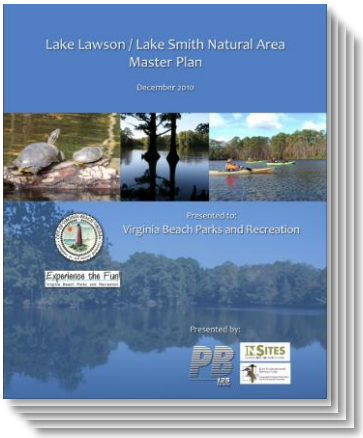
Recommendations

- Assign stewards for various aspects of preservation and study as outlined in the plan.
- Develop water quality management design guidelines for the monitoring and mitigation of the nitrogen and phosphorus levels of the lake.
- Evaluate the physical extent of the golf course in support of better buffer widths for water quality protection. This may include course alteration or hole count reduction.

LAKE LAWSON AND LAKE SMITH NATURAL AREA MASTER PLAN, 2010

Plan Context

This 2010 Master Plan covers a 42-acre preserve located along the Lake Lawson and Lake Smith waterfronts in District 9 (formerly within the Bayville District) with more than 2 miles of its shoreline being owned and managed by the City of Norfolk Department of Utilities. The site comprises three parcels (north, south, and west). The first phase includes the north and south parcels and is significantly constructed.



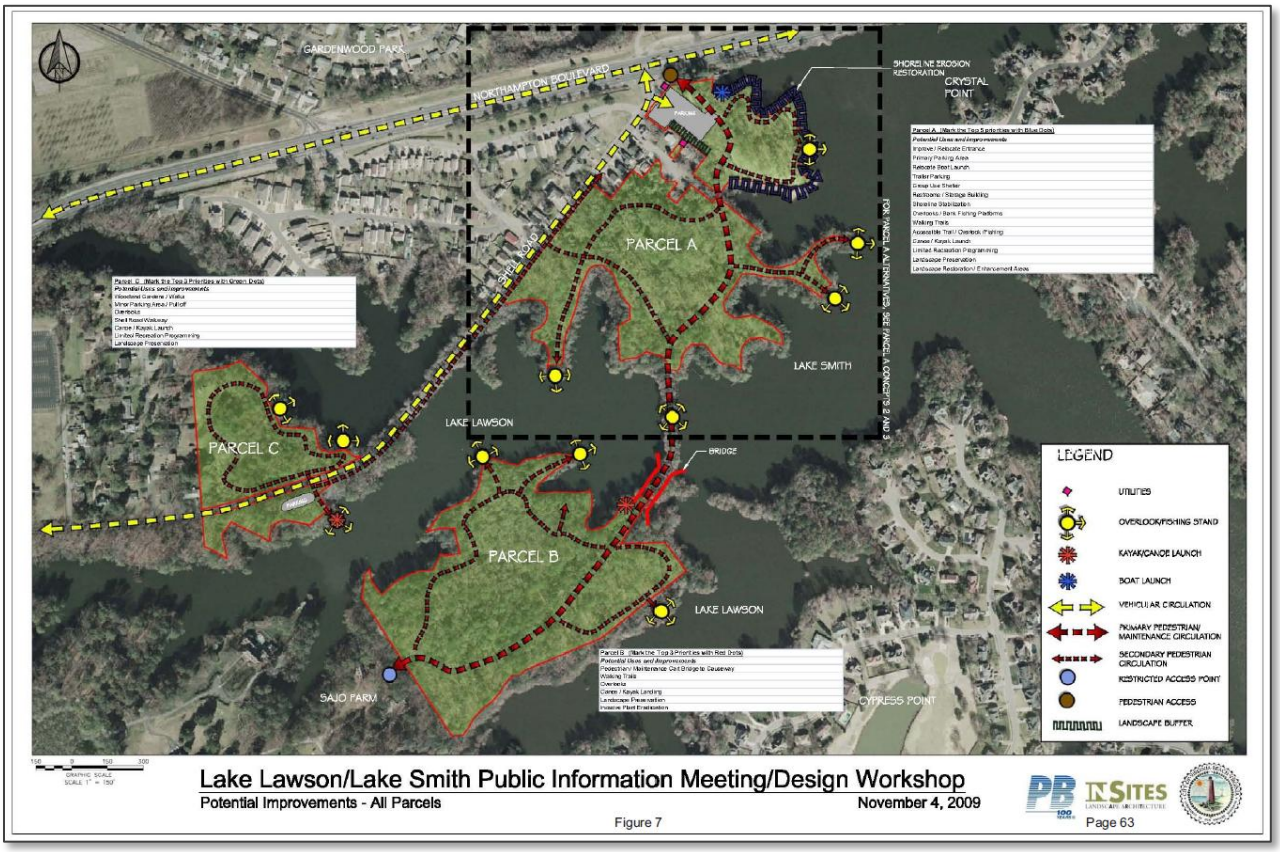
Cover

Plan Goals

- Balance objectives of the various stakeholders, users, and government agencies involved.

Plan Key Objectives

- Preserve native vegetation and wildlife as green infrastructure and scenic assets.
- Develop amenities and site circulation to accommodate visitors while better protecting more sensitive areas.



Potential Improvements from Design Workshop

Plan Recommendations

Phase 1, North Parcel (Parcel A):

- Limit planned improvements to the northern section of this parcel.
- Focus on trails, overlooks, and educational opportunities.

Phase 1, South Parcel (Parcel B):

- Focus on connectivity between the north and south parcels.
- Limit other improvements in this area.

Phase 2, West Parcel (Parcel C):

- Limit costly improvements to this parcel.
- Favor preservation efforts.

Project Status

Project Implementation Status

This project appears to be partially implemented, showing no apparent improvements to Phase 2, the West Parcel.

Barriers to Project Implementation

- Lack of funding.
- Limited interest in western parcel development.

Project Relevancy to current Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation Priorities

Located amid denser housing, the Lake Lawson and Lake Smith natural area is reminiscent of the rural parts of Virginia Beach, like Stumpy Lake or Back Bay. This plan is predominantly a preservation plan focusing on locating amenities to minimize impact to natural areas. It was acquired in multiple parcels between 2005 and 2009 through the Open Space Acquisition Program. Public access to this resource and its growing amenities can provide assurances for the land stewardship sought by this Master Plan.

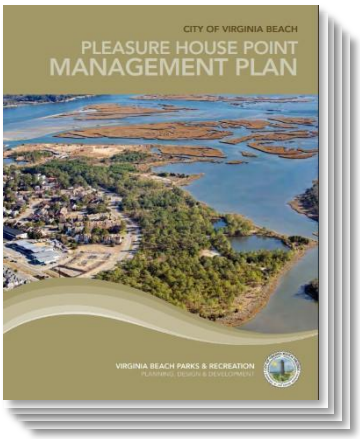
Recommendations

- Omit or limit planned improvements planned for Phase 2 (West Parcel) in the interest of furthering the preservation goals of this Master Plan.
- Develop a waterborne, decked pedestrian connection paralleling Shell Road as a means of connecting the West Parcel with the remaining park trail system while also increasing (but still localizing) fishing opportunities.

PLEASURE HOUSE POINT MANAGEMENT PLAN, 2012

Plan Context

Pleasure House Point is in the Chesapeake Bayfront area, the northern-most section of Virginia Beach. It is south of Shore Drive and west of the Lesner Bridge. The 118-acre property was acquired and preserved in July 2012 as a collaborative effort between the Trust for Public Land, the City of Virginia Beach, and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. Ten acres of the property were acquired by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. The remaining 108 acres were purchased by the City and placed into public ownership.



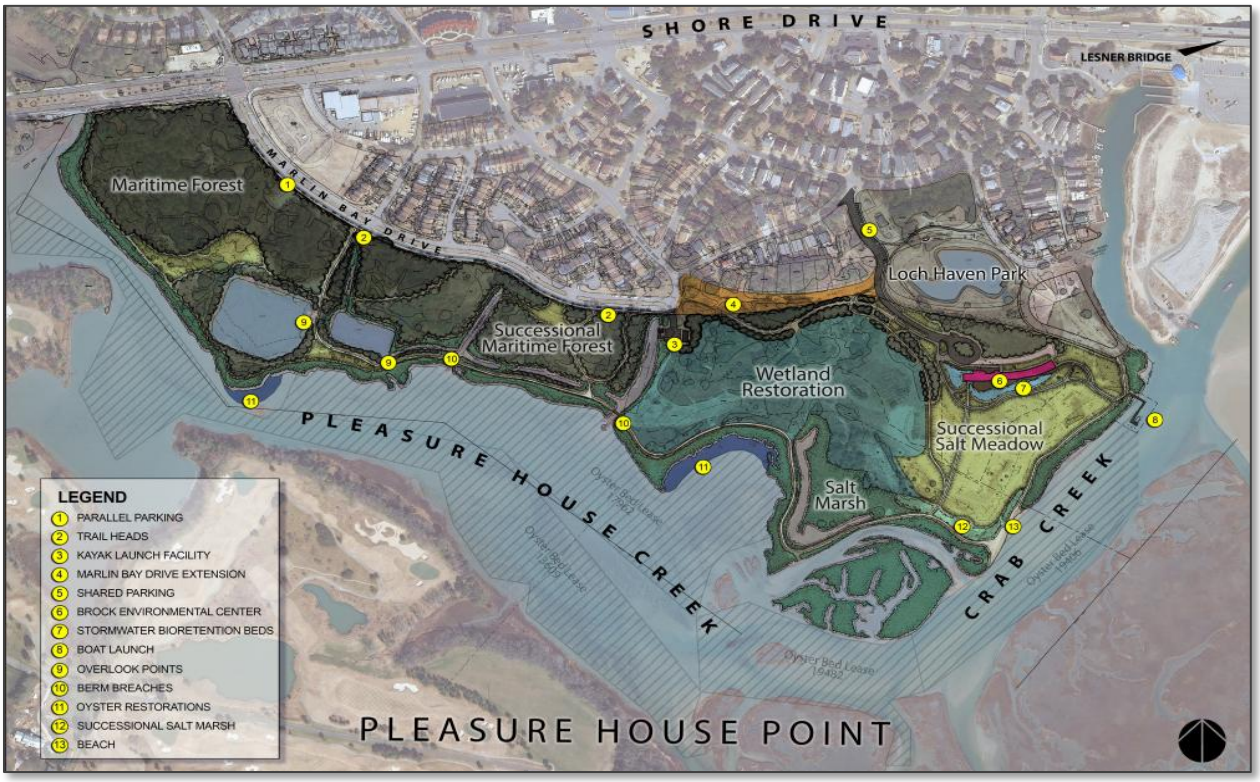
Cover

Plan Goals

- Maintain habitat value.
- Maintain Coastal Maritime Forests.
- Maintain water quality.
- Maintain educational and recreational value not detrimental to other aspects.

Plan Key Objectives

- Improve public access.
- Restore oyster habitat and enhance wetland habitat.
- Maintain and enhance upland habitat for plants and wildlife.
- Take initial inventory and continue to monitor plants and wildlife.
- Foster public engagement, outreach, and education.



Pleasure House Point Inventory of Vegetation

Plan Recommendations

- Execute a range of "Priority Projects" associated with each of the Plan Key Objectives listed in the plan.

Project Status

Project Implementation Status

Few amenities have been implemented on site per the plan. Realization of full public water access has been delayed due to dependency on a larger wetland bank project which, itself, was delayed due to funding restrictions. Many of the waterborne projects have been implemented, but not to the fullest extent expressed in the plan document.

Barriers to Project Implementation

- Lack of funding.
- Limited staffing.

Project Relevancy to current Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation Priorities

Pleasure House Point is a highly protected and preserved land and water resource, unlike anything in the Parks and Recreation system. The property has a complicated land ownership structure and a layered federal and state agency oversight. It remains a study in preservation as the outfall of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. The property is rich in wetlands, is protected by the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act Buffer, and it is known for its critical ecology as home to several essential fish and endangered turtle species.

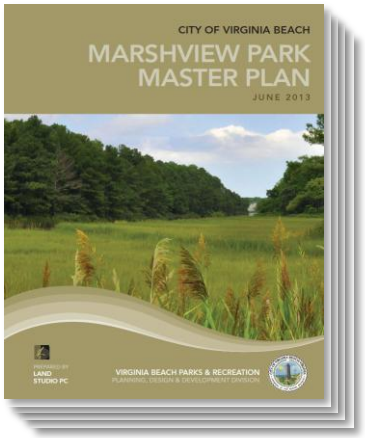
Recommendations

- Review the priority projects outlined in the Pleasure House Point Management Plan for progress and possible action. Some of these may no longer be needed.
- Evaluate the ADA kayak launch initiative in response to public interest in small craft recreation.
- Continue the planning for ADA trails throughout the site.

MARSHVIEW PARK MASTER PLAN, 2013

Plan Context

This Master Plan was developed in 2013 and discusses areas also covered in the Virginia Beach Comprehensive Plan Resort Strategic Growth Area, Virginia Beach 2008 Outdoors Plan, Virginia Aquarium & Owls Creek Area Master Plan, and Naval Air Station Oceana Plan. It sits near the Oceanfront Resort Area, Virginia Aquarium, Seatack Recreation Center, and Owls Creek Boat Ramp. The roughly 100-acre site was granted by the US Navy to the City as park land in 2010, and it retains many overlying deed restrictions geared toward limiting development and promoting outdoor recreation and forest preservation.



Cover

Plan Goals

- Affirm community buy-in for the trail and explore possibilities for future park development based on direction from the Virginia Aquarium & Owls Creek Master Plan.

Plan Key Objectives

- Environmental preservation and restoration.
- Develop passive amenities including a trail linking Marsh View Drive with Virginia Avenue.
- Cultural Interpretation of archeological finds and Seatack area history.
- Development within deed restrictions in response to AICUZ designation.



Marsh View Park Preliminary Master Plan

Plan Recommendations

- Promote cultural and historical interpretation given the 17th century farmstead findings, Seatack history, and NAS Oceana proximity.
- Promote environmental preservation and restoration given the land's resource buffering capacity and 50-100-year-old tree stands.
- Extend Trail Networks.
- Development of extended trail networks, bike track, informal recreation fields, play areas, dog park, restroom facilities, and parking areas.
- Observation of CPTED practices given the park's secluded nature.

Project Status

Project Implementation Status

The trail and associated trailhead improvements (including parking) have been constructed as Phase 1. Phase 2 improvements are not fully funded but include a bike track (completed), potential interpretation of a historic site, and a park office / restroom.

Barriers to Project Implementation

- Funding, as cited on the City's Park profile website.
- Public concerns over safety due to "illegal squatters" cited in the Site Analysis section.

Project Relevancy to current Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation Priorities

Marsh View Park is a critical property located in a culturally and historically significant neighborhood, uniquely encompassing a saltmarsh estuary and a mature maritime forest. The Seatack community has archaeological significance as an 18th century African American rural settlement with several cultures dating back to the 17th century. The mountain bike track for Phase 2, is under construction. Through a partnership with the East Virginia Mountain Bike Association, trails are being developed and will serve a unique recreational role for the city and perhaps region wide.

Recommendations

- Fund Phase 2 improvements.
- Fund the interpretation of site history and interpretation of the early African American settlements.
- Continue the focus on forest preservation and ecological education even with the development of the bike track.
- Ensure sight lines and safety measures, and logical circulation efforts are made order to counter the secluded access and concerns for transient populations within the park.

Table 2.2 // Summary of Master Plans Reviewed

Doc. Number	Plan Title	Recommendation	Implementation Status	Barriers to Implementation
1	***Management Plan for Stumpy Lake Natural Area***	- Continue with development of the plan - Advance preservation efforts from the plan - Assign a steward to shepherd the plan - Communicate plan activity to public	40%	- No funding - No apparent steward - Little interest - Gaps in data research
2	***Lake Lawson and Lake Smith Natural Area Master Plan***	- Limit costly Phase 2 Improvements - Focus on Preservation vs Amenities - Focus on Connectivity to Phase 1	65%	- No funding - Little interest in Phase 2
3	***Pleasure House Point Management Plan***	- Review Priority Projects of the plan - Advance kayak launch per public input - Assign a steward to shepherd the plan - Communicate plan activity to public	25%	- No funding - No apparent steward
4	***Marsh View Park Master Plan***	- Develop historical interpretation amenities - Develop bike pump track - Review current plan for safety concerns	50%	- Limited funding - Perception of safety

CHAPTER 3 // PARKS AND FACILITIES ASSESSMENT

3.1 PARKS AND FACILITIES INVENTORY

Virginia Beach's recreation, parks, and open space offerings help make the city an outstanding place to live, work, and play. Parks are a cornerstone for community vitality, economic growth, environmental and infrastructure services, and public health and well-being.

Virginia Beach has an extensive and comprehensive park system that is nationally recognized for its quality of service. The Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation Department owns and maintains 251 park, specialty, community recreation, and athletic facilities, totaling 5,772 acres. There are an additional 1,653 acres of undeveloped park sites. P&R also maintains 70 elementary and middle school sites with public recreational facilities (1,248 acres). This mix of parks, recreation facilities, athletic complexes, and natural areas provides open space, recreational programming, and sports tourism opportunities across the city.

VIRGINIA BEACH PARKS AND FACILITIES SNAPSHOT

7,425 acres total of park land owned by VBPR

Of this, **5,772 acres** are developed parks

1,653 acres are undeveloped city park land

23,017 acres of additional public parkland in the City (school sites, state parks, and federal park land)

Park & Rec Sites:

167 Local Parks *(634 acres)*

19 City Wide parks *(1,002 acres)*

36 Special Use Parks *(3,153 acres)*

22 Natural Areas *(902 acres)*

7 Recreation Centers *(81 acres)*

70 School Sites *(1,248 acres)*

Park & Rec Facility Highlights:

173 playgrounds

86 tennis and/or pickleball courts

79 diamond fields

64 basketball courts

31 miles of trails (paved & unpaved)

13 canoe/kayak launches

4 outdoor stages

PARK CLASSIFICATION

Virginia Beach currently defines park land into 16 separate designations. This specificity leads to confusion, overlap, and difficulty with resource analysis and planning. This plan proposes that five categories be applied to the designations. These categories are based on size and use, and applying these definitions will aid in planning, management, and level of service evaluation. The Department may choose to phase out the sub-designations or retain them as data indicators.

The full inventory of all Virginia Beach park sites and their amenities, including city-managed sites, school parks, and federal/state facilities, can be found in Appendix A. Full-size maps of park locations are in Appendix B.

Table 3.1 // Proposed Park Categories

Proposed Park Categories	Current Park Designations
Local Park	Neighborhood Park
	Town Green
	Urban Plaza
City-Wide Park	Signature Park
	Metro Park
	Community Park
Special-Use Park	Special Use
	Linear Park/Linkage
	Eco-Garden
Natural Area	Natural Resource Area
	Open Space Preservation Area
Recreation Center	Special Use – Recreation Center

Local Park

15 acres or less, ½ mile service radius, 10-minute walk-time, 3 acres/1,000 residents



Chatham Hall Park is a local park serving the surrounding area.

Local parks are smaller parks typically located within a suburban or urban area and intended to serve the active and/or passive recreation needs of the surrounding residents or users within a ½-mile walking radius. A local park's total acreage may be larger than 15 acres, but due to site conditions or other encumbrances, a portion of the property may be managed as a natural area or be managed by a separate organization or department. These parks are designed for use by individuals, smaller groups, and local families in self-directed or small group activities. A range of active and passive amenities for a variety of ages and user groups can be included in a local park. Sites within this category may be developed to different levels or use intents, customized to the users' needs and surrounding context. Typical facilities at local parks may include open lawns, playgrounds, trails, hard courts, un-lit playing fields, exercise facilities, picnic pavilions, and water access. Local parks typically do not contain organized large team sports facilities, though they may contain smaller or individual courts or playing fields. Smaller sites do not typically contain parking or restroom facilities. The parkland designations of Neighborhood Park, Town Green, and Urban Plaza are included in the Local Park category.

Elementary and middle school sites provide the services of a local park and are an important supplement to the recreational needs of communities. VBPR maintains school sites but does not develop or manage them. Consequently, school sites may not meet park design standards, but school amenities and recreation acreage are counted towards city recreation totals, at 50% to reflect their dual usage.

City-Wide Park

Typically larger than 15 acres, 3 mile service radius, 10 minute drive-time, 5 acres/1,000 residents

City-Wide parks are larger parks, typically larger than 15 acres, intended to serve the regional recreational needs of city residents and visitors. A wide variety of active and passive recreational amenities for a variety of ages and user groups, including families, organized groups, and special events, are provided at City-Wide parks. Unique or destination level facilities, like event spaces, beach access, competition facilities, or historic sites, are included in site programming. The site may also contain large expanses of natural areas that are managed for conservation or scenic enjoyment. City-Wide Park location and offerings may be dependent on the unique features of the site. Typical facilities at City-Wide parks can include the local park offerings, as well as multiple lighted athletic fields and hard courts, dog parks, skate parks, outdoor-adventure facilities, historic sites, amphitheaters, disc golf courses, nature centers, multiple large playground areas, multiple picnic areas with large shelters, multiple restrooms, and large parking areas. The parkland designations of Community Park, Metro Park, and Signature Park are included in the City-Wide Park category.

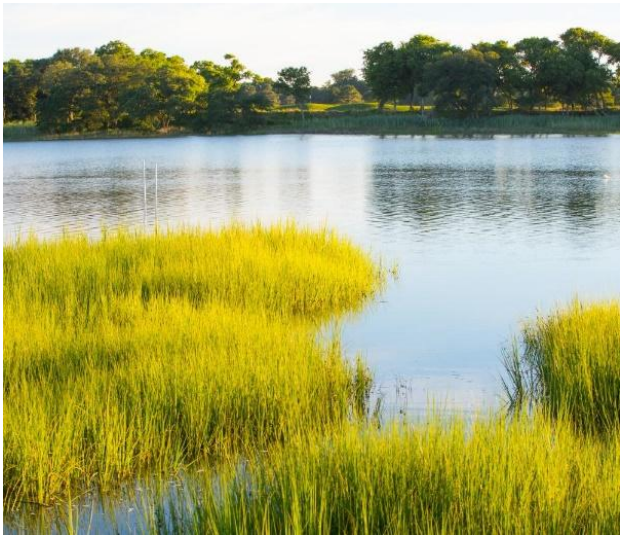


Woodstock Park is a City-Wide park with a diverse set of amenities serving a large area of Virginia Beach.

Special Use Park

No size or service radius standard, 2 acres/1,000 residents

Special use parks center around unique cultural, historical, or recreational features. The size and amenities offered at special use parks are tailored to the purpose and context of the site. Each type of site may have specialized design and facility service standards, which are addressed more specifically in the Department of Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan. The parkland designations of Athletic Complex, Eco-Garden, Gateway Park, Golf Course, Resort Area, Trail and Linear Parks, and Water Access are included in the Special Use Park category.



Pleasure House Point is a natural area that preserves important environmental habitats.

Natural Area

No size or service radius standard, 40% of all park acreage

*Ima*Natural areas are municipal preservation areas whose primary purpose is to preserve the indigenous vegetation and wildlife in order to serve as green infrastructure and as a scenic environment for city residents and visitors to enjoy. Natural areas are located based on situational opportunity and include large resource protection areas and smaller green space buffers around neighborhoods or sensitive environmental features. The conditions and intended use of each site are different and will be managed on a spectrum of passive recreation to dedicated protection and management of the natural/cultural environment. Each natural area requires a unique master plan to guide the management and programming of the site. Facilities and activities at a natural area park can include environmental education, trails, blueways wildlife viewing, public fishing, water access, and boat ramps. The parkland designations of Natural Resource Area and Open Space Preservation Area are included in the Natural Area category.



Princess Anne Athletic Complex is a special-use park, providing destination quality sports field.

Recreation Center

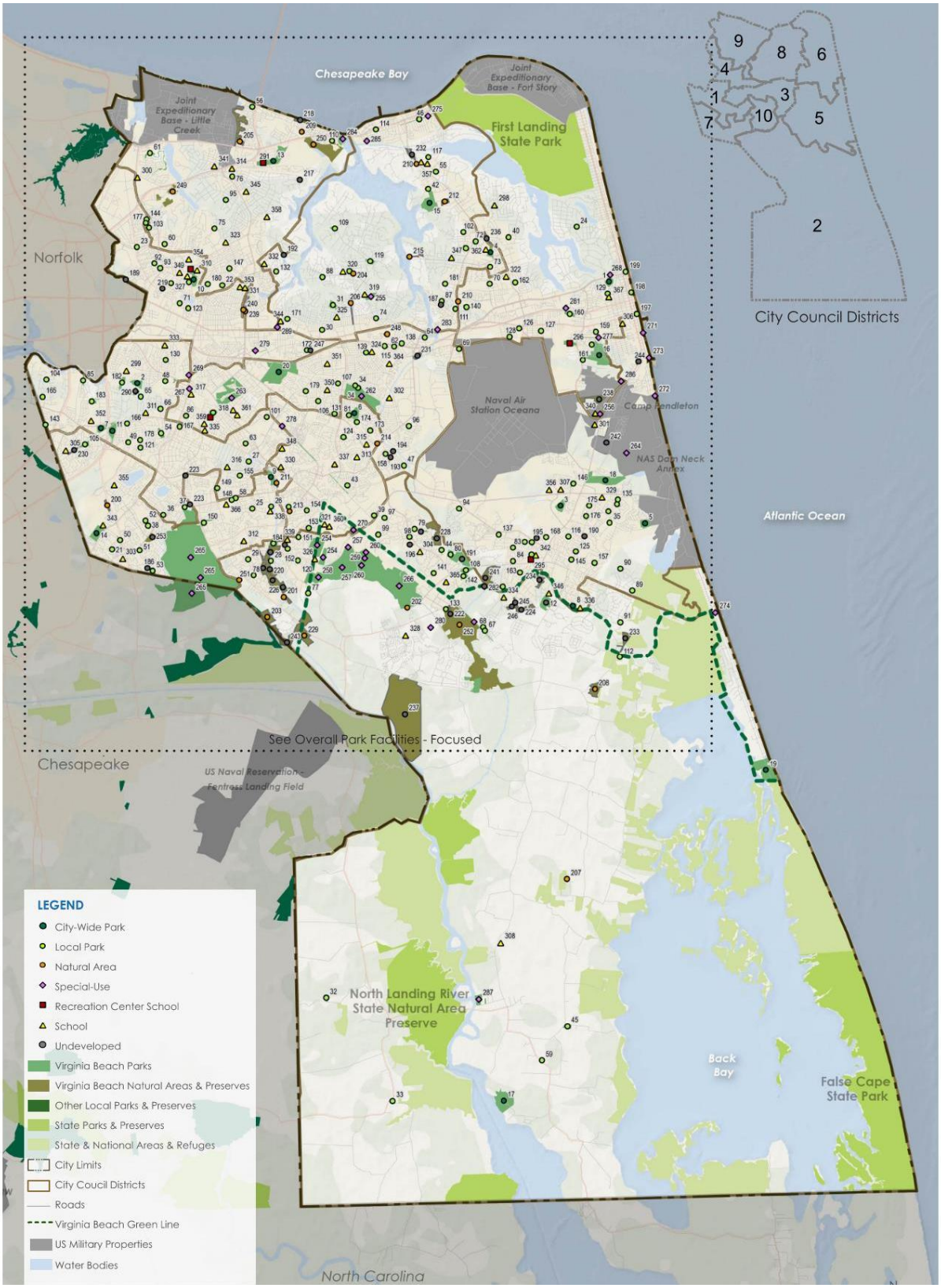
City wide service area

Recreation Center sites provide publicly accessible indoor passive and active recreation facilities, including meeting spaces, program support facilities, exercise facilities, aquatics, and supplementary outdoor support spaces. Design and facility service standards are addressed more specifically in the Department of Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan. The current parkland designation of Recreation Center is included in the Recreation Center category.

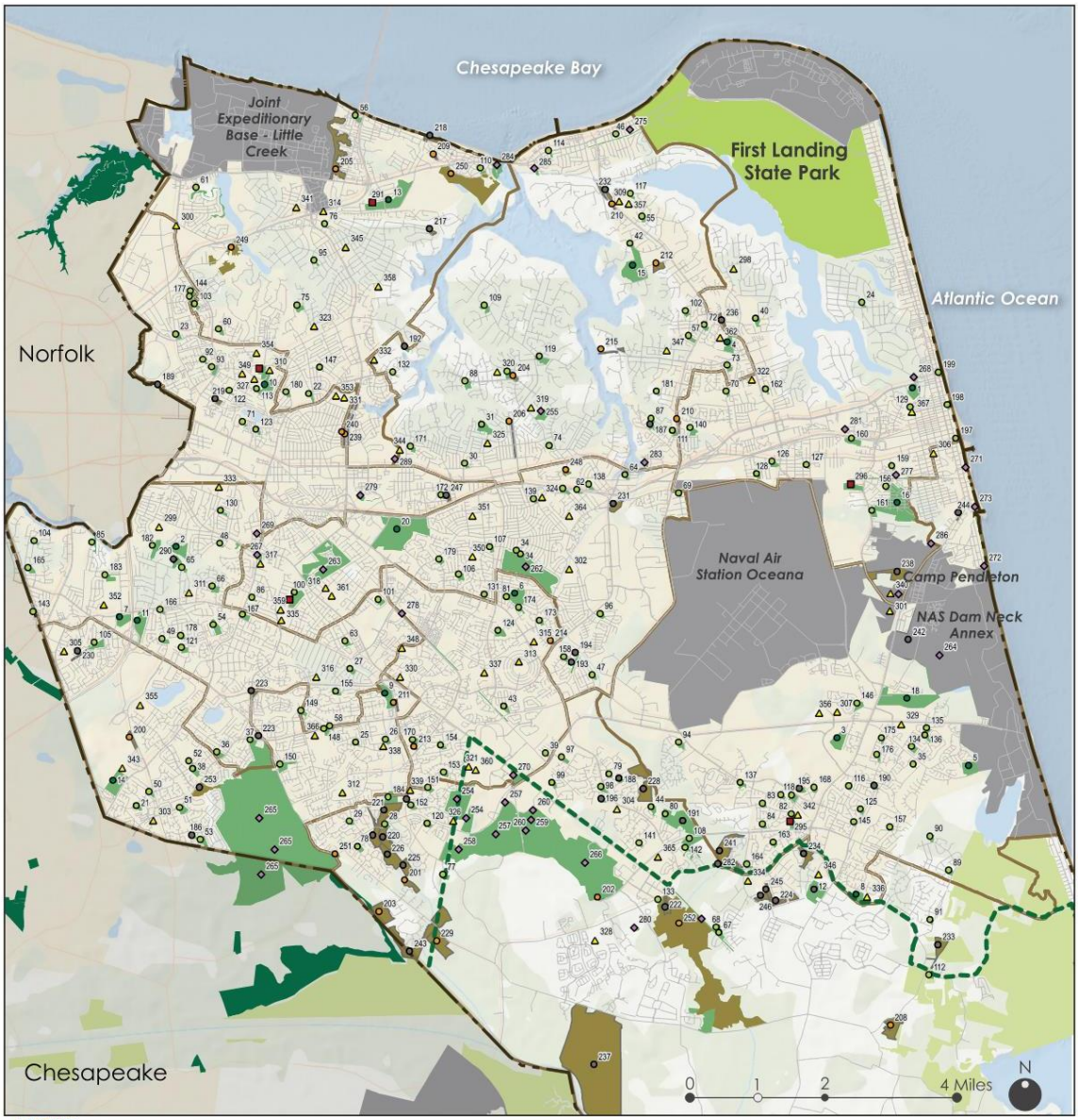


Williams Farm Recreation Center is a Recreation Center that provides indoor and select outdoor recreation facilities.

Map 3.1 // Virginia Beach Parks - Overall Map

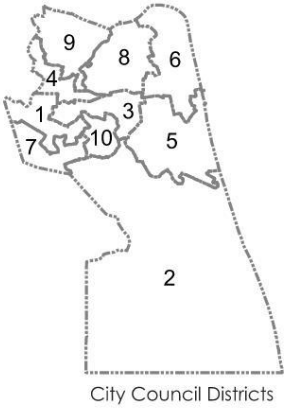


Map 3.2 // Virginia Beach Parks - Focused Area Map



LEGEND

- City-Wide Park
- Local Park
- Natural Area
- Special-Use
- Recreation Center School
- School
- Undeveloped
- Virginia Beach Parks
- Virginia Beach Natural Areas & Preserves
- Other Local Parks & Preserves
- State Parks & Preserves
- State & National Areas & Refuges
- City Limits
- City Coucil Districts
- Roads
- Virginia Beach Green Line
- US Military Properties
- Water Bodies

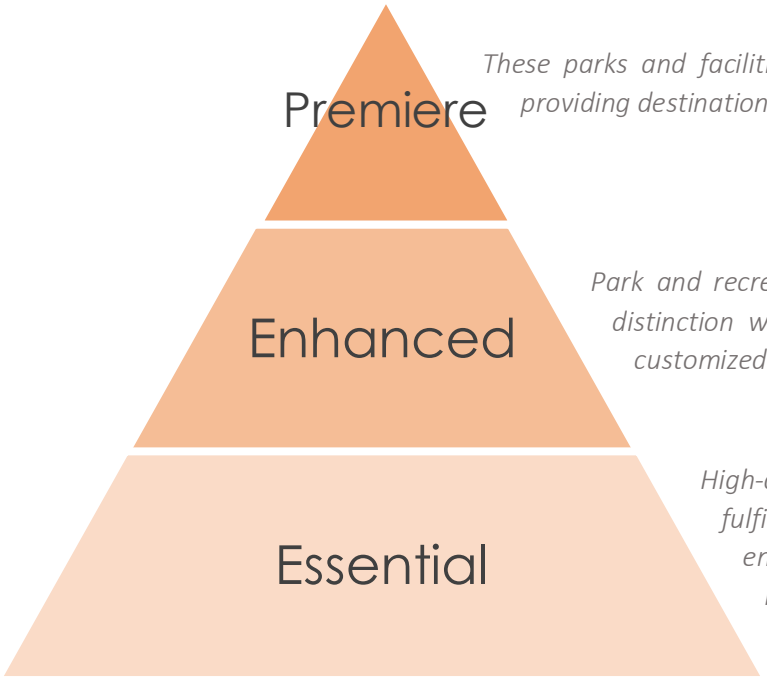


City Council Districts

PARK DEVELOPMENT LEVELS

A complementary method for parkland and facility planning is to consider tiers of development for each category of parkland. Park and recreation facilities can be developed to different tiers based on various levels of attributes including amenities, maintenance, staffing, and cost recovery goals. A three-tier classification system establishes a baseline level of service that will be the minimum provided in each park and extends to the top tier offering for facilities within the system. Base tier facilities are the most common, with the lowest quantities of attributes, while top-tier facilities are the least common within the system. Each park can be evaluated to determine its current development tier compared to the desired development tier to establish maintenance, investment, and development goals for resource allocation and planning. All parks within the system should be developed to at least the base 'Essential' tier level to ensure a baseline quality of service is provided to citizens. Development of new parks should be scheduled only when sufficient funding to develop the park to an 'Essential' level.

Figure 3.1 // Proposed Park Development Levels



These parks and facilities are the jewels of the park system, providing destination-quality amenities and experiences.

Park and recreation facilities developed to a level of distinction with a wide variety of programing and customized features.

High-quality park or recreation facilities that fulfill the basic needs for citizen use and enjoyment. They are the foundation of the recreation and parks system.

This classification system is very flexible and easily customized to fit Virginia Beach's needs and the wide variety of park types offered by the city. Utilizing this system, custom attributes for each tier can be developed for each of the park categories. For example, a premiere City-Wide park will look and be managed very differently than a premiere nature area. Even if there are customized definitions for management tiers of each park type, there is a general gradation between tiers for different attributes of development and management, as outlined in the table on the following page.

Table 3.2 // Attribute Standards for Tiered Park and Facility Classifications

	Amenity Quality	Amenity Quantity	Staffing	Field Maintenance	Example
Premiere	Destination	20+	Full-time	Tournament	Mt. Trashmore
Enhanced	Distinctive	10-20	Part-time/ volunteer	Competition	Woodstock Park
Essential	Respectable	7-11	Volunteer/ none	Practice	Lynnhaven Woods Park

Not every park type is suitable for development at all tiers. For example, the purpose of local parks is to serve the needs of nearby users and there should be an even distribution of them throughout the city. Developing some neighborhood parks to a premiere level while others are at an essential level creates inequitable levels of service. The table below shows the range of development appropriate for each park type.

Table 3.3 // Appropriate Development Tiers for Park Categories

	Essential	Enhanced	Premiere
City-Wide Park		●	●
Local Park	●	●	
Natural Area	●	●	●
Special Use	●	●	●
Indoor Recreation		●	●

The following is a list of potential amenities that are appropriate for each tier of park development. It should be noted that these amenities primarily apply to local and City-Wide park types. Natural areas and special use facilities are developed and managed with specific objectives.

Essential Amenities

(1-2 hour visit, recommended amenity quantity: 7-11)

- Covered shelters, family size
- Furnishings: benches, trash receptables, bike racks, and pet waste bag dispenser
- Loop Trail System
- Open play lawn
- Picnic tables
- Playground equipment
- Signage: wayfinding, regulatory

Note: recommend 2-4 additional recreation opportunities from the 'Enhanced' category be constructed to increase utilization and appeal of the 'Essential' park. However, these amenties should not attract large crowds or require support amenities such as parking lots or bathrooms, eg.dog parks or skate parks.

Enhanced Amenities

(2-4 hour visit, recommended amenity quantity: 10-20)

- All from *Essential* category
- Artwork, commissioned or partnered
- Bathrooms (or portable lavatory shelters)
- Community garden
- Connection to Regional/City trail system
- Covered shelters, large
- Disc Golf
- Dog Park
- Fishing accommodations
- Fitness equipment
- Fixed grills
- Geocaching
- Hard Courts (unlit)
- Hiking Trails
- Historic Landmark
- Concrete cornhole boards
- Interpretive / Educational features
- Maintenance Buildings
- Multi-Use Trails
- Natural area immersion
- Overlooks
- Parking
- Playing fields (unlit)
- Pump track
- Signage: educational/interpretive
- Signage: orientation kiosk
- Skate Park
- Skate Spot
- Specialty garden
- Splash Pad
- Volleyball court
- Water access/launch facility
- Water/sewer/electrical utility hookups

Premiere Amenities

(4-8 hour visit, recommended amenity quantity: 20+)

- All from *Essential* and many from *Enhanced* categories
- Athletic complex facilities
- Beachfront
- Circuitous fitness track w/equipment
- Concessions / Vending
- Dedicated transit stop
- Distinctive amenity (ex. skatepark or bike track)
- Electronic guided tour
- Enclosed, conditioned space for community gathering
- Fountains/water features
- Performance/amphitheater area
- Site lighting package
- Specialty / memorial garden
- Telephone/Internet/Wi-Fi utility hookups

SHARED USE AGREEMENTS

The parks and recreation department has an array of shared use agreements with other City departments as well as private recreational groups and organizations. These agreements extend the range and quality of recreational services available to the public. Refer to Table 3.4 on the following page for the full list of shared use agreements, current to 2021.

Partnership with Schools

School grounds and facilities are an extension of the park system made available to the Department through a shared use agreement with the school board. The annually renewed Memorandum of Agreement was entered into in 2015 and addresses the maintenance, cleaning, safety, scheduling, and priority use of facilities by the two parties *(renewed in 2022)*. In the agreement, school grounds are considered public parks outside of normal school operating hours, and VBPR has priority access to indoor and outdoor facilities for scheduling. School sponsored programming likewise has priority scheduling rights to select public parks and recreation facilities. Parks and Rec is responsible for the grounds, equipment, and facility maintenance at all school sites.

Other Shared Use of Facilities and Agreements

Parks & Rec manages, separately or in partnership with other City departments, more than twenty agreements. These agreements range from golf course operators that provide maintenance and revenue percentages to the Department to sports leagues that lease portions of city parks. The Parks and Recreation Department's senior management works closely with the Planning, Design, and Development Division, Sports Management Division, and the Department of Public Works in the management of many of these agreements.

Key Highlights

Establishing formal use agreements is essential for commitment and establishing equity. The conditions and responsibilities vary between use agreements, as does the application and management. The Parks and Recreation Department should review all existing use agreements and adjust them to be more equitable, at the time of renewal or when new use agreements are developed. Establishing a set of standards regarding maintenance, access, revenue sharing, etc., with the potential to modify to fit specific circumstances, will help ensure consistency between agreement parties, streamline departmental management, and provide a foundation for equitable agreements.



Stumpy Lake Golf Course is operated under a use agreement with Virginia Beach Parks & Rec

Table 3.4 // Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation Shared Use Agreements, 2021

Organization Name	Managing Office	General Notes
Cell Tower – Red Mill Farms Park	Public Works Facilities Management	Facility management holds the contracts for the cell towers. Public Works receives the payment and they deposit it in a Parks & Rec account.
Cell Tower – Bow Creek Golf Course	Public Works Facilities Management	Facility management holds the contracts for the cell towers. Public Works receives the payment and they deposit it in a Parks & Rec account.
Cell Tower – Stumpy Lake Golf Course	Public Works Facilities Management	Facility management holds the contracts for the cell towers. Public Works receives the payment and they deposit it in a Parks & Rec account.
Virginia Beach SportsPlex	Planning Design & Development	Heavily CIP supported – Planning Design & Development / Sports Management to discuss day-to-day issues and events, monitoring of maintenance, enforcement of event requirements, general facility operations
Field Hockey Regional Training Center	Planning Design & Development	Heavily CIP supported – Planning Design & Development / Sports Management to discuss day-to-day issues and events, monitoring of maintenance, enforcement of event requirements, general facility operations, approval of events outside of Agreement, etc.
Owl Creek Tennis Center	Sports Management	VB Pickleball
Stumpy Lake Golf Course	Sports Management	Get reports and percentage of revenue. Typically have monthly inspection.
Golf Courses – Kempsville, Red Wing, Bow Creek	Sports Management	Get reports and percentage of revenue. Typically have monthly inspection.
Farm Leases – Hill Farm/Three Oaks; New Bridge; Rock Church	Public Works Facilities Management	Public Works administers the leases
Great Neck Baseball League	Sports Management	Portion of Great Neck Park - Great Neck Baseball League Lease
Virginia Beach Little League	Sports Management	Portion of Ocean Lakes Park - Virginia Beach Little League Lease
Plaza Little League	Sports Management	Portion of Plaza/Northgate Park - Plaza Little League Lease
Green Run / Princess Anne Little League	Sports Management	Long-Term Lease - Gren Run Little League Lease – responsible for entire facility.
Lynnhaven Boys Baseball	Sports Management	Lynnhaven Boys Baseball Lease
Kempsville Pony Baseball	Sports Management	Portion of Providence Park - Kempsville Pony Baseball Lease – responsible for leased area
Hampton Roads Soccer Complex	Sports Management	Sports Management responsible for lease agreement.
Virginia Beach Fieldhouse	Sports Management	Do get annual reports. Also used as an emergency shelter and/or medical friendly shelter
Camp Grom – Prosperity Park	Public Works Facilities Management	Portion of park open space property is leased long term to VA Gentleman Foundation
Back Bay & False Cape – parking (Little Island)	PNA	Joint use agreement –limited parking space use for some overnight parking and tram pickup
Beach Garden Park		Shared use of park and building with schools
Aragona Christ Church; St Matthews Church; Plaza Methodist Church; London Bridge Park; Green Run Park	Planning Design & Development	Parks and Rec do not own these sites, but they maintain and manage as them a neighborhood park. City rules apply, permitting rules apply
Virginia Beach Public Schools	Virginia Beach Parks & Recreation	Parks and Rec responsible for maintenance of facilities and grounds; Parks and Rec gets priority scheduling for indoor and outdoor facilities. Schools get priority scheduling at select parks and recreation facilities.

3.2 UN-DEVELOPED AND UNDERDEVELOPED SITES EQUITY EVALUATION

Un-Developed Sites are comprised of City-owned parcels which currently contain no significant park elements or amenities. Theses parcels may either be naturalized, forested, maintained turf, meadow, paved, or barren. By comparison, Underdeveloped Sites are comprised of City-owned parcels under a higher degree of management and may have limited amenity. A simultaneous evaluation of both Un-Developed and Underdeveloped sites is recommended to prioritize Department initiatives in order to strengthen feedback on cost, social concerns, access, environmental equity, feasibility, and overall impact to the strategic goals of the Parks and Recreation Department.

EVALUATION

The Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation Department currently manages over 7,400 acres constituting 251 developed and undeveloped park sites. Approximately 1,650 acres remain undeveloped and nearly 100 previously developed sites fall into a substandard category. A tool was developed to create a final score (derived from a system of yes or no questions) to evaluate the enhancement potential of a site then rank it among other sites. The final scores were then considered with other comments regarding the site. This evaluation assists the Department by narrowing a list of potential sites for further consideration. The sites were evaluated as a "snapshot in time" regarding existing conditions and did not consider planned future improvements. Full-size maps showing the locations of all sites evaluated can be found in Appendix B.

A high score suggests candidates for enhancement and every site has been assigned an opinion of cost to raise the site above the substandard ranking to the "Essential" level of development. A low score may suggest a site that is suitable for conversion to (or preserved as) limited maintenance, natural areas also assists the City's goals in tree canopy coverage. Lower scores may also suggest alternative uses for the property. This evaluation can benefit both Parks and Recreation and Municipal-wide interests regarding site feasibility and selection.

Some select responses have been weighted in consideration of current planning goals. Weighted responses for both Un-Developed and Underdeveloped components are found in the categories of Significant Site Features & Linkages and the Environmental Sensitivity of the Site. These items provide two points (instead of one) for an affirmative response.

Figure 3.2 // Sample of the Un-Developed Sites Summary Matrix

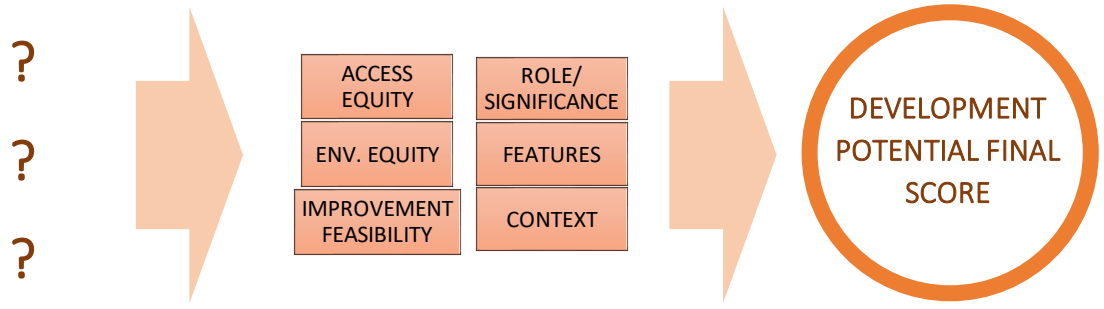
Site Name	Development Potential	Asset Potential	Access Equity Potential	Environmental Equity	Development Feasibility	Role / Significance	Context	Features	Comments
Saw Pen Point Park	**52**	Local	33	50	78	67	33	50	One of few sites located in the Lynnhaven River, and only open space for Witchduck Point
Margate Ave. Park	**47**	Local	67	25	67	67	33	25	A narrow sliver of land in a hard to reach duplex neighborhood. No other public open space nearby.
Three Oaks Park Sherwood Forest Parcel	**67**	Specialty Use	67	75	67	78	67	50	Large open site, suitable for active and passive use development.

Un-Developed Sites

The Un-Developed analysis compares the scores between these major categories:

- Access / Environmental Equity
- Development Feasibility
- Role / Significance in the P & R System
- Context
- Features

Figure 3.3 // Diagram of the Un-Developed Park Scoring Evaluation Method



Questionnaire
basis of points scoring

Major Categories
points subtotaled from Questionnaire

Final Score for Each Site
Subtotal scores averaged from Major Categories

This analysis ranks a selection of 40 priority sites identified by the Department, totaling 1,350 acres, with a final score range between 30 and 78. This component's questions are biased to discover system-wide potential and contextual value regarding the possibility of enhancement and park system integration.

Most Desirable:

Three sites which rose to the top include Pembroke Manor West and East (78), North Landing Park (77), and Buffington / Whitehurst Parcel 1 (74). These naturalized and wooded sites were great natural

resources, had historical architecture (Buffington), contained sufficient land area, were suitable for essential trailway connections through the city, or were potential candidate sites for environmental / educational centers. The Un-Developed sites analysis assumes no amenities are currently present. The cost of bringing these sites to an "Essential" level of development is, therefore, estimated to be the same from site to site for forecasting purposes. A cost of $723,800.00 is estimated to develop a shelter, a typical accompaniment of furnishings, trail system, playground set, and signage with a 40% cost contingency (an assumption for site prep, sidewalks, grading, stormwater, design documents, etc , scaled to the unknown site factors) . A comprehensive analysis of a candidate site may suggest a higher level of amenity so actual cost may vary.

Least Desirable

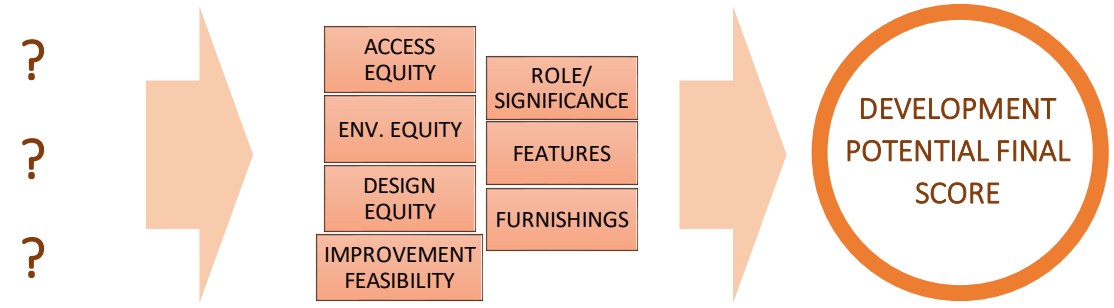
Lotus Garden Farms Park (31), and Scarborough Square East & North Parks (30/34) revealed as the least desirable for development. A big detractor for these sites was their inaccessibility due to marshlands and constraints of high-tension power lines which both severely limited the use of each site for development. The cost to bring all Un-Developed sites to an "Essential" level is estimated at $28,952,000 or $21,339 per acre.

Underdeveloped Sites

The Underdeveloped analysis compares the scores between these major attributes:

- Access / Environmental / Design Equity
- Improvement Feasibility
- Role /Significance in the P & R System
- Features
- Furnishings

Figure 3.4 // Diagram of the Under-Developed Park Scoring Evaluation Method



Questionnaire
basis of points scoring

Major Categories
points subtotaled from Questionnaire

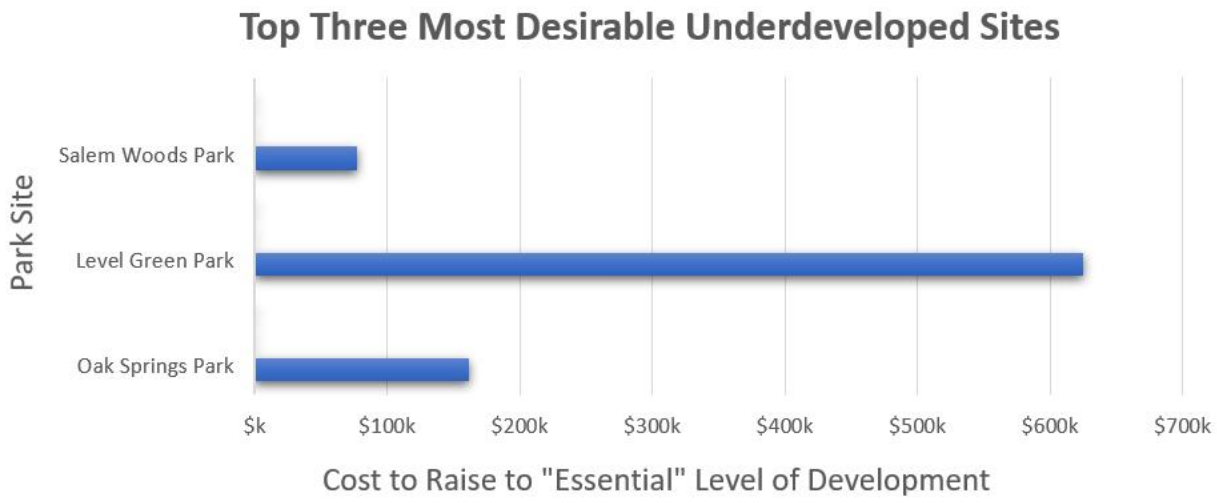
Final Score for Each Site
Subtotal scores averaged from Major Categories

This analysis ranks 47 sites with a final score range between 36 and 79. This component is comprised of candidate sites tentatively thought to have development potential. Its questions are biased to discover renovation potential with respect to context and Municipal system wide use.

Most Desirable

Three sites which rose to the top include Salem Woods Park (70), Level Green Park (76), and Oak Springs Park (79). These parks all had similar qualities including large acreage, good connectivity to various forms of transportation, easy accessibility, proximity to natural features, viable connections to the City's overarching goals, feasible stormwater management, and benefits to underserved neighborhoods. It should be noted that Level Green Park is under design with construction pending in Summer 2024 and that design is not considered in the "Essential" level of development cost.

Figure 3.5 // Cost Comparison to Develop the Top Three Most Desirable Underdeveloped Sites to an "Essential" Level



Least Desirable

Pecan Gardens Park (45), Sawyer Lakes Estate Park (45), Landstown Lakes Park (36), Landstown Meadows West Park (45), and Brigadoon Park (42) fell to the bottom due to lack of tree canopy, minimal amenities or natural features, undersized in area, or adjacency to commercial settings rendering them unusable or undesirable.

The cost to bring all Underdeveloped sites to an "Essential" level is estimated at $10,409,400 or $6,000 per acre.

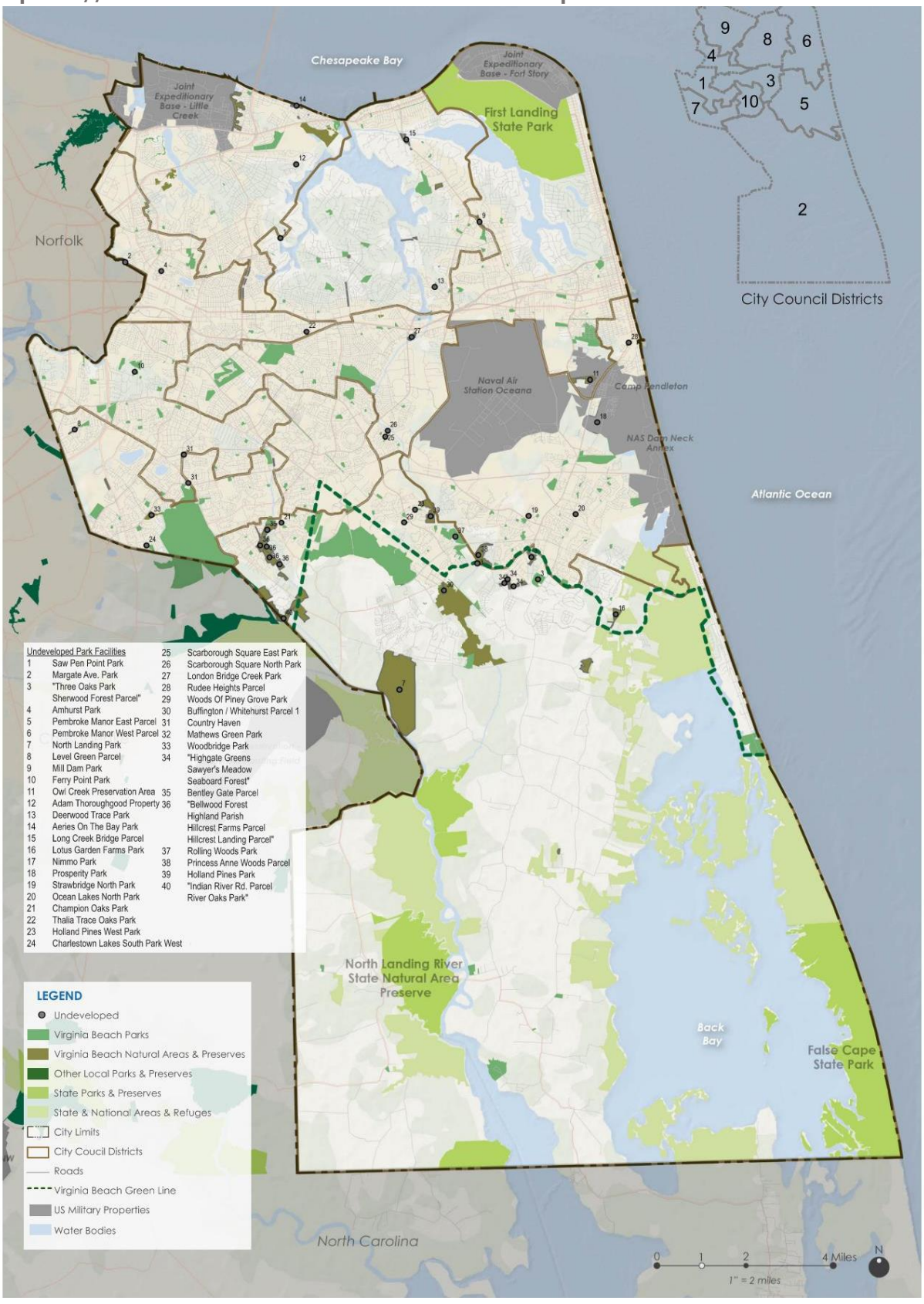
Relevant Evaluation

As physical conditions change, trends evolve, or interests shift, this tool can be modified at one level by revising the questions and at another level by amending topics for additional consideration such as land asset potential, current quality level, cost of enhancement (with descriptions), and special notes pertaining to the site. Custodianship of this tool is recommended.

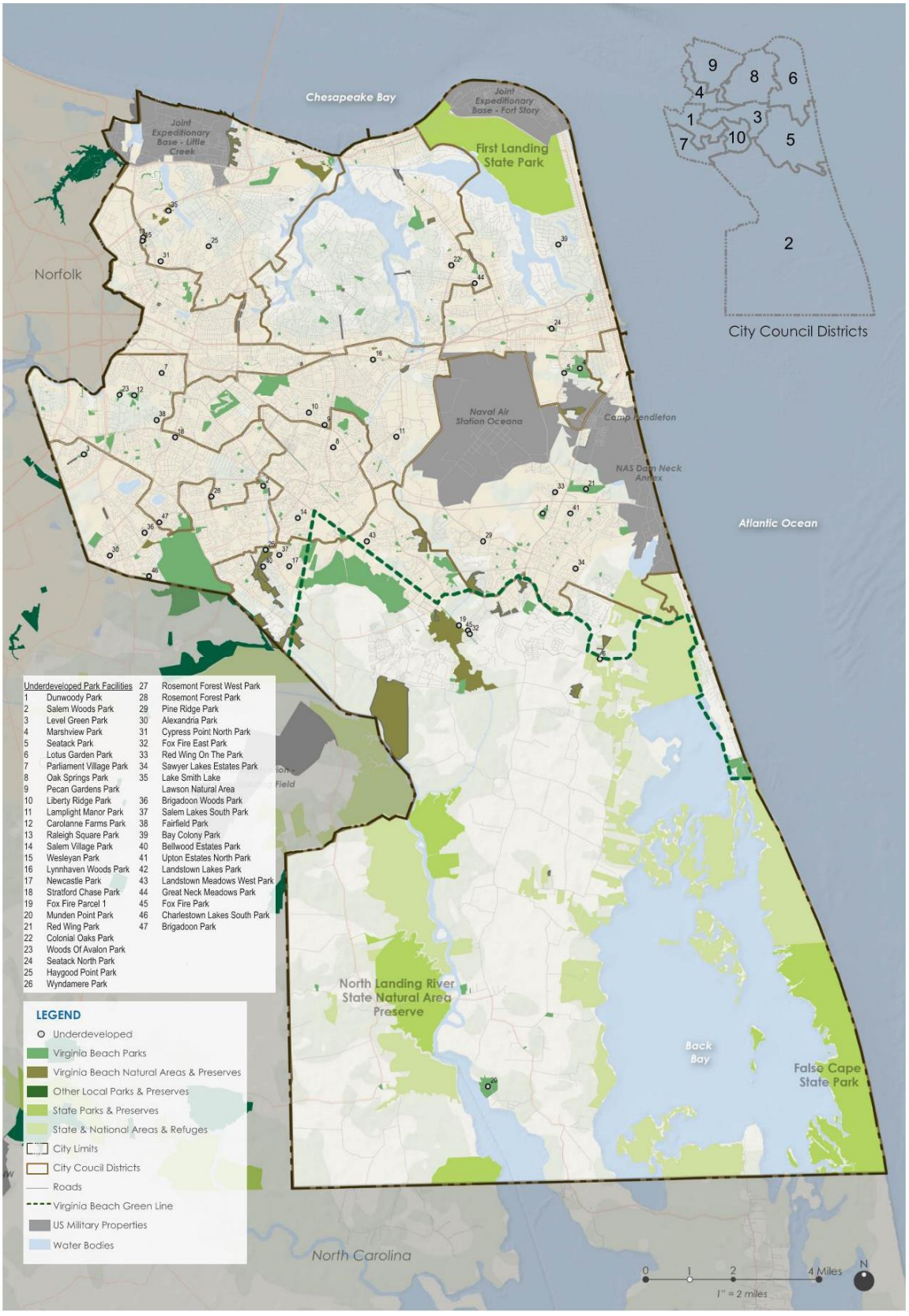
System-Wide Consideration

Final land use decisions based on this evaluation should be considered with the Virginia Beach Outdoors Plan and the Virginia Beach Comprehensive Plan.

Map 3.3 // Locations of the Evaluated Un-Developed Sites



Map 3.4 // Locations of the Evaluated Under-Developed Sites



3.3 PARK SITE CONDITIONS EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Individual site assessments and subsequent critiques and recommendations were performed on 40 park sites. These locations were selected by the Parks and Recreation Department and represent a cross section of park typologies provided in the Virginia Beach Park system. These typologies include City-Wide Parks, Local Parks, Natural Area, and Special-Use Parks.

A variety of Park characteristics were collected. Some characteristics provided weight for scoring and other items were inventoried for posterity. Characteristics that were scored include Site Systems (turf, landscape, stormwater, irrigation, and tree canopy), Amenity (sidewalks, ballfields, hardcourts, playgrounds, restrooms, shelters, equipment, and water features), Access & Connectivity (neighborhood linkages, ADA, parking, hazards, and crime potential), and General Characteristics (overall site condition and current level of enhancement). Points were assigned to each of these characteristics based on quality and generated a percentage score with corresponding letter grade. Characteristics not featured in a park were omitted from the final scoring to adjust for the differing park types and existing levels of enhancement. Refer to Appendix C for the individual assessment sheets for each evaluated park site.

A matrix capturing the evaluated parks has been prepared and is shown in Table 3.5, Evaluated Parks. This snapshot includes the final score, district, level of enhancement, general potential for improvement, and narrative. The narrative has been divided into two sections. The first, Primary Issues, is a critique of a park's serious deficiencies requiring more immediate attention. The second, Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunities, discusses the park's current state and suggests solutions for future growth.

SYSTEM-WIDE OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following items were cited by the site assessor as recurring throughout the park system.

Stormwater Infrastructure

Culverts

The recommended best management practice (BMP) for the culvert crossings (under trails, walkways, and roads) in many of the parks is to place an indigenous or indigenous-appearing embankment armoring and supplement that with native riparian plants. A simple plant composition containing 3-5 native riparian species will present an appropriate statement and will maintain better than a wide-ranging palette.



Lynnhaven Park

Inlets

The recommended BMP for draining large open areas in many of the parks is to implement infiltration or detention basins (e.g., rain gardens), notwithstanding overriding storm intensities, runoff volumes, soil conditions, or spatial restrictions.



Level Green Park

Detention Basins

The tops of banks and the slopes encircling detention basins and ponds have often been left bare of plants which neither celebrates nor conceals them. A more deliberative and therefore safer and appreciable choice for identifying these facilities and assimilating them into the design vernacular of a park is to plant the entire basin with an appropriate composition of native riparian species while leaving a maintenance route to the basin.



Pine Meadows Park

Bioswales

Opportunities for improving turf swales with native riparian vegetation abound throughout the city and in addition to appearing less utilitarian, also provide the opportunity for reducing maintenance if designed with soils and ambient moisture in mind. Managed meadow should be considered.



Mount Trashmore

Geese

Canadian Geese are not compatible with pedestrian traffic and children's play, especially on lawn areas. A collaborative effort with state and federal agencies and non-profits to innovate a benchmark policy plan is encouraged for the long-term management of this rapidly expanding and already overabundant species. Otherwise, the waste and foraging habits of this waterfowl will pose an even more complex problem of hazard and expense upon Virginia Beach spaces.



Kempes Landing Park



Mount Trashmore

Signs

Signs appear suspended in mid-air which suggests an opportunity to reduce the mounting height for a more contemporary arrangement. This could be accomplished either by lowering the sign for better scale (vertically) and appearance or resolve the void beneath the name plate with a well-scaled, well-tiered, plant mass. The Department is currently conducting an internal wayfinding plan, which will address this.



Dunbarton Park

Trails

Soft trails throughout the system would present a safer surface for pedestrians (on foot or on wheels) if a regular schedule of grading and/or mulch overlays were developed. Existing mulch materials consist of fine aggregate or shredded hardwood depending on the park and the trail function. These materials could be incorporated with base material (e.g. sand, aggregate) and edging to reduce hazards and stem erosion.



Lake Smith - Lake Lawson Natural Area

Open Space

Many parks boast large, open, play fields which have long-established layouts for league sports such as soccer. These field layouts are temporary and in time the fields revert to open expanses of turf. Coordination of the layouts with league representatives could identify interstitial areas suitable for trees that would provide shade as well as framing the fields and/or “pinning” the corners.



Stratford Chase Park

Waterways

Water access has not been fully realized in many of the city parks. Often times, access has been improvised by park users to penetrate through hedgerows and shoreline thickets. The result is that the best paths to the water and the optimal locations for amenities have been identified by the residents who use the facilities. By finishing these improvised trails and overlooks to Parks and Recreation standards, other benefits such as erosion prevention can be achieved and user safety can be enhanced.





Lake Placid Park (2)

Hedgerows

Thickets along property lines, ditches, and creeks are present throughout the park system and are a pre-existing amenity waiting to be capitalized. Thinning, cleaning, limbing, etc. re-claims perimeter edges and can be managed to open vistas, views, and access for safety and aesthetics.



Dunbarton Park

Fences

Two-rail right-of-way (ROW) fences (left) are aging and failing and can be effectively replaced with a more durable and attractively-scaled 4x10 single-rail prototype (right). Where appropriate the two rail fence should be removed either entirely or replaced with a single rail guard rail. This initiative is currently underway system wide with most of the 200+ city parks completed as of 2024.



Charlestown Lakes South Park



New Light Park

Playground Ramp Accessibility

There are many entrances to mulched playgrounds in our system. These entrances are trying to achieve a level surface across a certain distance. However, the resulting slope does not meet ADA standards. This presents an opportunity for a creative design solution.



Charlestown Lakes South Park

Playground Surface Maintenance

Engineered wood fiber (EWF) surfacing is worn down or in some cases as this photo from Lake Placid illustrates, is worn out. Increasing the frequency of maintenance attention is a simple solution.



Lake Placid Park

Arboriculture

Trees are one of the most visible elements of a park system and therefore their upkeep and management is a high priority. Virginia Beach has a wealth of opportunities for turning trees into beautiful assets by pruning, limbing up, canopy thinning, structural sculpting, and pleaching. A certified arborist can develop a custom plan for different parks and trees, depending on site conditions and usage.

Also identified throughout the system were inappropriately mulched trees. A mound peaking at the trunk of a tree conflicts with the specifications and details of tree installation and maintenance because it engenders a condition that is not healthy for the tree. The correct standard of tree mulching forms a dish circumscribed around the dripline of the tree, ensuring the root flair is contained wholly within the enclosed 'dish'. Most existing instances were likely installed correctly but have been incorrectly supplemented and maintained. Consequently, they may be irreparable at this point due to the duration of time the mulch has been mounded against the base of the tree. It is advised that strict adherence to arboricultural standards of practice are implemented and then maintained and strictly sustained on all new installations



Lake Placid Park



Red Mill Farms Park

SYSTEM-WIDE OPPORTUNITIES IN BRIEF

- Stormwater Infrastructure
    - Culverts – Install appropriate brick, timber, and/or vegetation for armoring and softening.
    - Inlets – Develop inlet protection standards for filtering all park source runoff.
    - Detention Basins – Plant basins with material to celebrate good management practices.
    - Bioswales – Improve overland swales with vegetation to reduce velocities and filter runoff.
- Geese – Spearhead national policy with the first-ever management plan for public spaces.
- Signs – Improve utilitarian appearances with vertical scaling and/or plant material.
- Trails – Re-grade and/or overlay unpaved trails for smoother and less hazardous traverse.
- Open Space – Delineate/define space and deliver canopy screening and shade by adding trees.
- Waterways – Expand access to and increase visibility of the premier resource in Virginia Beach.
- Hedgerows - Utilize this existing amenity to enhance valuable perimeters and enclosures.
- Fences – Replace the fragile, split-rail prototype with the more durable single-rail timbers.
- Ramps – Ease the slopes of the mulched ramps to something less than or equal to 8%.
- Maintenance – Increase a sustained funding and frequency of existing facilities and amenities.
- Arboriculture – Pragmatically, artistically – creatively – sculpt, shape, and unveil the magic of trees.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BEST AND WORST SCORING PARKS

Of the 40 parks sites evaluated, the best scoring parks sites include Charlestown Athletic Complex Park (98%), Lawson Hall Park (97%), and (tied for third) Red Mill Farms North Park and Princess Anne Athletic Complex (93%). Although improvement recommendations are available for these parks, they are generally characterized by up-to-date public amenities in good condition, good access and connection with surrounding neighborhoods, and good spatial definition and efficient layouts.

The worst scoring parks are Plaza Park, Northgate (55%), Rosemont Forest East Park (61%), and Thalia Trace Park (63%). These parks are characterized by amenity and maintenance deficiencies, recurring ADA issues, security issues, and drainage issues. Improvement recommendations have been made available in Table 3.5 Evaluated Parks starting on the following page.

Table 3.5 // Evaluated Parks

City-Wide Park

Community Parks

Beach Garden Park		A-	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
City-Wide Park	District 6		No major problems. A couple of spots in the outlying areas are not ADA compliant. Future pedestrian and vehicular safety could be easily facilitated now by pruning the parking lot trees and the trees adjacent to the loop trail. Limbing them up and thinning the canopies is needed.	There are a few opportunities for additional waterway overlooks via new spur trails on the north and south sides of the park. Rain garden(s)/detention basin(s) could be installed in place of the existing drop inlets draining the softball fields.
Enhanced or higher		(90%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit small amenities in the park (ex. fitness stations)	

Carolanne Farms Park		B-	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
City-Wide Park	District 1		Some minor issues. Some portions of the park are not ADA compliant. Inadequate trail markings complicate way-finding.	Adding a picnic shelter and table, a bike rack, and additional trash barrels could achieve an Enhanced status. Vegetative/bio-swale along the east edge of the park may be an opportunity. Preserve the open space and play fields for active recreation. Color-coded and/or numbered identifiers along trail system on the east and west sides of Turtle Lake in concert with a key map at the east end of Turtle Lake Trail is ideal. Could also benefit from parking in support of playfields.
Essential		(81%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit small amenities in the park (ex. fitness stations)	

Lynnhaven Park		B+	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
City-Wide Park	District 8		Very clean. No major problems. Thinning and grooming the hedgerow along the edge of the creek (east side) is needed to improve visibility and safety.	A pedestrian bridge across the creek in concert with a loop trail would connect the middle school to the neighborhood. Vegetative/armoring of walkway culverts would be beneficial. Adding trees for shade and/or delineation at the parking lot and the west side of the park would be strong improvements.
Essential		(89%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit small amenities in the park (ex. fitness stations)	

Plaza Park (Northgate)		F	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
City-Wide Park	District 10		Primary issues require repairs to the little league structures and walkways for safety and ADA accessibility. Of note, little league elements are the responsibility of the little league through leasing arrangement. The forested space of the park offers limited ADA accessibility and poses a risk to ones sense of security.	A disk golf course now sits in a wooded area. Limbing up trees and improving/expanding trail system in wooded area would be beneficial. Potential to include new overlooks and seating enclaves on Bow Creek and the drainage course on the east side. The aggregate lot could be improved with permeable surfacing.
Essential		(55%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit medium sized amenities in one or more areas of the park (ex. basketball court)	

Red Mill Farms Park		B	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
City-Wide Park	District 5		Fairly clean. Some outlying areas are not ADA compliant. Repairs to the restroom facility is needed	Supplement turfed detention basins with native plantings. A collector walk on the north side of the parking lot could aid pedestrian safety. Trim and groom the hedgerow along the east side of the park for uniformity and security. Prune the shade trees in the parking lot and in the promenade between the fields. Delineate/frame the open play areas with trees.
Essential		(85%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit small amenities in the park (ex. fitness stations)	

Woodstock Park		B+	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
City-Wide Park	District 1		No major problems. The woods trail and bridge need repairs for ADA compliance and safety.	Consider high-efficiency vehicle striping in larger parking lots. Safe and well-sized neighborhood linkages could be better developed should the neighborhood change their position on developing those linkages.
Enhanced or higher		(89%)		
Room for Improvement?			No, the park is built to capacity. Any new development would need to replace an existing amenity.	

Metro Park

Bayville Farms Park		A-	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
City-Wide Park	District 9		Some minor issues. Areas in the disc course are not ADA compliant. Thinning and limbing the trees in this sector would improve the sense of orientation and security (CPTED).	Adding / revising plant beds to better delineate and frame the walks /trails / spaces. Supplement large collection ditch with native plantings. On the disc course, add a portable lavatory between the 4th and 12th tee pads; add a bench at the 10th tee pad. A new marquis sign is needed using indigenous material only for structural support.
Enhanced or higher		(90%)		
Room for Improvement?			No, the park is built to capacity. Any new development would need to replace an existing amenity.	

Great Neck Park		C-	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
City-Wide Park	District 8		Fairly clean, some minor issues. Safety is a concern near the bridged connection between the Shorehaven Drive loop and the volleyball/open space field. Shorehaven Drive loops through the west end of the park with little insulating safety buffers or baffles between vehicular and pedestrian space. Forested spaces in the western end of the park need delineated clarity and would benefit from a program of selective thinning and limbing.	Develop neighborhood linkages to the north, east, and south. Some Little League fields should be reviewed for relocation given the current parking count. Sight distances in and through the site are CPTED concerns. Potential for vegetative swales in the southern open spaces (west of the baseball quad). Informal entrance off of Falcon Crescent could be considered for development as a formal park entrance.
Enhanced or higher		(70%)		
Room for Improvement?			No, the park is built to capacity. Any new development would need to replace an existing amenity.	

Red Wing Park		B+	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
City-Wide Park	District 5		Very clean only minor issues. The forest trail is not entirely ADA compliant. Consider trail surfacing to remedy the exposed root hazards on all trails. Repair warped rails around the McClanan Fragrance Garden.	Add riparian plants to swales at walk and road crossings. Consider adjacent property owner coordination to improve access to the pocosin lake. Add inlet protection/bio-retention around inlets in the valley swales of the west parking lot. Pave the aggregate lot (former dog park parking) with permeable pavement. Explore areas for additional parking during peak hours.
Enhanced or higher		(88%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit medium sized amenities in one or more areas of the park (ex. basketball court)	

Signature Park

Mt. Trashmore Park		C-	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
City-Wide Park	District 3		Fairly clean, some minor issues pertaining to the extensive wildfowl waste deposits and a lack of shade . Limited diversity of gathering/seating areas for privacy and the sense of scale for entering visitors are main secondary issues. The amphitheater staging area is irrigated and the system is in good working order. A worn path linking the south parking lot to the amphitheater area could be improved for appearances and accessibility.	Stronger links and connections between park features is needed. Add pedestrian connection on South Boulevard eastward to the Windsor Woods neighborhood. Add parking lot islands . Acquire funding to implement the existing plan to resurface agg. lots with asphalt and re-stripe with standard spaces. Prune the hedgerow around the eastern perimeter and Lake Windsor. Except for on the mount, consider adding trees throughout the park for shade and spatial definition. Plant drainage swales and the lakeshore (where practicable) with riparian material for environmental improvement, toddler restraint, and volleyball catchment.
Enhanced or higher		(71%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit small amenities in the park (ex. fitness stations)	

Local Park

Neighborhood Parks

Birchwood-Malibu Park		B-	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Local Park	District 8		No major problems. The benched overlook areas for fishing are not entirely ADA compliant. Replace the weathered tennis court fence. Trim and groom the plants in the detention pond on the east side of the tennis courts.	Re-open the trail alongside the creek on the north side. Re-surface the trails along the creek and through the woods (north and west sides). Potential to expand the natural infiltration basins in the wooded pocosin.
Essential level or higher		(81%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit medium sized amenities in one or more areas of the park (ex. basketball court)	

Brigadoon Park		C+	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Local Park	District 1		The only access to this park is from the sidewalk bordering the heavily-trafficked Lynnhaven Parkway. Adding off-street parking is not practicable due to poor sight distances. Explore pedestrian connectivity into the surrounding neighborhood. Very clean otherwise.	If parking is possible, use permeable pavement. Explore existing easements for cohabitation of pedestrian access walks. Alternatively, consider property acquisition. Potential for bridge crossing over the creek on the west side. Trim and groom the hedgerow on the west side. Install a vegetative swale/rain garden on the east side. Add trees for shade and spatial definition. Potential to pepper in evergreen plants to create sense of separation with busy road while maintaining security views.
Essential level or higher		(78%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit small amenities in the park (ex. fitness stations)	

Buckner Farms Park		B+	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Local Park	District 10		No major problems. Parking is accommodated by on-street parking.	Potential to incorporate natural amenities on the north side with a trail connection to the Crofts Pride neighborhood. Plant the roadside ditch and repair the fence rails along the southwest boundary with the church.
Essential level or higher		(88%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit small amenities in the park (ex. fitness stations)	

Charlestown Athletic Complex Park		A	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Local Park	District 7		No major problems. A permanent restroom/storage facility would be beneficial.	Confer with Little League and consider the construction of a permanent restroom/storage/maintenance structure under the current maintenance understanding. Install a through-passage/connection to the ROW trail at the northeast corner of the park. Allow lateral branches of ROW shrubs to join for forming hedge as intended. Prune trees on site and add trees for shade and spatial definition.
Essential level or higher		(98%)		
Room for Improvement?			No, the park is built to capacity. Any new development would need to replace an existing amenity.	

Charlestowne Lakes South Park		C+	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Local Park	District 7		Some minor issues. Most portions are ADA accessible. Issues with this park are undeveloped neighborhood linkages to the east, the underutilized space in the south, and the lack of cohesion and accessibility overall. On-street parking is sufficient. Repairs are needed to the right-of-way (ROW) fence rails. An abandoned hopscotch/shuffleboard court could be removed/re-purposed.	Improve connections over the collector ditch on the east side for additional neighborhood access. Add amenity(s) to the south end and east sides of the park. Expand the walk/trail system for loop circulation and fitness. Add trees for shade and spatial definition. Consider off-street parking for any field enhancements.
Essential level or higher		(80%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit a large sized amenity in the park (ex. full size 90' ball diamond)	

Colonial Oaks Park		B+	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Local Park	District 8		No major problems, very clean. ADA compliant space is limited. Obscured visibility presents some safety concerns. Limb up the mature canopy and trim/limb/prune the bosque on the north side.	A loop walk or trail connecting Great Neck Road to Parkside Place would be beneficial. Add signage on Great Neck Road frontage.
Essential level or higher		(88%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit small amenities in the park (ex. fitness stations)	

Dunbarton Park		C	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Local Park	District 1		Some minor issues. Cloistered siting presents diminished security. The hedgerow on the south side could be selectively thinned and trimmed for better visibility and surveillance. Parking is on-street and very limited.	Consider clearing eastern edge of encroachments and develop access from Old Princess Anne Road. Supplement the collection ditch (south side of park) with new plantings in concert with pruning and trimming the hedgerow. Install vegetative swales on the east and west sides of the park.
Essential level or higher		(75%)		
Room for Improvement?			No, the park is built to capacity. Any new development would need to replace an existing amenity.	

Lake Placid Park		B+	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Local Park	District 5		Fairly clean, some minor issues. Limb trees up to improve visibility and reduce future problems. Repair the fence rails along the southern edge of the park and increase frequency of maintenance visits.	Groom lakeshore vegetation for overlooks/seating areas. Opportunity to retro-fit BMPs.
Essential level or higher		(88%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit small amenities in the park (ex. fitness stations)	

Lark Downs Park		B	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Local Park	District 3		No major problems. Install BMP(s) on east side of northern softball field and north end of southwest softball field.	Link the two tennis court cells with a shaded seating area and add trees throughout for spatial definition. Explore potential easement or acquisition on the east side for an additional pedestrian connection to the Darby Road neighborhood. Vertically undulate the berm along the north and east sides where practicable for aesthetics and to meet CPTED criteria.
Essential level or higher		(87%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit small amenities in the park (ex. fitness stations)	

Lawson Hall Park		A	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Local Park	District 9		Great park. Open space may not be entirely ADA compliant. On-street parking is ample.	Add trees to better define the street edge.
Essential level or higher		(97%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit small amenities in the park (ex. fitness stations)	

Level Green Park		C-	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Local Park	District 7		Existing amenity is weathered and in need of replacement.	Upgrade park amenity with currently planned project which includes expanded parking, splashpad, restroom, dark park, playground, and fitness stations.
Below Essential		(72%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit a large sized amenity in the park (ex. full size 90' ball diamond)	

Litchfield Manor Park		C-	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Local Park	District 2		This park has not been constructed. Makeshift trail is ADA accessible. Primary issues for design program should include parking, access, and safety.	Provide access to West Neck Creek. Explore trail connections to node(s) for parking. Existing aggregate trail between Litchfield Way and Fenwick Way offers good starting link for future trail system. Connect to Pierce Lane and Dozier's Bridge facilities (kayak launch).
Below Essential		(70%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, significant portions of the site are undeveloped and multiple amenities could be developed	

Lynbrook Landing Park		B-	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Local Park	District 4		Only minor issues. Some areas of the park are not fully ADA compliant. Obscured visibility effects security. Limbing up mature tree canopy will improve visibility and lighting. Some turf areas could be aerated and re-seeded. Ample on-street parking.	Add plants for buffering and better spatial definition. Walkway alignment in needs accentuation - perhaps a specimen shrub. Link to Williams Farm Park is a major benefit.
Essential level or higher		(80%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit small amenities in the park (ex. fitness stations)	

Newlight Park		C+	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Local Park	District 1		No major problems. Some outlying portions are not fully ADA accessible. Turf repairs are needed and the parking area would benefit from permeable paving.	Plant trees along street frontage for park definition and parking lot shade. Add walk or trail connection between parking lot and softball bleachers. Delineate open spaces within the park by adding trees.
Essential level or higher		(79%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit small amenities in the park (ex. fitness stations)	

Oak Springs Park		C	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Local Park	District 10		Some minor issues. Accessibility, safety, and maintenance are the primary issues within the park. Expansive open space is undefined. Thin and trim the hedgerows on the east and south sides. Limb up trees along the ROW. Aerate turf and add topsoil to improve the lawn area. Remove remnant berms. On-street parking is adequate for the facilities provided.	Provide overlooks and access through select penetrations of hedgerow on the east side. Add trees for shade and spatial definition. Consider either on-street or off-street parking for facility expansion.
Essential level or higher		(77%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit a large sized amenity in the park (ex. full size 90' ball diamond)	

Parliament Village Park		D+	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Local Park	District 1		Fairly clean but with some issues. The main walk alongside the shelter and the playground serves as a retention basin. Visibility into the park from Leesburg Drive is a security issue. Perimeter spaces and neighborhood connections contain areas that are not fully ADA compliant. Limbing up trees and pruning would be beneficial.	Add trees to provide shade and delineation of open space and play fields. Good visual and physical access from surrounding residences. Vertically undulate berm along Leesburg Drive where practicable for aesthetics and visibility.
Essential level or higher		(68%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit medium sized amenities in one or more areas of the park (ex. basketball court)	

Pine Meadows Park		A-	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Local Park	District 5		No major problems. Ample parking is provided on-street.	Add shrub beds and specimen trees at each end of the Wassermand Drive frontage. Add a well-scaled shrub bed around the park sign. Add a BMP in place of the triple-grated inlet in the center of the park. Further soften the eastern, southern, and western edges of the park with additional trees. Consider on-site parking for facility expansion.
Essential level or higher		(91%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit a large sized amenity in the park (ex. full size 90' ball diamond)	

Point O' Woods Park		A-	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Local Park	District 6		Only minor issues. Ample parking is provided on adjacent street but somewhat remote.	Potential trail development to W. Plantation Road providing water access and overlooks. Simple, quiet, well-defined park.
Essential level or higher		(90%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit small amenities in the park (ex. fitness stations)	

Red Mill Farms North Park		A	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Local Park	District 5		No major problems. Ample parking is provided but on a moderately (vs. lightly)-trafficked Red Mill Boulevard. Limbing up trees and pruning in concert with turf maintenance is needed.	A well-scaled, well-designed planting bed around the sign would be beneficial. Coordinate with Economic Development and explore an Upton Drive crosswalk for connecting to a lakefront open space to the east.
Essential level or higher		(93%)		
Room for Improvement?			No, the park is built to capacity. Any new development would need to replace an existing amenity.	

Rosemont Forest East		D-	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Local Park	District 7		Fairly clean, some minor issues of connectivity. Prune the trees on Sundevil Drive.	Obtain Essential classification by adding bike racks, shade structure (or trees), walks, benches, and way-finding/directional graphics. Define park boundaries with a motif (i.e., unifying, themed, simple, etc.) planting scheme. Connect facilities to parking areas at high school and middle school with well-defined paths/walks.
Below Essential		(61%)		
Room for Improvement?			No, the park is built to capacity. Any new development would need to replace an existing amenity.	

Scarborough Square Park		C	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Local Park	District 3		The primary issues with this park are the littering and the safety. Correlated to these matters are maintenance issues. Prune trees for safety and improved visibility.	Develop a community program to incentivize litter pickup. Add trees to define park perimeter.
Essential level or higher		(77%)		
Room for Improvement?			No, the park is built to capacity. Any new development would need to replace an existing amenity.	

Southgate Park		A-	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Local Park	District 5		No issues. Accessible and inviting. Keep the current maintenance regimen - great condition. Good blend of trees and lawn.	Potential connection along the southern edge. Thin and trim hedgerow. Add a small bridge over the drainage way at the southeast corner of the park. Add a trail alongside the drainage way between the park and Grace Covenant Church. Explore extending this connection southwesterly until a connection can be made to Southgate West Park.
Essential level or higher		(91%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit small amenities in the park (ex. fitness stations)	

Stratford Chase Park		B+	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Local Park	District 1		No major problems. Ample parking is provided on-street. Large open play field is well-maintained.	Vertically undulate Minden Road berm where practicable for better visibility. Increase the height of the berms around northwest corner. Highlight park entrance by adding a plant bed to the sign area. Add trees (e.g., specimens) for shade and to better define the park perimeter.
Essential level or higher		(88%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit medium sized amenities in one or more areas of the park (ex. basketball court)	

Thalia Trace Park		D-	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Local Park	District 4		Litter, maintenance, dilapidated perimeter fencing and poorly drained areas are the primary issues.	Incentivize adjacent residents to repair their fences (provide unifying design[s] for them). Fine grade and add BMP on the west side in concert with trimming and thinning the vegetation.
Essential level or higher		(63%)		
Room for Improvement?			No, the park is built to capacity. Any new development would need to replace an existing amenity.	

Upton Estates Park		B+	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Local Park	District 5		Only minor issues. Limb up trees in the southern bosque area for light, security, and safety. Some turf spots require attention.	Add trees along the northern and northwestern perimeter. Add a loop walk/trail around the perimeter of the open space (northern area of the park) and connect it to the Upton Drive sidewalk at the north apex.
Essential level or higher		(88%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit small amenities in the park (ex. fitness stations)	

Natural Area

Lake Smith/Lake Lawson Natural Area		B	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Natural Area	District 9		The primary issues are inadequate parking at the northern end (boat ramp area) and inadequate trail markings in the southern preserve (Sajo Farm sector).	Explore feasibility of permeable surfacing for additional parking at boat ramp area. Grade and overlay trail as necessary. Add numbered and color-coded cairns for orientation, directions, and way-finding on trail network.
Essential level or higher		(83%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit small amenities in the park (ex. fitness stations)	

Special-Use Park

Special Use Athletic Park

Princess Anne Athletic Complex		A-	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Special-Use Park	District 2		Some ADA issues pertaining to distance. Parking lot trees should be pruned now to optimize future growth patterns.	Sports Management office in need of renovation or replacement. Planting design for the lakeshore at the west end of the park and for the shoreline around the pond at the southwest arc of the Red Quad will define spaces as park elements. Should future expansion necessitate additional parking, acquire wooded parcel(s) north of Landstown Centre Way and add parking using permeable pavement and other BMP measures. Provide multiple, well-designed pedestrian crossings to access athletic fields. Ensure ADA compliance throughout.
Essential level or higher		(93%)		
Room for Improvement?			Yes, there is space to fit small amenities in the park (ex. fitness stations)	

Special Use Gateway Park

Kempes Landing Park		D+	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Special-Use Park	District 3		The primary issues with this park are access, maintenance, and purpose. Access is pedestrian only with remote, undefined parking at a distance that may not be ADA compliant. Maintenance of the pond and walkways need very frequent attention due to Canadian Geese populations. Pruning and trimming the trees and shrubs is a clear and present need. Added features (boxes and statues) obscure the purpose of the park as a gateway space.	Relocate the tree obscuring the visual connection between the pavilion and historic high school structure. Environmental graphics directing vehicular traffic to the parking area(s) and the pedestrian connections would be beneficial. Potential maintenance access of the pond through a gated fence panel is needed. Interpret the purpose of the Jefferson Canal and provide informative panels and access to the canal.
Essential level or higher		(68%)		
Room for Improvement?			No, the park is built to capacity. Any new development would need to replace an existing amenity.	

Special Use Water Access Park

Lynnhaven Marina		B-	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Special-Use Park	District 8		The primary issues are parking and shade. Required portions are accessible.	Attain an Essential classification by providing a shelter and table on the western pier point, benches throughout, parking space shade structures and/or trees, more legible graphics for slip numbers/orientation, and a permanent convenience/lavatory. Explore provisions for 60-80 additional parking spaces.
Below Essential		(80%)		
Room for Improvement?			No, the park is built to capacity. Any new development would need to replace an existing amenity.	

Owl Creek Boat Ramp		D	Primary Issues:	Conditions, Observations & Development Opportunites:
Special-Use Park	District 6		The primary issues are shade and parking area surfacing. Required portions are accessible.	Pave all parking areas with permeable pavement. Convert parking lot islands into rain gardens (i.e., infiltration basins), and add trees for shade. Add pedestrian connections into the facility from the General Booth Boulevard hike-and-bike path. Develop environmental graphics with an appropriate motif/theme. Trim and thin the hedgerow on the west side of the facility to reveal vistas of Owl Creek.
Below Essential		(64%)		
Room for Improvement?			No, the park is built to capacity. Any new development would need to replace an existing amenity.	

CHAPTER 4 // NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The purpose of the needs assessment is to identify potential discrepancies between Virginia Beach's recreational needs and the services provided. The techniques used in this report to accomplish that are a statistically valid survey, demographic and recreational trends, benchmarking against comparable municipalities, and Level of Service analysis.

4.1 STATISTICALLY VALID SURVEY ANALYSIS

PURPOSE

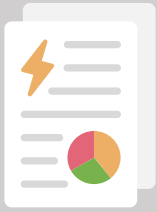
ETC Institute administered a Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment on behalf of Virginia Beach, Virginia. This assessment is part of the City's initiative to establish priorities for indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities to Virginia Beach residents. Data compiled and analyzed from this assessment will help City leaders in making decisions that best reflect the parks and recreation needs of the community. The complete survey report can be found in Appendix D.

METHODOLOGY

ETC Institute mailed a survey packet to a random sample of households in Virginia Beach. The sample of respondents were demographically representative of Virginia Beach overall, which makes the results of the survey statistically valid and a key foundation for future recommendations.



The goal was to obtain 500 completed surveys from City residents. A total of 545 surveys were collected.



The overall results for a sample of 545 surveys have a precision of at least +/- 4.2% at the 95% level of confidence.

AMENITY, FACILITY AND PARK PRIORITY NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

Parks and Recreation Facility/Amenity Needs

Households were asked to identify if they had a need for 39 facilities/amenities and rate how well their needs for each were currently being met. Based on this analysis, ETC Institute was able to estimate the number of households in the community that had the greatest "unmet" need for various facilities/amenities. The six facilities/amenities with the highest percentage of households whose needs are currently being partly or not met are listed to the right.

Importance of Parks and Recreation Facilities/Amenities

In addition to assessing the needs for each facility and amenity, ETC Institute also evaluated the importance that households placed on each one. Based on the sum of households' top four choices, the six most important Parks & Recreation facilities and amenities to households are listed to the right.

Priorities for Facility/Amenity Investments

The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) was developed by ETC Institute to provide organizations with an objective tool for evaluating the priority that should be placed on Parks and Recreation investments. The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) equally weighs (1) the importance that households place on each facility/amenity/and (2) how many households have unmet needs for the facility/amenity.

The Priority Investment Ratings for each facility and amenity is shown below.

Top 6 Amenity Needs

- Biking trails – 45,818 households (26.8%)
- Paved walking & jogging trails – 39,146 households (22.9%)
- Fishing piers & dock areas – 31,785 households (18.6%)
- Outdoor pool – 29,497 households (17.3%)
- Unpaved walking & jogging trails – 28,182 households (16.5%)
- Canoe/kayak launches – 25,280 households (14.8%)

Top 6 Most Important Amenities

- Natural areas (32.8%)
- Biking trails (29.7%)
- Paved walking & jogging trails (29.0%)
- Children's playgrounds (27.1%)
- Indoor fitness & exercise facilities (26.0%)
- Small neighborhood parks (19.5%)

Figure 4.1 // Top Priorities for Investment for Parks & Recreation Facilities/Amenities

Based on the Priority Investment Rating (PIR)



PROGRAM AND ACTIVITY NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

Recreation Program Needs

Households were asked to identify if they had a need for 27 programs and rate how well their needs for each were currently being met. Based on this analysis, ETC Institute was able to estimate the number of households in the community that had the greatest "unmet" need for each of the programs. The six programs with the highest percentage of estimated households whose needs are currently being partly or not met are listed to the right.

Importance of Recreation Programs

In addition to assessing the needs for each program, ETC Institute also assessed the importance that households placed on each one. Based on the sum of households' top four choices, the six programs important to the highest percentage of households are listed to the right.

Priorities for Recreation Program Investments

The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) was developed by ETC Institute to provide organizations with an objective tool for evaluating the priority that should be placed on Parks and Recreation investments. The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) equally weighs (1) the importance that households place on each facility/amenity/and (2) how many households have unmet needs for the facility/amenity.

The Priority Investment Ratings for each program is shown below.

Top 6 Program Needs

- Adult fitness & wellness – 29,940 households (17.5%)
- Outdoor adventure/recreation (kayaking, etc.) – 28,343 households (16.6%)
- Special events at the parks – 23,687 households (13.9%)
- Outdoor fitness classes in the parks – 22,081 households (12.9%)
- Large special events in City parks – 21,239 households (12.4%)
- Senior adult fitness & wellness, ages 65+ – 21,005 households (12.3%)

Top 6 Most Important Recreational Programs

- Adult fitness & wellness (39.7%)
- Outdoor adventure/recreation (kayaking, etc.) (27.2%)
- Senior adult fitness & wellness, ages 65+ (22.8%)
- Special events at the parks (21.3%)
- Large special events in City parks (19.2%)
- Senior adult recreation programs, ages 65+ (17.1%)

Figure 4.2 // Top Priorities for Investment for Parks & Recreation Programs

Based on the Priority Investment Rating (PIR)



SUMMARY OF 2021 SURVEY RESULTS

To ensure that Virginia Beach continues to meet the needs and expectations of the community, ETC Institute recommends that the Park and Recreation Department sustain and/or improve the performance in areas that were identified as "high priorities" by the Priority Investment Rating (PIR). The ratings for Parks and Recreation facilities/amenities and recreational programs are listed belo

Parks and Recreation Facilities/Amenities Rated as High Priority Items:

1. Biking trails (PIR=190.5)
2. Paved walking & jogging trails (PIR=173.9)
3. Natural areas (PIR=151.8)
4. Unpaved walking & jogging trails (PIR=120.3)
5. Fishing piers & dock areas (PIR=116.3)
6. Indoor fitness & exercise facilities (PIR=112.9)
7. Children's playgrounds (PIR=104.0)
8. Small neighborhood parks (PIR=103.4)

Recreation Programs Rated as High Priority Items:

1. Adult fitness & wellness (PIR=200.0)
2. Outdoor adventure/recreation (kayaking, etc.) (PIR=163.2)
3. Special events at the parks (PIR=132.8)
4. Senior adult fitness & wellness (ages 65+) (PIR=127.6)
5. Large special events in City parks (PIR=119.3)
6. Senior adult recreation programs (ages 65+) (PIR=104.9)

RECREATION TREND AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT ALIGNMENT

There is strong alignment between the local recreation trends, which showed above average participation in 90% of the activities tracked and the highest priority needs of the community as identified in the 2021 survey. The synergy between these data points provides Virginia Beach with a high level of confidence that future investment in the parks and recreation system in alignment with the trend and needs assessment results will be strongly supported by residents.

2017 AND 2021 SURVEY RESULTS COMPARISON

The 2021 ETC survey follows up a survey they conducted in 2017 and certain trends become apparent. The following comparison charts look at trends in the overall population, as well as within certain demographic groups.

PLEASE NOTE: NR = Not Ranked and NA = Analysis Not Available

Highest Prioritized Parks, Facilities and Amenities

City as a Whole

When evaluating the community's rankings of highest prioritized parks, facilities and amenities provided by the Department in 2021 as compared to 2017, many of the rankings remained the same or had slight changes. The most significant changes are the increases in the ranking for fishing piers and dock areas as

well as unpaved walking and jogging trails. These changes in ranking might be attributed to the overall increase in outdoor recreation participation due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 4.1 // Highest Prioritized Park and Facility Needs, City as a Whole

Recreation Facility, Park, Trail	2017 Ranking	2021 Ranking	Differential
Biking trails	1	1	No Change
Paved walking & jogging trails	2	2	No Change
Natural areas	3	3	No Change
Community recreation centers	4	NR	NR
Indoor fitness & exercise facilities	5	6	(1)
Small neighborhood parks	6	8	(2)
Large community parks	7	NR	NR
Unpaved walking & jogging trails	8	4	4
Children's playgrounds	9	7	2
Fishing Piers	13	5	8

Highest Prioritized Programs and Services

City as a Whole

When evaluating the community's rankings of highest prioritized programs and services provided by the Department in 2021 as compared to 2017, many of the rankings remained the same or had slight changes. The most significant changes are the decreases in the ranking for adult art, dance and performing arts, adult water fitness programs and large special events. These change in the rankings might be attributed to social distancing requirements imposed during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 4.2 // Highest Prioritized Program and Services Needs, City as a Whole

Program/Service	2017 Ranking	2021 Ranking	Differential
Adult fitness & wellness	1	1	No Change
Large special events in City parks	2	5	(3)
Small special events	3	3	No Change
Adult art, dance, performing arts	4	10	(6)
Adult water fitness programs	5	9	(4)
Outdoor adventure/recreation (kayaking, etc.)	NR	2	NA
Senior adult fitness & wellness (ages 65+)	6	4	2
Senior adult recreation programs (ages 65+)	7	6	1

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC AND RECREATIONAL TRENDS ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

A key component of the Parks System Needs Assessment & Development Strategy Plan ("Plan") is a Demographic & Recreation Trends Analysis. This provides the City of Virginia Beach's Parks and Recreation ("City") insight into the general makeup of the population served and identifies market trends in recreation. It also helps quantify the market in and around the City and understand the types of parks, facilities, and programs / services that are most appropriate to satisfy the needs of residents.

This analysis is two-fold – it aims to answer the *who* and the *what*. First, it assesses the demographic characteristics and population projections of City residents to understand *who* they serve. Secondly, recreational trends are examined on a national, regional, and local level to understand *what* the population served wants to do. Findings from this analysis establish a fundamental understanding that provide a basis for prioritizing the community need for parks, trails, facilities, and recreation programs.

The following highlights key results of the demographics and recreational trends analysis. The complete report can be found in Appendix E.

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALSYIS

The Demographic Analysis describes the population within the city. This assessment is reflective of the City's total population and its key characteristics such as age segments, race, ethnicity, and income levels. It is important to note that future projections are based on historical patterns and unforeseen circumstances during or after the time of the analysis could have a significant bearing on the validity of the projected figures.

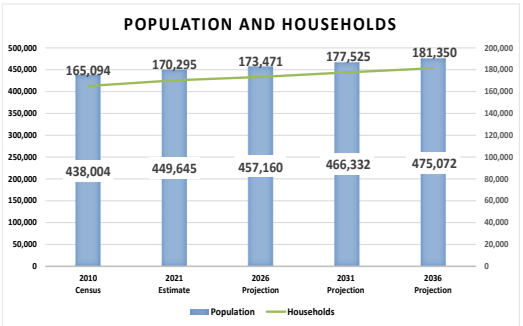
Methodology

Demographic data used for the analysis was obtained from U.S. Census Bureau and from Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI), the largest research and development organization dedicated to Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and specializing in population projections and market trends. All data was acquired in July 2021 and reflects actual numbers as reported in the 2010 Census. ESRI then estimates the current population (2021) as well as a 5-year projection (2026). PROS utilized straight line linear regression to forecast demographic characteristics for 2031 and 2036.

Population

- The City is experiencing below average population and household growth, increasing just 2.7% and 3.2% from 2010 to 2011.
- Population is expected to grow slightly faster than the current rate, reaching 475,072 residents and 181,350 households by 2036.
- **With a modestly growing population, park and recreation services will need to strategically invest, develop, and maintain parks and facilities in relation to current and future housing development areas**

Figure 4.3 // Projected Population in Virginia Beach, 2010-2036



Age Segment

- Virginia Beach's population is relatively balanced though slightly skewed toward the older age segments, with 27.5% of the residents aged 55+.
- The City will continue on an aging tend, with those aged 55+ increasing to 35.5% of the population by 2036, an increase of 8% over 2021 levels.
- Given the differences in how the active adults (55 and older) participate in recreation programs, the trend is moving toward having at least two to three different program age segments for older adults.
- **When developing the park and recreation system, the City should evaluate recreation experiences that would cater to active adults who are 55-64, 65-74 and 75+ age segments.**

Race and Ethnicity

- Virginia Beach's population is majority White Alone (64%) and the largest minority is Black Alone (20%), with an above average representation of Asian Americans (8%).
- People of Hispanic/Latino origin represent approximately 9% of the population, well below the national average of 19%.
- The City's population is expected to get slightly more diverse by 2036.
- A slightly diversifying population will likely focus the City on **providing traditional programming and service offerings while always seeking to identify emerging activities and sports.**

Income

- With median and per capita household income averages greater to that of the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) averages and above national averages, it is important for the City to **prioritize providing offerings that are first class with exceptional customer service with a general focus on seeking opportunities to create revenue generation. Residents are still likely to be price conscious and have a need to understand the value that correlates with quality-of-life indicators.**

Figure 4.4 // Projected Population in Virginia Beach, 2010-2036, by Age Group

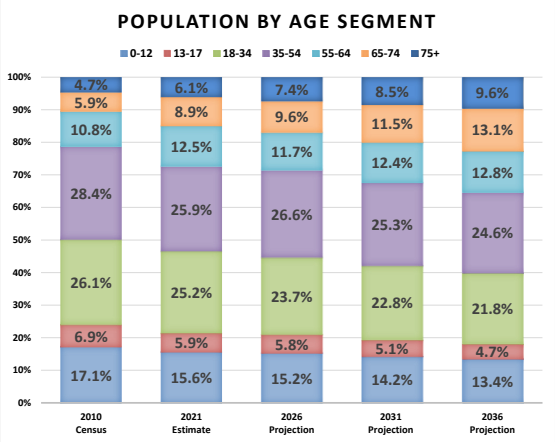
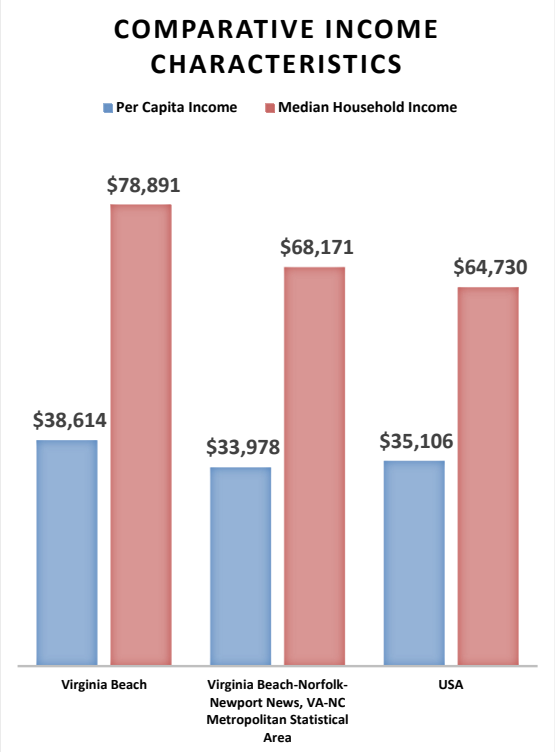


Figure 4.5 // Per Capita and Median Household Income Comparison – Virginia Beach, Metro Region, VA



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Demographic Breakdown by City Council District

Given that the city is 497 square miles, it is important to recognize that the City-As-A-Whole demographic information provides only a snapshot of the make-up of the city. The following provides a summary of the current and projected increases in population of the City broken down by City Council District.

- While the City-Wide population growth will be restrained, several districts will likely see significant population growth by 2036, including District 4 (19.3%), District 2 (11.2%), and District 10 (8.4%). **Park planning and development will need to accommodate differential population growth in City districts and regions.**
- City-Wide average income is higher than MSA/VA averages, but certain districts have below average median incomes, including Districts 3, 4, and 10. **It is important to provide equitable opportunities for recreation so that lower income households do not face barriers to participation.**

Figure 4.6 // City Council District Map, 2022

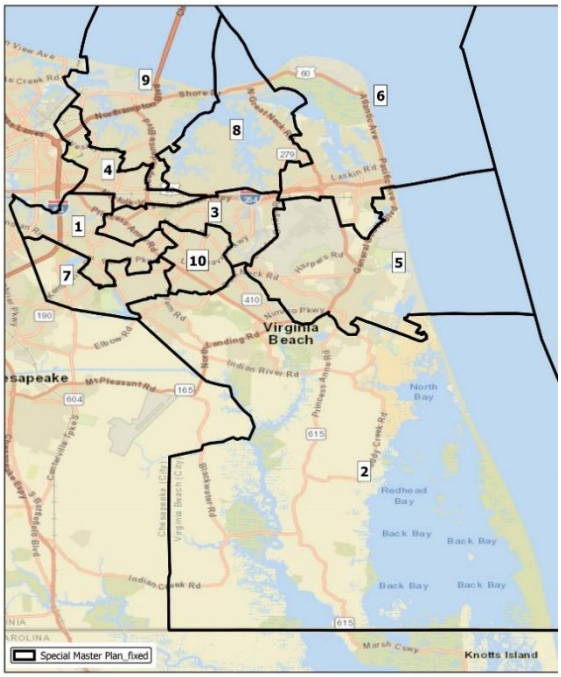


Table 4.3 // City Council District Population Projections for 2036

COUNCIL DISTRICT	POPULATION 2021	PROJECTED POPULATION 2036	INCREASE	PERCENTAGE INCREASE
District 1	45,960	48,179	2,219	4.8%
District 2	43,598	48,479	4,881	11.2%
District 3	46,072	47,012	940	2.0%
District 4	42,831	51,102	8,271	19.3%
District 5	44,932	44,605	-327	-0.7%
District 6	45,075	46,604	1,529	3.4%
District 7	46,654	49,158	2,504	5.4%
District 8	43,626	43,591	-35	-0.1%
District 9	45,436	47,050	1,614	3.6%
District 10	45,461	49,292	3,831	8.4%
CITY TOTALS	**449,645**	**475,072**	**25,427**	**5.7%**

Table 4.4 // City Council District Demographic Projections for 2036

COUNCIL DISTRICT	DEMOGRAPHIC PROJECTIONS for 2036		
	AGE SEGMENTATION	RACE	INCOME
District 1	Significant Aging Population (42% of population will be 55+)	White (59%)/Black (18%)/Asian (14%); Hispanic (11%)	Equal to Virginia Beach and greater than MSA/US Averages
District 2	Significant Aging Population (42% of population will be 55+)	White (66%)/Black (14%)/Asian (11%); Hispanic (10%)	Greater than Virginia Beach and MSA/US Averages
District 3	Aging Population (34% of population will be 55+)	White (56%)/Black (21%)/Asian (9%); Hispanic (16%)	Below Virginia Beach and equal to MSA/US Averages
District 4	Balanced Age Segmentation (22% will be under age of 18; 23% of population will be 55+)	White (42%)/Black (37%)/Asian (8%); Hispanic (16%)	Below Virginia Beach and MSA/US Averages
District 5	Aging Population (36% of population will be 55+)	White (71%)/Black (12%)/Asian (6%); Hispanic (15%)	Greater than Virginia Beach and MSA/US Averages
District 6	Aging Population (34% of population will be 55+)	White (68%)/Black (15%)/Asian (4%); Hispanic (15%)	Equal to Virginia Beach and MSA/US Averages
District 7	Balanced Age Segmentation (20% will be under age of 18; 30% of population will be 55+)	White (40%)/Black (26%)/Asian (20%); Hispanic (14%)	Equal to Virginia Beach and greater than MSA/US Averages
District 8	Significant Aging Population (51% of population will be 55+)	White (81%)/Black (6%)/Asian (5%); Hispanic (9%)	Greater than Virginia Beach and MSA/US Averages
District 9	Aging Population (37% of population will be 55+)	White (68%)/Black (13%)/Asian (9%); Hispanic (13%)	Greater than Virginia Beach and MSA/US Averages
District 10	Balanced Age Segmentation (23% will be under age of 18; 26% of population will be 55+)	White (38%)/Black (29%)/Asian (17%); Hispanic (19%)	Below Virginia Beach and equal to MSA/US Averages

RECREATIONAL TRENDS ANALYSIS

The Trends Analysis provides an understanding of national, and local recreational trends. Trends data used for this analysis was obtained from Sports & Fitness Industry Association's ("SFIA"), National Recreation and Park Association ("NRPA"), and ESRI. All trend data is based on current and/or historical participation rates.

National Trends in Recreation

Methodology

The SFIA's Sports, Fitness & Recreational Activities Topline Participation Report 2020 was utilized in evaluating the following trends:

- National Recreation Participatory Trends
- Core vs. Casual Participation Trends

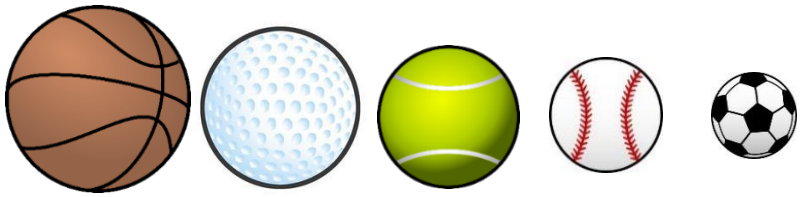
The study is based on findings from surveys carried out in 2019 by the Physical Activity Council ("PAC"), resulting in a total of 18,000 online interviews. Surveys were administered to all genders, ages, income levels, regions, and ethnicities to allow for statistical accuracy of the national population. A sample size of 18,000 completed interviews is considered by SFIA to result in a high degree of statistical accuracy. A sport with a participation rate of five percent has a confidence interval of plus or minus 0.32 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level. Using a weighting technique, survey results are applied to the total U.S. population figure of 302,756,603 people (ages six and older).

The purpose of the report is to establish levels of activity and identify key participatory trends in recreation across the U.S. This study looked at 122 different sports/activities and subdivided them into various categories including: sports, fitness, outdoor activities, aquatics, etc.

National Trends in General Sports

- The popularity of sports most heavily participated in, basketball, golf, and tennis can be attributed to the relatively small number of participants required, and for basketball, the limited equipment necessary to play.
- The five fastest growing sports in the last five years (2015-2020) are golf, pickleball, flag football, baseball, and indoor soccer. The sports with the most rapid decline are ultimate frisbee, squash, touch football, badminton, and tackle football. It should be notes that participation in baseball has not grown since 2017.

Figure 4.7 // Most Popular General Sports, Nationally



Basketball	Golf	Tennis	Baseball	Soccer
24.9 Million	24.3 Million	17.7 Million	15.8 Million	11.9 Million

National Trends in General Fitness

- Overall, national participatory trends in general fitness has experienced strong growth in recent years, in part because there are few barriers to entry.
- The fastest growing activities are trail running, yoga, cross training style workout, and stationary group cycling. The activities showing the biggest decline are traditional triathlon, running/jogging, free weights, and fitness walking. Though declining, fitness walking, free weights, and running/jogging remain highly popular activities with large numbers of users.

Figure 4.8 // Most Popular General Fitness Activities, Nationally



Fitness Walking 111.4 Million | Treadmill 56.8 Million | Dumbbell Free Weights | Running/ Jogging 49.5 Million | Stationary Cycling 37.1 Million

National Trends in Outdoor Recreation

- The fastest growing activities in the last five years are BMX Bicycling, day hiking, fly fishing, salt water fishing, and mountain biking. The activities showing the biggest decline are in-line roller skating, archery, and adventure racing.

Figure 4.9 // Most Popular Outdoor Recreation Activities, Nationally



Hiking (Day) 49.7 Million | Bicycling (Road) 39.4 Million | Fishing (Freshwater) 39.2 Million | Camping (<¼mi. of Car/Home) 28.2 Million | Camping (Recreational Vehicle) 15.4 Million

National Trends in Water Sports/Activities

- Over the past five years, stand-up paddling and recreation kayaking were the fastest growing water activities, followed by white water kayaking and surfing. Activities declining in participation most rapidly were water skiing, jet skiing, scuba diving, wakeboarding, and snorkeling, though these activities still remain very popular with large numbers of people.
- It is important to note that aquatic recreation is heavily dependent on regional, seasonal, and environmental factors.

Figure 4.10 // Most Popular Water Sports/Activities, Nationally



Kayaking 11.4 Million | Canoeing 9.0 Million | Snorkeling 7.7 Million | Jet Skiing 5.1 Million | Sailing 3.6 Million

Local Sport and Leisure Market Potential

The charts to the right show sport and leisure market potential data from ESRI. A Market Potential Index (MPI) measures the probable demand for a product or service within the City. The MPI shows the likelihood that a resident of the target area will participate in certain activities when compared to the US national average. The national average is 100, therefore numbers below 100 would represent a lower than average participate rate. High index numbers (100+) are significant because they demonstrate that there is a greater likelihood that residents within the service areas will actively participate in those offerings provided by the city. The tables to the right illustrate and summarize the indexes of the general sports, fitness, and outdoor recreation market potential for the City as a whole. Difference between each Council District were also evaluated and can be found in Appendix D as part of the Demographic and Recreation Trends Analysis.

Please Note: MPI scores are not meant to be compared to each other, rather each MPI score should be compared to the national average. To further emphasize this point, a column is added to each of the charts to indicate the approximate percentage of population in Virginia Beach that participates in each activity.

Findings

MPIs for City residents show market potential is greater than the US average in almost every activity that can be offered by the Parks and Recreation Department. The only activities based on MPI that were slightly below that of the US average are: Softball (96), Archery (96), and Fresh Water Fishing (94).

Market Potential Index – Virginia Beach Compared to National Average

(national average is 100, so numbers over 100 indicate a higher than average participation rate)

General Sports

GENERAL SPORTS	National Average	City as a Whole	MPI as % of population
Baseball	100	107	4.1%
Basketball	100	116	9.0%
Football	100	109	4.4%
Frisbee/Disc Golf	100	113	4.2%
Golf	100	119	10.0%
Soccer	100	111	4.7%
Softball	100	96	2.4%
Tennis	100	112	4.2%
Volleyball	100	112	3.5%

General Fitness

FITNESS	National Average	City as a Whole	MPI as % of population
Aerobics	100	112	8.1%
Jogging/ Running	100	119	13.1%
Pilates	100	119	3.6%
Swimming	100	119	18.4%
Walking for Exercise	100	108	27.5%
Weight Lifting	100	121	13.0%
Yoga	100	115	10.3%
Zumba	100	106	3.6%

Outdoor Recreation

OUTDOOR RECREATION	National Average	City as a Whole	MPI as % of population
Archery	100	96	2.5%
Backpacking	100	107	3.8%
Bicycling (Mountain)	100	116	4.4%
Bicycling (Road)	100	112	10.6%
Boating (Power)	100	117	5.5%
Canoeing/Kayaking	100	110	7.4%
Fishing (Fresh Water)	100	94	9.8%
Fishing (Salt Water)	100	119	4.6%
Hiking	100	118	15.0%
Horseback Riding	100	106	2.4%
Target Shooting	100	101	5.0%

Recreational Trends Key Findings

National Participatory Trends

National participatory trends are promising for the City, as many of the activities in sports and fitness aligned with core offerings are trending positively in recent years. Despite the facility closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in general, people are recreating more and the importance of living an active, healthy lifestyle is on the rise. The City must continue to provide active recreation opportunities and seek out new, trending activities that will pique interest and meet the demand for parks, facilities, and recreation programs among City residents for many years to come.

Local Participatory Trends

Local recreation trends show above average participation across most categories assessed, with only 3 of the 29 tracked activities having MPI scores below the national average.



Kayakers at Stumpy Lake Natural Area

4.3 BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

The Consulting Team identified metrics to be benchmarked against comparable Parks and Recreation systems. The complexity in this analysis was ensuring direct comparison through a methodology of statistics and ratios in order to provide objective information that is relevant and accurate, as best as possible.

It must be noted that the benchmark analysis is only an indicator based on the information provided. The information sought was a combination of metrics based on jurisdiction size and park inventories. The attributes considered for selection in this benchmark study included:

- Jurisdiction population size
- Jurisdiction land area size
- Parks and Recreation service delivery
- Parks and Recreation funding

Benchmark analysis incorporates a mix of systems that are similar based on population served. The benchmark includes the following agencies:

Table 4.5 // Benchmark Agencies

Agency	State	Jurisdiction Type	Population	Jurisdiction Size (Sq. Mi.)	Population per Sq. Mi.
Colorado Springs	CO	City	478,961	196	2,444
Kansas City	MO	City	467,007	319	1,464
Loudoun County	VA	County	385,945	521	741
Plano	TX	City	285,494	72	3,965
Prince William County	VA	County	460,472	348	1,323
Raleigh	NC	City	467,665	148	3,168
Virginia Beach	VA	City	449,645	498	904

Due to difference in how each system collects, maintains, and reports data, variances exist. These variations have an impact on the per capita and percentage allocations; hence the overall comparison must be viewed with this in mind.

The benchmark data collection for all systems was obtained in 2022. Population figures used for analysis reflect data from the 2020 US Census. While it is possible that there may have been changes or updates in the data provided, to ensure consistency only the original figures obtained at that time have been used in the benchmark. The goal is to evaluate how Virginia Beach's Parks and Recreation Department is positioned among peer agencies as it applies to the delivery of its parks system through data that offers a view of each system's park acreage, funding, and indoor facility inventory.

COMPARISON OF TRUST FOR PUBLIC LANDS PARKSCORE

Trust for Public Lands 2021 ParkScore Index

The Trust for Public Land's (TPL) 2021 ParkScore index is the national gold-standard comparison of park systems across the 100 most populated cities in the United States. Published annually, the index measures park systems according to five categories: access, investment, amenities, acreage, and equity. The table below shows the ParkScore for each of the cities in the benchmark analysis. PLEASE NOTE: TPL does not provide an analysis of County Park and Recreation systems, and therefore, a ParkScore is not available for Loudoun County and Prince William County.

Table 4.6 // Comparison of Trust for Public Lands ParkScore Ranking

Agency	State	Jurisdiction Type	Trust for Public Lands Park Score
Colorado Springs	CO	City	56
Kansas City	MO	City	20
Loudoun County	VA	County	NA
Plano	TX	City	15
Prince William County	VA	County	NA
Raleigh	NC	City	31
Virginia Beach	VA	City	40

As noted above, overall Virginia Beach's ParkScore ranks the system as the 40th best parks and recreation system among the top 100 most populated cities in the United States. When comparing Virginia Beach's ParkScore to the benchmark agencies, it ranks 4th, ahead of only Colorado Springs, Colorado. More detailed information regarding Virginia Beach's ParkScore can be found at the following weblink: https://www.tpl.org/city/virginia-beach-virginia.

COMPARISON OF TOTAL PARK ACRES

This section provides a general overview of each system within the benchmark analysis. The table below describes the total park acreage, total acres per 1,000 residents, and percentage of park acres of each agencies overall land mass.

Total Park Acreage

In total acres, the benchmark agencies range from 3,141 acres – 29,818 acres. Virginia Beach ranks first out of the seven benchmark agencies in total park acreage and is well above the benchmark median of 11,478 total acres. PLEASE NOTE: Virginia Beach's total park acres includes 21,769 undeveloped/passive park acres provided by other service providers as well as 50% of the 1,248 acres provided by schools.

Table 4.7 // Comparison of Total Park Acreage

Agency	State	Jurisdiction Type	Trust for Public Lands Park Score	Total Park Acres	Total Acres per 1,000 Residents	Park Acres as percentage of overall land mass
Colorado Springs	CO	City	56	16,173	33.8	13%
Kansas City	MO	City	20	12,243	26.2	6%
Loudoun County	VA	County	NA	3,141	8.1	1%
Plano	TX	City	15	3,867	13.5	8%
Prince William County	VA	County	NA	5,337	11.6	2%
Raleigh	NC	City	31	9,764	20.9	10%
Virginia Beach	VA	City	40	29,818	66.3	9%

Total Park Acres per 1,000 Residents

When comparing the benchmark agencies total park acres per 1,000 residents, Virginia Beach ranks first with 66.3 acres per 1,000 residents and is well above the benchmark median of 25.8 acres per 1,000 residents. PLEASE NOTE: Virginia Beach's total park acres includes 21,769 undeveloped/passive park acres provided by other service providers as well as 50% of the 1,248 acres provided by schools.

Park Acres as a Percentage of Overall Land Mass

When analyzing the total park acres provided to residents as a percentage of overall jurisdictional land mass, Virginia Beach ranks third with 9% and is above the benchmark median of 7%. PLEASE NOTE: Virginia Beach's total park acres includes 21,769 undeveloped/ passive park acres provided by other service providers as well as 50% of the 1,248 acres provided by schools.

COMPARISON OF DEVELOPED PARK ACRES

This section provides an analysis of the developed park acres for each benchmark agency. The table below describes the total park acreage, total developed park acres, number of residents per developed park acre and number of developed park acres per 1,000 residents.

Table 4.8 // Comparison of Developed Park Acreage

Agency	Population	Total Park Acres	Total Developed Acres	Total Residents per Developed Acre	Total Developed Acres per 1,000 Residents
Colorado Springs	478,961	16,173	9,094	52.7	18.99
Kansas City	467,007	12,243	3,623	128.9	7.76
Loudoun County	385,945	3,141	1,982	194.7	5.14
Plano	285,494	3,867	2,036	140.2	7.13
Prince William County	460,472	5,337	1,850	248.9	4.02
Raleigh	467,665	9,764	8,794	53.2	18.80
Virginia Beach	449,645	29,818	5,772	77.9	12.84

Total Developed Park Acreages

In developed acres, the benchmark agencies range from 1,850 acres – 9,094 acres. Virginia Beach ranks third out of the seven benchmark agencies in total developed park acreage with 5,772 acres and is above the benchmark median of 4,736 developed acres. PLEASE NOTE: Virginia Beach's total developed park acres includes 50% of the 1,248 acres provided by schools.

Total Residents per Developed Acre

In total residents per developed acre, the benchmark agencies range from 52.7 residents per acre – 248.9 residents per acre. Virginia Beach ranks third out of the seven benchmark agencies in residents per developed park acre (77.9) and is above the benchmark median of 128.1 residents per developed acre. *PLEASE NOTE: Virginia Beach's total developed park acres includes 50% of the 1,248 acres provided by schools.*

Level of Service – Developed Park Acres

When comparing a population based level of service for developed park acreage, there is a wide range of coverage among the benchmark agencies, from 4.02 to 18.99 acres per 1,000 residents. Virginia Beach's 12.84 acres per 1,000 residents ranks third and is above the benchmark median (10.67 acres per 1,000). PLEASE NOTE: Virginia Beach's total developed park acres includes 50% of the 1,248 acres provided by schools.

COMPARISON OF UNDEVELOPED/PASSIVE PARK ACRES

This section provides an analysis of the undeveloped/passive park acres for each benchmark agency. The table below describes the total park acreage, total undeveloped/passive park acres, and undeveloped/passive park acres as a percentage of each system's total park acreage.

Table 4.9 // Comparison of Undeveloped/Passive Park Acres

Agency	Population	Total Acres	Total Undeveloped/ Passive Park Acres	Undeveloped/Passive Park Acres as a Percentage of Total Acres
Colorado Springs	478,961	16,173	7,079	44%
Kansas City	467,007	12,243	8,620	70%
Loudoun County	385,945	3,141	1,159	37%
Plano	285,494	3,867	1,831	47%
Prince William County	460,472	5,337	4,813	90%
Raleigh	467,665	9,764	970	10%
Virginia Beach	449,645	29,818	24,046	81%

Undeveloped/Passive Park Acreage

When comparing undeveloped/passive park acres, the benchmark agencies range from 970 acres – 24,046 acres. Virginia Beach ranks first out of the seven benchmark agencies in total undeveloped/passive park acreage (23,422) but ranks second in percentage of nature parks acreage (81%). Virginia Beach's #1 ranking aligns with the high priority that the community places on natural areas and open space. The benchmark median for undeveloped/passive park acres as percentage of total park acres is 54%. PLEASE NOTE: Virginia Beach's total undeveloped/passive park acres includes 21,769 acres provided by other service providers.

COMPARISON OF INDOOR FACILITIES

This section provides a general overview of the indoor facilities available to residents as provided by the benchmark agencies. The table below describes the total number of facilities and level of service (total per 75,000 residents for each agency).

PLEASE NOTE: The development of indoor facilities in Virginia Beach is based on a regional planning model that places an emphasis on larger facilities that, in turn, serve a larger geographical area. Some of the benchmark agencies provide a greater quantity of facilities, as noted in the chart below, but many of these facilities are smaller and based on a neighborhood planning model.

Table 4.10 // Comparison of Indoor Facilities

Agency	Population	Planning Model	Indoor Facilities	Total Facilities per 75,000 Residents
Colorado Springs	478,961	Regional	8	1.25
Kansas City	467,007	Regional	10	1.61
Loudoun County	385,945	Neighborhood/Regional	17	3.30
Plano	285,494	Neighborhood/Regional	9	2.36
Prince William County	460,472	Regional	5	0.81
Raleigh	467,665	Neighborhood	28	4.49
Virginia Beach	449,645	Regional	7	1.17

Indoor Facility Inventory

The benchmark agencies range from 5 facilities – 28 facilities. Of the agencies that operate under a regional planning model for indoor facilities, Virginia Beach ranks third out of the four benchmark agencies in total number of facilities (7) but is in-line with the benchmark median of 7 indoor facilities. Given the high priority placed on large facilities, as well as, indoor recreation programs and space by the community, Virginia Beach should consider further investment in indoor recreation centers.

Level of Service – Indoor Facilities

When comparing a population based level of service for indoor facilities, there is a wide range of coverage among the benchmark agencies, from 0.81 to 4.49 facilities per 75,000 residents. Of the agencies that operate under a regional planning model for indoor facilities, Virginia Beach ranks third out of the four benchmark agencies in number of facilities per 75,000 residents (1.17) but is in-line with the benchmark median of 1.25 indoor facilities per 75,000 residents. Given the high priority placed on large facilities, as well as indoor recreation programs and space by the community, Virginia Beach should consider further investment in indoor recreation centers.

FUNDING THE PARK AND RECREATION SYSTEM

This section provides a general overview of the funding appropriated to operate and develop the parks and recreation systems of the benchmark agencies. The table below describes the annual operational per capita and the projected capital improvement budget for the next five years.

Table 4.11 // Comparison of Park and Recreation Funding

Agency	State	Jurisdiction Type	Population	Annual Operational Budget Per Capita Spending	Capital Budget next 5 years (in millions)
Colorado Springs	CO	City	478,961	$92	$40
Kansas City	MO	City	467,007	$127	$57
Loudoun County	VA	County	385,945	$88	$233
Plano	TX	City	285,494	$106	$182
Prince William County	VA	County	460,472	$89	$66
Raleigh	NC	City	467,665	$117	$44
Virginia Beach	VA	City	449,645	$109	$67

Annual Operational Budget per Capita Spending

The annual operational budget per capita spending of the benchmark agencies ranges from $88 per capita to $127 per capita. Virginia Beach ranks fourth out of the seven benchmark agencies in operational budget per capita spending ($109) and is slightly above the benchmark median of $104 per capita. It should be noted that nearly $25 million of the Department's budget is allocated for non parks and recreation costs: debt service, capital projects/CIP, and maintenance of non-park properites including roadways and municipal buildings. With this perspective, Virginia Beach's capital budget for the next five years drops to $42 million, or $93 per capita.

Projected Capital Improvement Budget – Next 5 Years

When comparing the projected capital improvement budget for the next five years, there is a wide range of expected spending among the benchmark agencies, from $40MM to $233MM. Virginia Beach ranks third out of the seven benchmark agencies in projected capital improvement spending for the next five years ($67MM) and is below the benchmark median of $98MM.

4.4 STAKEHOLDER INPUT

One of the key steps in a needs assessment is to gather feedback from interested parties, including park staff, leadership, and community stakeholders. This input provides a baseline of sentiment as well as inside perspective on the diverse offerings and operation of the Parks Department. When this input is compared against participation, usage and demographic statistics, a holistic view emerges showing needs, shortfalls, and priorities related to the parks system.

For this evaluation, stakeholder input consisted of a staff workshop in July 2021, meeting with the Parks Commission, and interviews with key stakeholders in Virginia Beach. The comments received during this process can be organized into four categories: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.

STRENGTHS

- Design standards and consistency
- After School program
- Rec Centers
- Partnership with schools
- Dedicated funds (primarily for Rec Centers)
- History of strong support
- CAPRA accredited (20 years)
- Quantity of park sites and diversity of programs and services
- Leadership and communication
- Professional staff
- Maintenance and aesthetic
- Forecasting trends and addressing needs

WEAKNESSES

- Budget limitations.
- Parks lacking diversity of amenities and many “mainstream” P&R amenities.
- Historical focus on Rec Centers, perhaps to the detriment of parks.
- There is a staffing shortage and a need to recruit more staff.
- Restrictive policies (commercial use, special events, program scheduling, alcohol).
- Keeping up with life cycle improvements of facilities; obsolescence; playground replacement.
- Funding gap between allocation and maintenance requirements.
- Communicating with the public the reasons behind park decisions.
- Un- and Under-developed parks.
- Gaps in service of geographical park access.
- Lack of shade at park sites.

OPPORTUNITIES

- The park system is land rich.
- Integration of stormwater into park projects and potential to tap into alternative funding streams (TMDL, storage, wetland banking).
- Partnerships, including inter-departmental and public-private
- 40 Undeveloped park sites and over 100 under-developed parks.
- Renewed appreciation for parks (due to Covid-19).
- American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funding potential.
- Equitable park access across neighborhoods.
- Less restrictive, more open management policies regarding commercial use, special events, program scheduling, and alcohol, would expand opportunities for service, events, and revenue.
- Achieve higher level of maintenance on park properties.
- Increase public awareness of park system, programs, and events.
- Integrated trail system for walking and multi-use trails, for recreation and active transportation.
- Upgrade older rec centers.

THREATS

- The potential for parkland to be dedicated to stormwater projects.
- Politics.
- Competing funding priorities, especially capital funding/projects.
- Lack of awareness/ understanding.
- Complacency with current LOS and amenities.
- Tourism/ tourists vs local needs.
- Aging infrastructure.
- Future development.

4.5 EXISTING LEVEL OF SERVICE

Parks and recreation per capita Level of Service (LOS) standards help to define the appropriate number of amenities needed to serve the population to ensure demands are met now and in the future. Standards can and will change over time, as population grows, demographics shift, and recreation trends evolve. It is important to periodically reevaluate LOS to determine if the Department's actions have been meeting the standards and if the LOS should be revised to meet changing conditions.

The LOS evaluation measures the current per capita service levels against the recommended LOS levels to see where standards are met and shortfalls may exist. The traditional method to communicate LOS is as a unit of recreation needed per unit of population. For example, one standard of service might be 1 playground per 2,000 people. This section of the report evaluates current service levels for park acreage and amenities against the recommended LOS standard.

Industry best practices have shifted away from national LOS benchmarks to customized standards to meet each locality's context and user needs. The recommended LOS will be used to evaluate current needs and projected future needs based on forecasted population change. Factors used to determine a customized LOS include:

- Virginia Beach Outdoors Plan, 2008 and 2016
- National Recreation and Park Associate (NRPA) guidelines
- National and regional recreation trends
- City demographics and projections
- National benchmarking of peer agencies
- Community and stakeholder input including the 2021 statistically valid survey
- Expectations and practices in Virginia Beach park and service delivery

The LOS standards assessment results should be coupled with conventional wisdom and judgement as well as other methods of service equity evaluation when making recreation planning decisions. The service level analysis reveals gaps and surpluses in parks and amenities, offering valuable insight, but is just one of the factors related to park and facility planning. Surplus assets should always be reviewed through the lens of actual use, equity, and need.

This evaluation considers per capita service levels of Virginia Beach as a whole and in each of the ten Council Districts. Variation is expected between the levels of service in the different districts due to historic development patterns, land ownership, and governmental operations. Understanding the distribution of services through the city creates opportunities for addressing equitable recreation access.

CURRENT LEVEL OF SERVICE FINDINGS

The existing parkland and amenity level of service was calculated based on current inventory lists provided by the Department and compared to the 2021 Virginia Beach population of 449,645 (U.S. Census Bureau, ESRI, 2021). The LOS evaluation also considers needs of the population of Virginia Beach in 2036, estimated to be 475,072 (ESRI, 2021), to identify potential future shortfalls. Some of the future need will be met by the construction of proposed parks and expansion of existing, but the City must also begin planning for additional facilities. The LOS includes the parkland and facilities provided by Parks & Rec, schools with neighborhood park level amenities, and sites provided by other public entities, including the City's shared

use path system, state parks, and federal preserves. Undeveloped and proposed future park sites and facilities were not included in the evaluation, because they are not currently open for recreational use.

Elementary and middle schools with neighborhood park type amenities (e.g. playground, basketball court, tennis court, track) were included in the neighborhood park inventory. This reflects the sites being publicly-funded and serving as resources to the surrounding community. The acreage of school sites and school amenities was factored at a reduced percentage of 50% to account for school hours of operation.

Park Acreage Per Capita LOS

This report evaluates the total park land available, as well as the types of park acreage. The 'Existing Service Levels' section of Tables 4.12 and 4.13 shows the entire city's park acreage service levels per 1,000 people. The current and proposed 2021 service levels are shown, with an evaluation of if the proposed standard is met in 2021 and will be met in 2036, based on current inventory. Park types with significant acreage shortfalls across the city are highlighted yellow. Refer to Appendix F for the service levels of each Council District.

Table 4.12 // Virginia Beach 2021 Existing Level of Service – Park Acreage 2021 Standards

	2021 Inventory[1]				Existing Service Levels						2021 Standards		
TYPE	City Inventory	School Inventory	Other Inventory	Total Inventory	2021 Service Levels (pop. 449,645)			Proposed Standards			Meets Standard/ Shortfall Exists	Shortfall/ Surplus	
Local Park	633.9	623.8		1,257.70	2.80	acres per	1,000	3.00	acres per	1,000	Shortfall	-91	Acre(s)
City Wide Park	1,001.9			1,001.90	2.23	acres per	1,000	5.00	acres per	1,000	Shortfall	-1,246	Acre(s)
Special Use	2,114.2			2,114.20	4.70	acres per	1,000	2.00	acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	1,215	Acre(s)
Natural Areas	2,021.9		21,769.0	23,790.90	84%	of total park acreage		40%	of total park acreage		Meets Standard	12,525	Acre(s)
*Natural Areas[5] (city owned only)	2,021.9			2,021.90	35%	of total city park acreage		40%	of total city park acreage		Shortfall	-287	Acre(s)
Active Parkland Acreage (Local, City-Wide, Special Use)	**3,750.0**	**623.8**	**0.0**	**4,373.8**	**9.73**	**acres per**	**1,000**	**10.00**	**acres per**	**1,000**	Shortfall	**-123**	**Acre(s)**
Total Parkland Acreage	**5,771.9**	**623.8**	**21,769.0**	**28,164.7**	**62.64**	**acres per**	**1,000**	**no standard**			**no standard**		

Table 4.13 // Virginia Beach 2021 Existing Level of Service – Park Acreage 2036 Standards

	2021 Inventory[1]				Existing Service Levels						2036 Standards (est. pop. 475,072)		
TYPE	City Inventory	School Inventory	Other Inventory	Total Inventory	2021 Service Levels (pop. 449,645)			Proposed Standards			Meets Standard/ Shortfall Exists	Shortfall/ Surplus	
Local Park	633.9	623.8		1,257.70	2.80	acres per	1,000	3.00	acres per	1,000	Shortfall	-168	Acre(s)
City Wide Park	1,001.9			1,001.90	2.23	acres per	1,000	5.00	acres per	1,000	Shortfall	-1,373	Acre(s)
Special Use	2,114.2			2,114.20	4.70	acres per	1,000	2.00	acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	1,164	Acre(s)
Natural Areas	2,021.9		21,769.0	23,790.90	84%	of total park acreage		40%	of total park acreage		Meets Standard	12,525	Acre(s)
*Natural Areas[5] (city owned only)	2,021.9			2,021.90	35%	of total city park acreage		40%	of total city park acreage		Shortfall	-287	Acre(s)
Active Parkland Acreage (Local, City-Wide, Special Use)	**3,750.0**	**623.8**	**0.0**	**4,373.8**	**9.73**	**acres per**	**1,000**	**10.00**	**acres per**	**1,000**	Shortfall	**-377**	**Acre(s)**
Total Parkland Acreage	**5,771.9**	**623.8**	**21,769.0**	**28,164.7**	**62.64**	**acres per**	**1,000**	**no standard**			**no standard**		

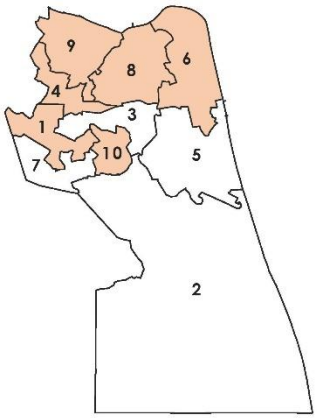
Note: 1. The Level of Service Evaluation considers publicly available open space only. Private clubs, HOA, military facilities, and other non-publicly available land and facilities are not included in this evaluation.

*Note: 5. Stumpy Lake Natural Area is **considered** a "Special Use" park in the current inventory, but functions as a conservation area. For that reason, this 1119.5 acre facility is categorized as a Natural Area in the LOS evaluation.*

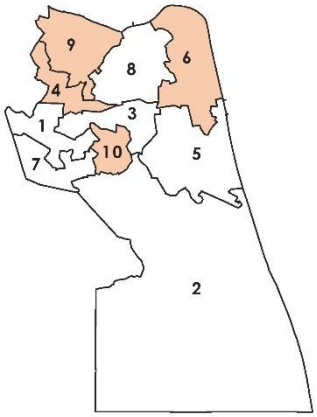
The proposed park acreage LOS bring the department's service goals more in line with national standards, the city's current offerings, and the needs of the citizens.

Figure 4.11 // Council Districts with Park Acreage Shortfalls in 2021

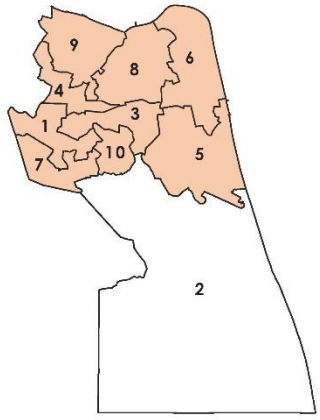
**shaded = shortfall*



Total Park Acreage Shortfalls



Local Park Acreage Shortfalls



City-Wide Park Acreage Shortfalls

Table 4.14 // Current and Proposed Park Acreage LOS

Current Park Designations	Current LOS	Proposed Park Categories	Proposed LOS
Neighborhood Park	2 ac. / 1,000 ppl	Local Park	3 ac. / 1,000 ppl
Town Green	N/A	Local Park	3 ac. / 1,000 ppl
Urban Plaza	N/A	Local Park	3 ac. / 1,000 ppl
School Park	1 ac. / 1,000 ppl	Local Park	3 ac. / 1,000 ppl
Signature Park	3 ac. / 1,000 ppl	City-Wide Park	5 ac. / 1,000 ppl
Metro Park	3 ac. / 1,000 ppl	City-Wide Park	5 ac. / 1,000 ppl
Community Park	3 ac. / 1,000 ppl	City-Wide Park	5 ac. / 1,000 ppl
Special Use	1 ac. / 1,000 ppl	Special-Use Park	2 ac. / 1,000 ppl
Linear Park/Linkage	1 ac. / 1,000 ppl	Special-Use Park	2 ac. / 1,000 ppl
Eco-Garden	N/A	Special-Use Park	2 ac. / 1,000 ppl
Natural Resource Area	1 ac. / 1,000 ppl	Natural Area	N/A
Open Space Preservation Area	1 ac. / 1,000 ppl	Natural Area	N/A
Total	16 ac/ 1,000 ppl		10 ac./ 1,000 ppl

Analysis Highlights

- The current total LOS acreage of active parks (local, City-Wide, and special use) in Virginia Beach is 9.73 acres per 1,000 people. This is slightly below the recommended level of 10 acres per 1,000 people. An additional 123 acres are needed to meet this standard in 2021 and 377 acres by 2036 (average of 31 acres/year necessary to meet recommended acreage by 2036).
- The current total LOS acreage of all parks, city, state, and federal, is 62.64 acres per 1,000 people.
- There is a slight shortfall of Local Park acreage across the city, with an additional 91 acres necessary to achieve the LOS of 3 acres per 1,000 people in 2021. 168 acres will be needed to meet the standards in 2036.
- There is a significant shortfall of City-Wide Park acreage in Virginia Beach, with an additional 1,246 acres needed to reach the standard of 5 acres per 1,000 people in 2021. This shortfall rises to 1,373 acres in 2036.
- Special Use sites contribute significantly to the overall park LOS. Over a third of VBPR developed parkland is a Special-Use site. The existing LOS of 4.70 acres per 1,000 people exceeds the recommended standard of 2 acres per 1,000 people by 1,215 acres. Special-Use sites center around unique features and opportunistic purchases, so it is not recommended that the City divest itself of these parklands.

- 84% of all park land within the city is natural area, exceeding the recommended standard of 40%. State and Federal Land is the primary contributor to the acreage, offering recreational and environmental services to the City. 35% of all city-owned parkland is natural area, falling short of the recommended standard of 40%. Based on current total park acreage, the City should acquire an additional 287 acres of natural area.
- Active park land is unevenly distributed through the City. The recommended level is 10 acres per 1,000 people, and the following districts have less: District 1 (4.64 acres per 1,000 people), District 4 (2.51 acres per 1,000 people), District 6 (5.51 acres per 1,000), District 8 (5.78 acres per 1,000 people), District 9 (3.42 acres per 1,000 people), and District 10 (3.29 acres per 1,000 people).
- Most districts meet or are within 20 acres of the recommended LOS for Local Parks, which is 3 acres per 1,000 people. District 4 has a shortfall of 56 acres (currently 1.7 acres per 1,000 people), District 6 has a shortfall of 60 acres (currently 1.66 acres per 1,000 people), District 9 has a shortfall of 49 acres (currently 1.59 acres per 1,000 people), and District 10 has a shortfall of 47 acres (currently 1.97 acres per 1,000 people).
- Every Council District, except for District 2, has a shortfall of City-Wide type parks. The existing LOS in districts with shortfalls range from 0.68 acres per 1,000 people (District 10) to 3.58 acres per 1,000 people (District 3). The recommended level is 5 acres per 1,000 people.
- The City may be able to address shortfalls in acreage and park type in 2021 and through 2036 by developing and opening to the public un and under-developed park land. Further recommendations will examine where existing sites overlap shortfalls in need.

Park Amenity Per Capita LOS

The City offers a diverse set of amenities to the public through the City park system, school facilities, and other public entities. The inventory includes park-type amenities, like playgrounds and hard courts, at elementary and middle schools. Use of school facilities by the public is restricted by school hours so only half of the total amenities were counted.

The park amenities service levels of the city overall are shown in Tables 4.15 and 4.16. Refer to Appendix F for the service levels of each Council District. Recommended levels of service for amenities are based on public need, benchmark park and recreation departments, City goals, and market and demographic trends. The evaluation notes where standards are met and shortfalls exist in 2021 and for the projected population in 2036, with significant City-Wide shortfalls highlighted yellow. Any comparison between districts of shortfalls should focus on local-level amenities, like local parks, trails, playgrounds, or picnic shelters.

Analysis Highlights

- There is variation of service levels between the Council Districts, one factor of which is the location of state and federally owned recreation amenities.
- School amenities provide an equalizing force for the service levels of standard park amenity types (e.g. playgrounds, basketball courts, ball diamonds, sports fields) across districts.
- The amenities currently offered by the City with the highest degree of shortfalls City-Wide in 2021 are paved trails, soft-surface trails, playgrounds, large picnic shelters, and basketball courts.
- The City will need to add amenities to the park system to meet 2036 standards for most outdoor park amenities, except golf courses and event stages
- This report recommends adding several new amenity types to Virginia Beach's park offerings, including splash pads, cricket fields, archery ranges, community gardens, nature centers, and outdoor pools.

Table 4.15 // Virginia Beach 2021 Existing Level of Service – Parks

	2021 Inventory[1]				Existing Service Levels						2021 Standards			2036 Standards (est. pop. 475,072)		
TYPE	City Inventory	School Inventory	Other Inventory	Total Inventory	2021 Service Levels (pop. 449,645)			Proposed Standards			Meets Standard/ Shortfall Exists	Shortfall/ Surplus		Meets Standard/ Shortfall Exists	Shortfall/ Surplus	
Local Park	633.9	623.8		1,257.70	2.80	acres per	1,000	3.00	acres per	1,000	Shortfall	-91	Acre(s)	Shortfall	-168	Acre(s)
City Wide Park	1,001.9			1,001.90	2.23	acres per	1,000	5.00	acres per	1,000	Shortfall	-1,246	Acre(s)	Shortfall	-1,373	Acre(s)
Special Use	2,114.2			2,114.20	4.70	acres per	1,000	2.00	acres per	1,000	Meets Standard	1,215	Acre(s)	Meets Standard	1,164	Acre(s)
Natural Areas	2,021.9		21,769.0	23,790.90	84%	of total park acreage		40%	of total park acreage		Meets Standard	12,525	Acre(s)	Meets Standard	12,525	Acre(s)
*Natural Areas[5] (city owned only)	2,021.9			2,021.90	35%	of total city park acreage		40%	of total city park acreage		Shortfall	-287	Acre(s)	Shortfall	-287	Acre(s)
Active Parkland Acreage (Local, City-Wide, Special Use)	**3,750.0**	**623.8**	**0.0**	**4,373.8**	**9.73**	**acres per**	**1,000**	**10.00**	**acres per**	**1,000**	Shortfall	**-123**	**Acre(s)**	Shortfall	**-377**	**Acre(s)**
Total Parkland Acreage	**5,771.9**	**623.8**	**21,769.0**	**28,164.7**	**62.64**	**acres per**	**1,000**	**no standard**			**no standard**			**no standard**		

Table 4.16 // Virginia Beach 2021 Existing Level of Service – Amenities

	2021 Inventory[1]				Existing Service Levels						2021 Standards			2036 Standards (est. pop. 475,072)		
TYPE	City Inventory	School Inventory	Other Inventory	Total Inventory	2021 Service Levels (pop. 449,645)			Proposed Standards			Meets Standard/ Shortfall Exists	Shortfall/ Surplus		Meets Standard/ Shortfall Exists	Shortfall/ Surplus	
Basketball	64	37.5		101.5	1	site per	4,430	1	site per	4,000	Shortfall	-11	Sites	Shortfall	-17	Sites
Basketball (half court)		3		3	1	site per	149,882	1	site per	150,000	Meets Standard	0	Sites	Meets Standard	0	Sites
Boat Ramp	5		2	7	1	site per	64,235	1	site per	40,000	Shortfall	-4	Sites	Shortfall	-5	Sites
Canoe/Kayak Launch	13		3	16	1	site per	28,103	1	site per	20,000	Shortfall	-6	Sites	Shortfall	-8	Sites
Diamond Field	79	48		127	1	site per	3,541	1	site per	3,500	Shortfall	-1	Sites	Shortfall	-9	Sites
Dog Park	5			5	1	site per	89,929	1	site per	50,000	Shortfall	-4	Sites	Shortfall	-5	Sites
Field Hockey	2			2	1	site per	224,823	1	site per	225,000	Meets Standard	0	Sites	Meets Standard	0	Sites
Fishing Piers	4		2	6	1	site per	74,941	1	site per	40,000	Shortfall	-5	Sites	Shortfall	-6	Sites
Golf Course[2]	5			5	1	site per	89,929	1	site per	150,000	Meets Standard	2	Sites	Meets Standard	2	Sites
Outdoor Fitness	3			3	1	site per	149,882	1	site per	100,000	Shortfall	-1	Sites	Shortfall	-2	Sites
Outdoor Stage	4			4	1	site per	112,411	1	site per	120,000	Meets Standard	0	Sites	Meets Standard	0	Sites
Paved Trails (miles)	20.8		81.6	102.4	1	mile per	4,391	1	mile per	3,000	Shortfall	-47	Miles	Shortfall	-56	Miles
Pickleball [3]	6	0.5		6.5	1	site per	69,176	1	site per	15,000	Shortfall	-23	Sites	Shortfall	-25	Sites

Table 4.16 // Virginia Beach 2021 Existing Level of Service – Amenities (continued)

	2021 Inventory[1]				Existing Service Levels						2021 Standards			2036 Standards (est. pop. 475,072)		
TYPE	City Inventory	School Inventory	Other Inventory	Total Inventory	2021 Service Levels (pop. 449,645)			Proposed Standards			Meets Standard/ Shortfall Exists	Shortfall/ Surplus		Meets Standard/ Shortfall Exists	Shortfall/ Surplus	
Playground	173	33.5	1	207.5	1	site per	2,167	1	site per	2,000	Shortfall	-17	Sites	Shortfall	-30	Sites
Pump Track	1			1	1	site per	449,645	1	site per	150,000	Shortfall	-2	Sites	Shortfall	-2	Sites
Rectangular Field	12	13		25	1	site per	17,986	1	site per	12,000	Shortfall	-12	Sites	Shortfall	-15	Sites
Shelters (large)	37		1	38	1	site per	11,833	1	site per	9,000	Shortfall	-12	Sites	Shortfall	-15	Sites
Shelters (small)	197		1	198	1	site per	2,271	1	site per	2,250	Shortfall	-2	Sites	Shortfall	-13	Sites
Skate Park	3			3	1	site per	149,882	1	site per	100,000	Shortfall	-1	Sites	Shortfall	-2	Sites
Skate Spot	1			1	1	site per	449,645	1	site per	50,000	Shortfall	-8	Sites	Shortfall	-9	Sites
Soccer[4]	1			1	1	site per	449,645	1	site per	18,000	Shortfall	-24	Sites	Shortfall	-25	Sites
Soft Trails (miles)	10		27	37	1	mile per	12,153	1	mile per	6,000	Shortfall	-38	Miles	Shortfall	-42	Miles
Tennis	43	14		57	1	site per	7,889	1	site per	8,000	Meets Standard	1	Sites	Shortfall	-2	Sites
Tennis/Pickleball dual striping	12	0.5		12.5	1	site per	35,972	1	site per	36,000	Meets Standard	0	Sites	Shortfall	-1	Sites
Volleyball	6			6	1	site per	74,941	1	site per	75,000	Meets Standard	0	Sites	Meets Standard	0	Sites
Nature Center				0	1	site per	0	1	site per	250,000	Shortfall	-2	Sites	Shortfall	-2	Sites
Cricket Field				0	1	site per	0	1	site per	500,000	Shortfall	-1	Sites	Shortfall	-1	Sites
Archery Range				0	1	site per	0	1	site per	200,000	Shortfall	-2	Sites	Shortfall	-2	Sites
Community Gardens				0	1	site per	0	1	site per	100,000	Shortfall	-4	Sites	Shortfall	-5	Sites
Outdoor Pools				0	1	site per	0	1	site per	200,000	Shortfall	-2	Sites	Shortfall	-2	Sites
Splash Playground				0	1	site per	0	1	site per	50,000	Shortfall	-9	Sites	Shortfall	-10	Sites

Notes:

1. The Level of Service Evaluation considers publicly available open space only. Private clubs, HOA, military facilities, and other non-publicly available land and facilities are not included in this evaluation.
2. Bow Creek Golf Course will be converted to a stormwater storage facility with a variety of recreational amenities. Referendum funding for the approved project was passed in Nov. 2021.
3. The Owl Creek Tennis Center (25 pickleball courts) is operated by an outside vendor and court play fees are required. As such, these courts are not included in the LOS evaluation
4. The Hampton Road Soccer Complex (24 soccer fields) is operated by an outside vendor and field use fees are required. As such, these fields are not included in the LOS evaluation.
5. Stumpy Lake Natural Area is considered a "Special Use" park in the current inventory, but functions as a conservation area. For that reason, this 1119.5 acre facility is categorized as a Nature Area in the LOS evaluation.

Significant shortfalls are highlighted.

Note: A fraction of a shortfall on this table <-0.5 is not counted as a shortfall and will appear as Meets Standard. A district may have zero of amenity type but still appear Meeting Standard due to a fraction of a shortfall.

Current Park Access Level of Service

Another method to evaluate park service levels is to map service radii to identify "gaps" or inequities in access to particular park types. A service area radius is the maximum distance that a person can be expected to travel to reach a park and is indicated in miles. Larger parks with more amenities tend to attract people from farther distances and therefore have a distance. Below is a listing of service distance used for this plan:

- Local parks: ½ mile distance, 10-minute walk
- City-Wide parks:, 10-minute drive

Special-Use parks and Natural Areas are unique place-based or destination facilities and do not have a service radius associated with them.

All elementary and middle schools are included in the local park facility mapping. They offer neighborhood park style amenities like playground, basketball courts, tennis courts, and open play areas. Please note, access to school sites is restricted based on school operating schedules, weekly and seasonally.

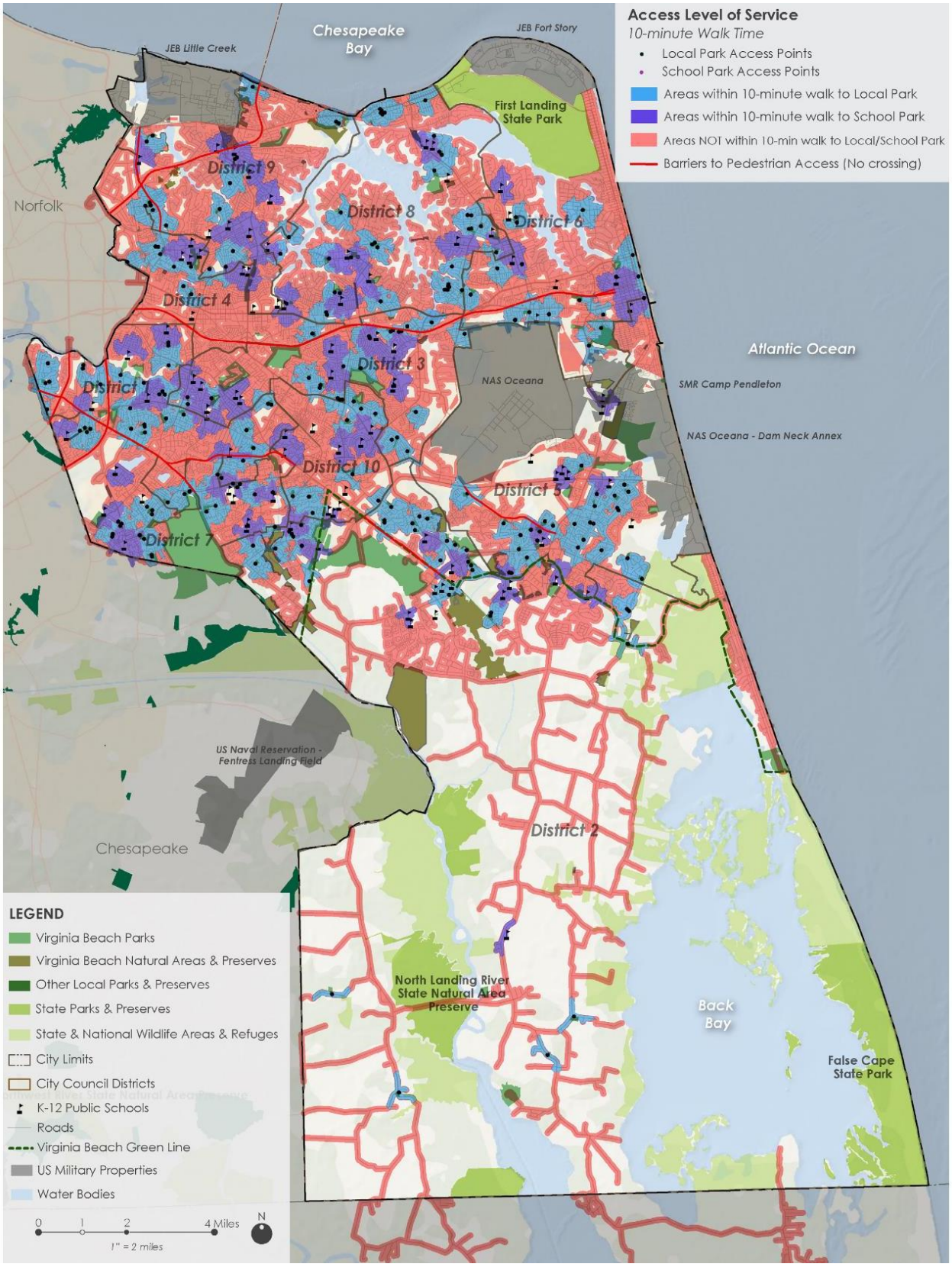
Later sections of the report evaluate the walk and drive time service areas of the park, which refines the understanding of recreational access.

Refer to the maps on the following pages for the park service areas overlayed on population density maps. Population density was mapped using data from the 2019 American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau).

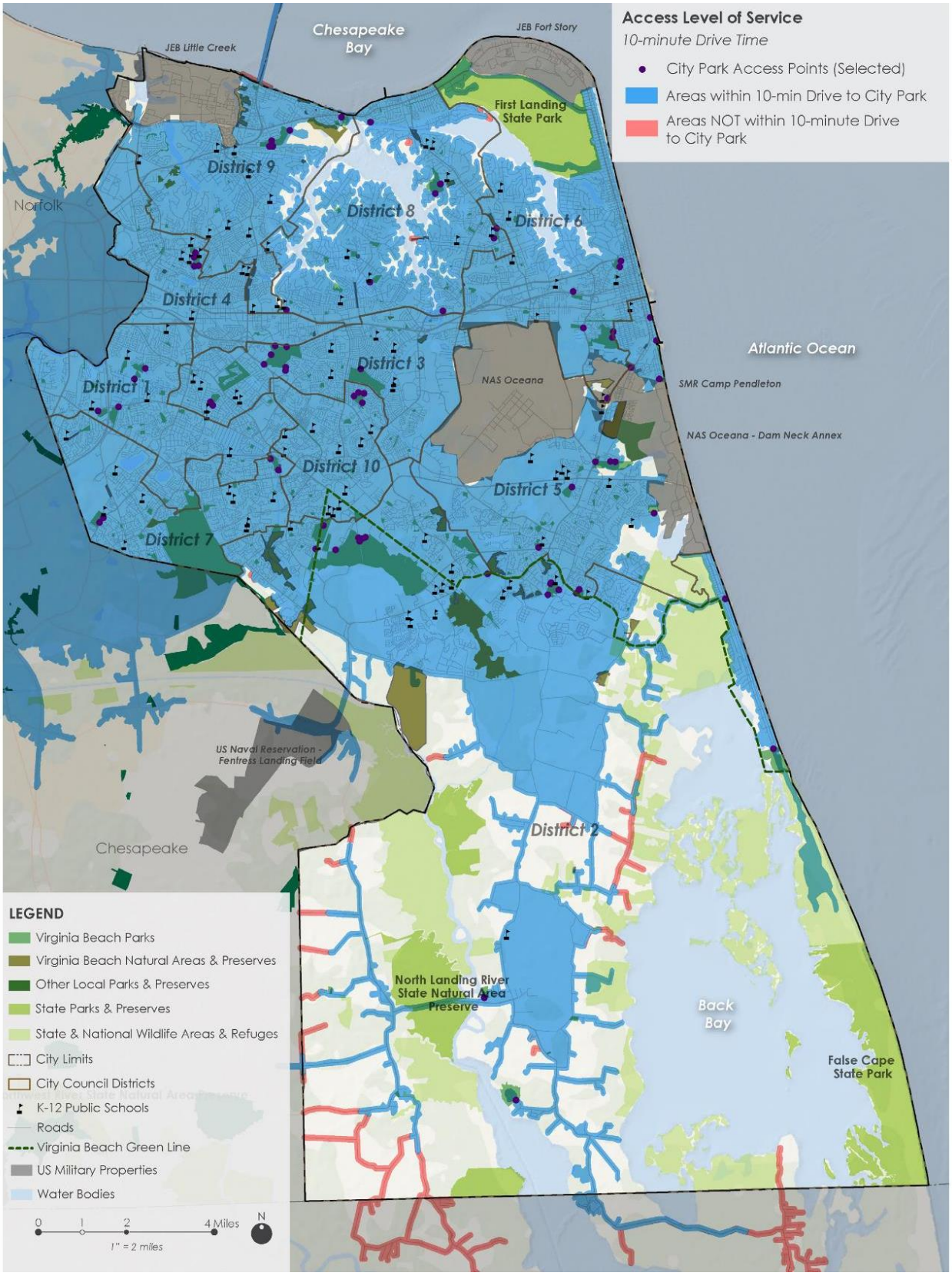
Analysis Highlights

- Local parks, including school parks, offer significant level of service (LOS) coverage to Virginia Beach north of the Green Line, which is the most densely populated portion of the City.
- Gaps in Local park LOS coverage occur in pockets, rather than broad regions.
- Some densely populated areas of Virginia Beach are outside of the Local park ½-mile LOS radius, including the Virginia Beach Blvd. corridor between Newtown Road and Independence Boulevard, the Rt. 58 Laskin Road corridor between North Great Neck Road and North Birdneck Road, the Independence Road corridor between Holland Road and Salem Road, and the Regent University area.
- Some areas that appear to have gaps in LOS are neighborhoods served by private facilities, like the Cypress Point County Club community and Kempsville Lake community. Consideration of the context beyond what is shown in the service mapping should be a factor when making park investment decisions.
- City-Wide parks provide even coverage for most of Virginia Beach north of the Green Line, which is the mostly densely populated area. The Green Line is an urban-growth boundary, to concentrate development to the north part of the city and protect its agricultural land to the south.
- There is limited LOS of City-Wide parks south of the Green Line.

Map 4.1 // Park Access Level of Service Mapping – Local Parks 10-min Walk



Map 4.2 // Park Access Level of Service Mapping – City-Wide Parks, 10-min Drive



10-Minute Walk Initiative

The 2008 Virginia Beach Outdoors Plan established a goal to provide every resident with park space within a 10-minute walk, which is approximately half a mile. This goal is shared by large park systems throughout the nation and is tracked annually as a benchmark measure by the Trust for Public Land (TPL), a U.S. nonprofit organization that facilitates and funds the creation of parks and protected lands for people. In 2016 the national median score for the percentage of residents that have park space within a 10-minute walk was 67.7% while Virginia Beach's score was 58% (The Trust for Public Land, 2021). In the following 4 years, the City increased the percentage of access to 62% in 2020. This calculation includes parks, public beaches, and schools, the standards measurements for TPL. Virginia Beach considers paved trails as recreational features, and with this amenity included, the 2020 percentage of access in Virginia Beach increases to 67%.

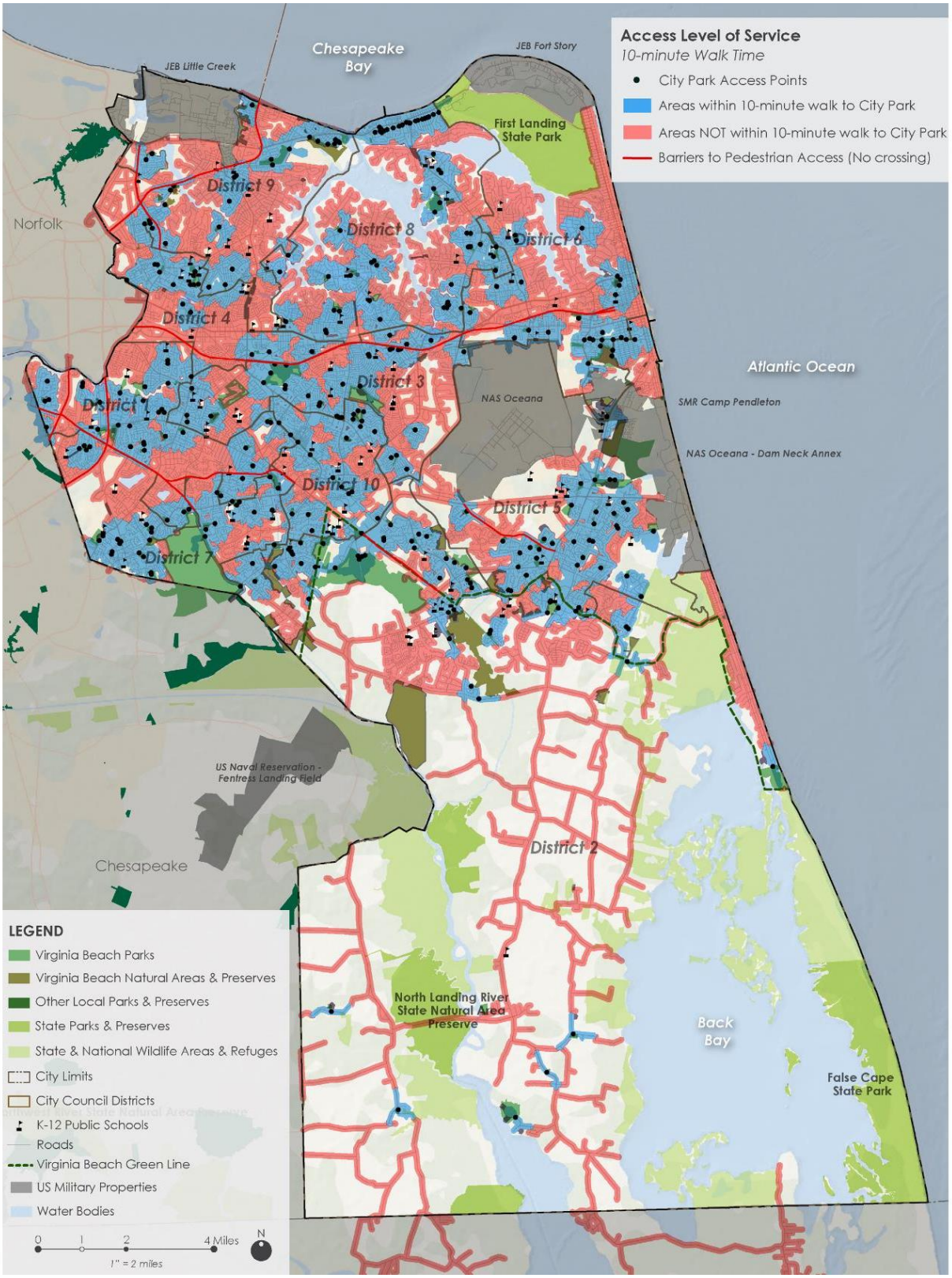
The following series of maps shows the 10-minute walkability coverage based on a series of recreational opportunities including city parks, school parks, water access points, and shared use paths. The inventory is based on publicly available information and the walk time is based on a nationwide walkable road network dataset provided by Esri, a geographical information system (GIS) geospatial analytics source. The analysis identifies physical barriers such as highways, train tracks, and rivers without bridges, and chooses routes without barriers. Full-size maps are included in the Appendix G.

Analysis Highlights

- The inclusion of schools, beaches, water access, and trails significantly increases the walkability access to recreational features within the City. Multi-use trails provide recreational access to an additional 5% of the population that would otherwise not have any access.
- The most densely populated portion of the City, which correlates with above the Green Line, has significant availability of parks within a 10-minute walk. The rural southern half of the City is extremely limited in walkability. This is consistent with the rural character, limited to non-existent pedestrian infrastructure, and dispersed population patterns.
- Many of the areas with parkland deficits are neighborhoods originally constructed without integrated park systems. Providing recreational trail connections could be an opportunity to retrofit park space into built up areas and link residents to additional park spaces.
- More support for this section can be found within the Active Transportation Plan Chapter 4 Implementation Performance Measures, pages 71 & 72.

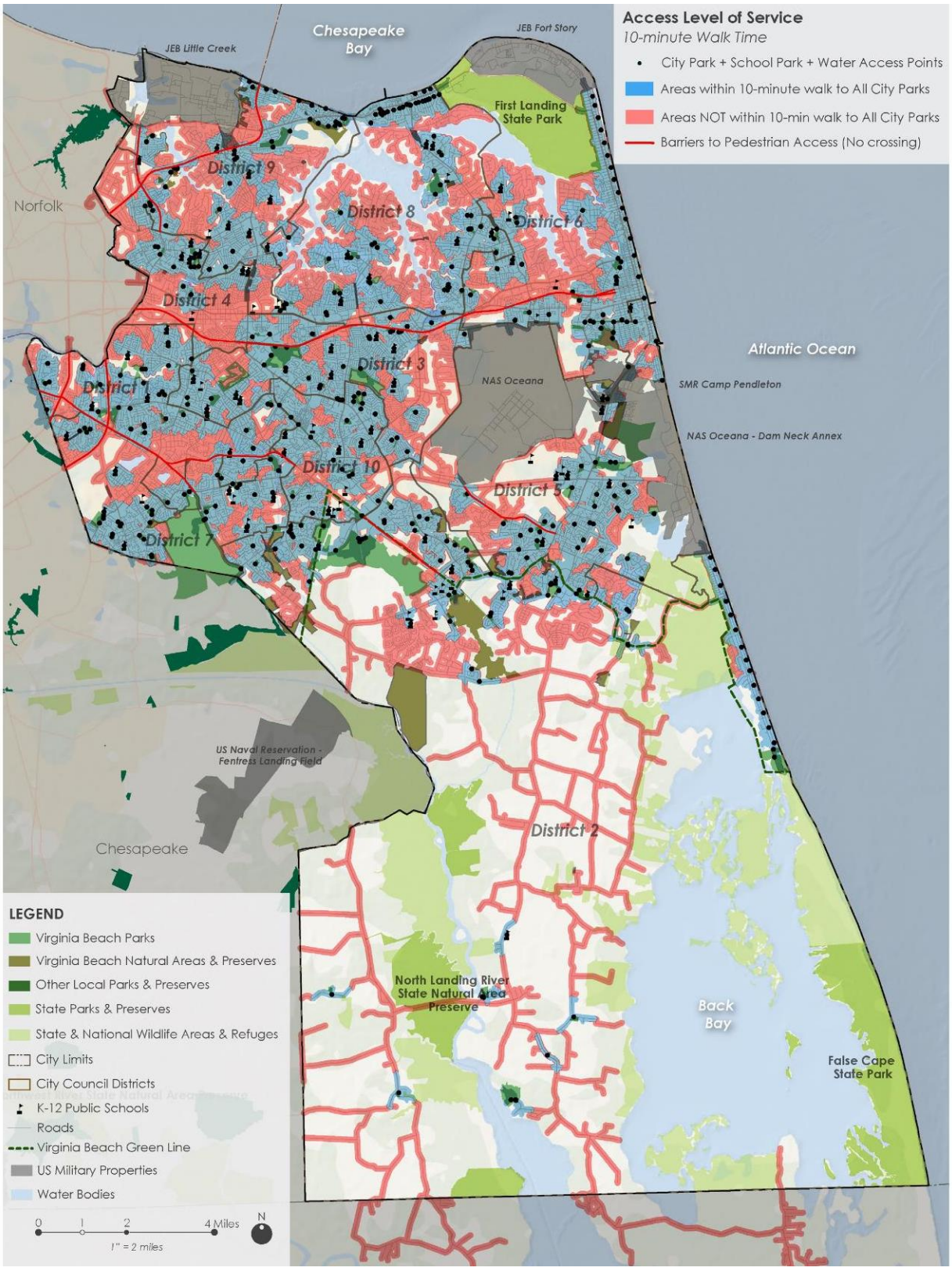
Map 4.3 // Park Access Mapping – 10-Minute Walk Time Assessment

(City Park and School Parks)



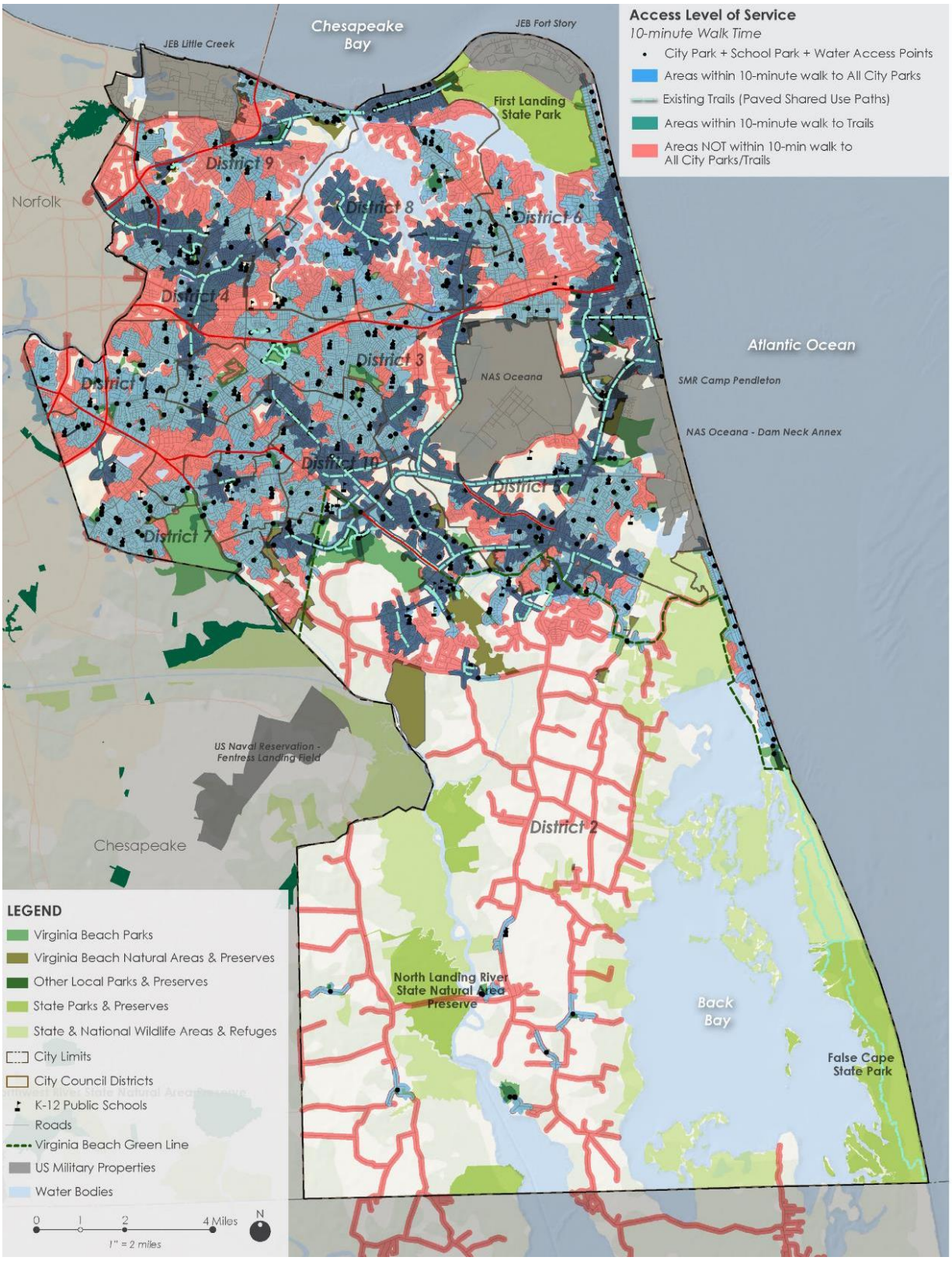
Map 4.4 // Park Access Mapping – 10-Minute Walk Time Assessment

(City Parks, School Parks, and Water Access Points)



Map 4.5 // Park Access Mapping – 10-Minute Walk Time Assessment

(City Parks, School Parks, Water Access Points, and Shared Use Paths)



4.6 EQUITY-BASED PARK SERVICE METRICS

The role that parks can play in improving communities and the benefits to individuals who use parks is well documented[1,2]. Understanding how parks impact social equity *across a city* is a complex question however, yielding no easy answers. It involves analyzing a wide range of factors at a variety of scales, including the social and physical conditions of communities, the physical conditions and locations of parks, and the amount of funding for parks, among many other metrics. Often, knowledge of the historical legacy of racial and/or class-based discrimination and segregation is important for recognizing why current conditions exist.

The following analyses compile a diverse set of data sources that provide a portrait of the social equity implications of parks within Virginia Beach.

ACCESS EQUITY

Where parks are located and the park size both have crucial implications for how they impact the surrounding community. Access Equity addresses the ability of citizens to reach and use park and recreation facilities and services.

10-Minute Walk or Drive to a Recreational Facility

One of the standards that the Department has set is that 80% of residents live within a 10-minute drive or a 10-minute walk (1/2 mile) of a park or other recreational facility. There are many other dimensions of access equity, which are more fully explored in a future section of this report.

Results

Geographical analysis has shown that 98% of Virginia Beach citizens are within a 10-minute drive and 67% are within a 10 minute walk of a park or similar facility. Refer to the maps in Appendix G. Tables 4.17 and 4.18 on the following page show the percentage of residents in each district that are within a 10-minute walk or drive to recreational features like a city park, school park, beach or water access, or multi-use trail.

District 10 is the only district to meet the walkability goal of at least 80% of residents being within a 10-minute walk of a park. District 2 has the lowest walkability percentage, with 51%. This is a rural district which explains the low level. The other districts range from 56% (District 9) to 77% (District 8). There is room for improvement to meet the walkability goals in almost every district.

Access Equity – Achievement Metric

Goal: 80% of residents within 10-min. drive and 10-min. walk to recreational facility.

Achievement:

97% of residents within 10-min. drive, to a recreational facility.

67% of residents within a 10-min walk of a recreational facility

1 http://www.eastshorepark.org/benefits_of_parks%20tpl.pdf
2 https://cityparksalliance.org/about-us/why-city-parks-matter/

Table 4.17 // Virginia Beach Residents within a 10 Minute Drive to a Park (City Parks, School Parks)

	Total City Pop (ESRI, 2020 Census)	Pop Served (ESRI, 2020 Census)	% Served	% Served Goal	Difference
City of VB	**459,470**	**450,767**	**98%**	**80%**	**18%**
District 1	46,516	46,516	100%	80%	20%
District 2	45,624	40,536	89%	80%	9%
District 3	46,379	46,379	100%	80%	20%
District 4	45,493	45,493	100%	80%	20%
District 5	45,062	43,229	96%	80%	16%
District 6	45,604	44,837	98%	80%	18%
District 7	46,840	46,840	100%	80%	20%
District 8	45,712	44,697	98%	80%	18%
District 9	46,419	46,419	100%	80%	20%
District 10	45,821	45,821	100%	80%	20%

Table 4.18 // Virginia Beach Residents within a 10 Minute Walk to a Park (City Parks, School Parks, Water Access Points, Shared Use Paths)

	Total City Pop (ESRI, 2020 Census)	Pop Served (ESRI, 2020 Census)	% Served	% Served Goal	Difference
City of VB	**459,470**	**309,532**	**67%**	**80%**	**-13%**
District 1	46,516	30,986	67%	80%	-13%
District 2	45,624	23,457	51%	80%	-29%
District 3	46,379	34,164	74%	80%	-6%
District 4	45,493	31,430	69%	80%	-11%
District 5	45,062	28,961	64%	80%	-16%
District 6	45,604	30,107	66%	80%	-14%
District 7	46,840	31,326	67%	80%	-13%
District 8	45,712	35,184	77%	80%	-3%
District 9	46,419	25,951	56%	80%	-24%
District 10	45,821	37,966	83%	80%	3%

Park Acreage

Park acreage provides another lens in understanding the ability of citizens to access recreational opportunities. The population-based Level of Service assessment examines the quantity and type of park acreage available in the City through each District and sets standards for service. The following park acreage assessment examines that data geographically. Only City-owned park land was included in the following assessments. Full sized maps can be found in Appendix G.

Total Park Acreage per Council District

The total park acreage per Council District provides a baseline for understanding where parkland is located throughout the city. Although total park acreage in a certain area can be skewed by the presence of outliers (i.e. extremely large parks), it is still a valuable metric for determining how parkland is allocated across Virginia Beach, particularly because all Council Districts have a similar population. As seen in the list below, park acreage ranges widely between Council Districts.

Map 4.6 shows the total park acreage within each Council District, as does Table 4.19 below. The general range for total acreage is 734 acres (District 5) to 52 acres (District 4). Districts 7 and 2 are outliers, both including large natural areas, golf courses, and/or athletic complexes , which affects the final results.

Average Park Size per Council District

The average park size per Council District provides another way for understanding how parkland is allocated across the city. Average park size has implications for the type of park (local park vs. City-Wide park, etc.) that is likely to be represented and the accompanying range of facilities/amenities that could be located in the average park.

Map 4.7 shows the average park size in each District, as does Table 4.20 below. The general range for park sizes is 19.9 acres (District 5) to 3. 7 acres (District 4). Districts 7 and 2 are outliers, both including very large contiguous conservation or natural areas, which affects the final results.

Table 4.19 // Total Park Acreage per Council District (ranked highest to lowest)

District	Total Park Acres
2	3,349
7	1,211
5	734
3	469
9	348
6	253
8	228
1	176
10	86
4	52

Table 4.20 // Average Park Size per Council District (ranked highest to lowest)

District	Average Park Size
7	55.1 acres
2	46.5 acres
5	19.9 acres
3	18.8 acres
9	16.6 acres
6	10.1 acres
8	6.3 acres
1	6.1 acres
10	6.1 acres
4	3.7 acres

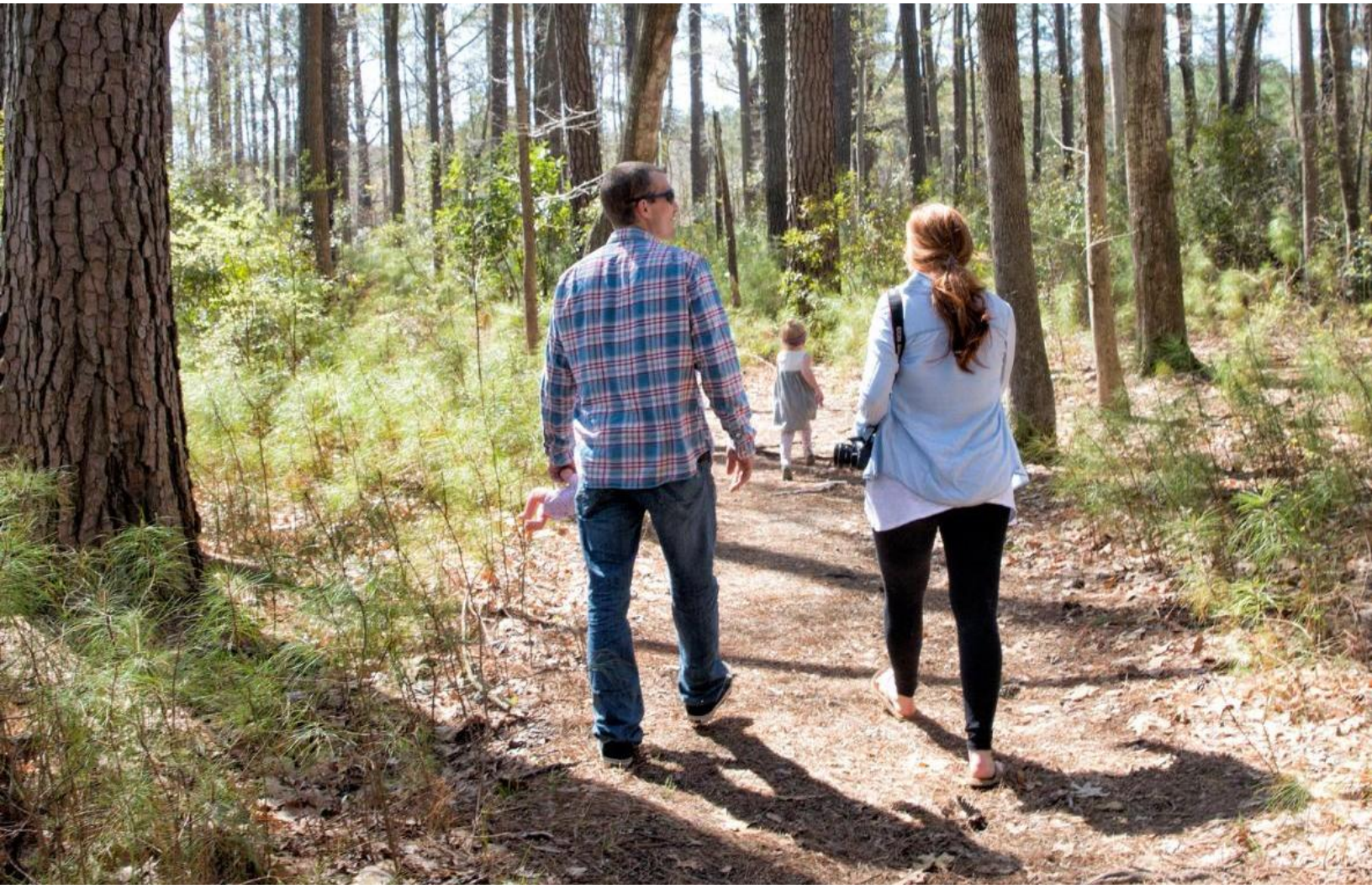
Table 4.21 // Amount of Parkland as % of Council District Land (ranked highest to lowest)

District	% Parkland of Total Land
7	20.49%
3	6.63%
2	6.13%
5	4.53%
9	3.83%
1	2.75%
8	2.54%
6	2.49%
10	2.11%
4	1.04%

Parkland as Percentage of Council District Land

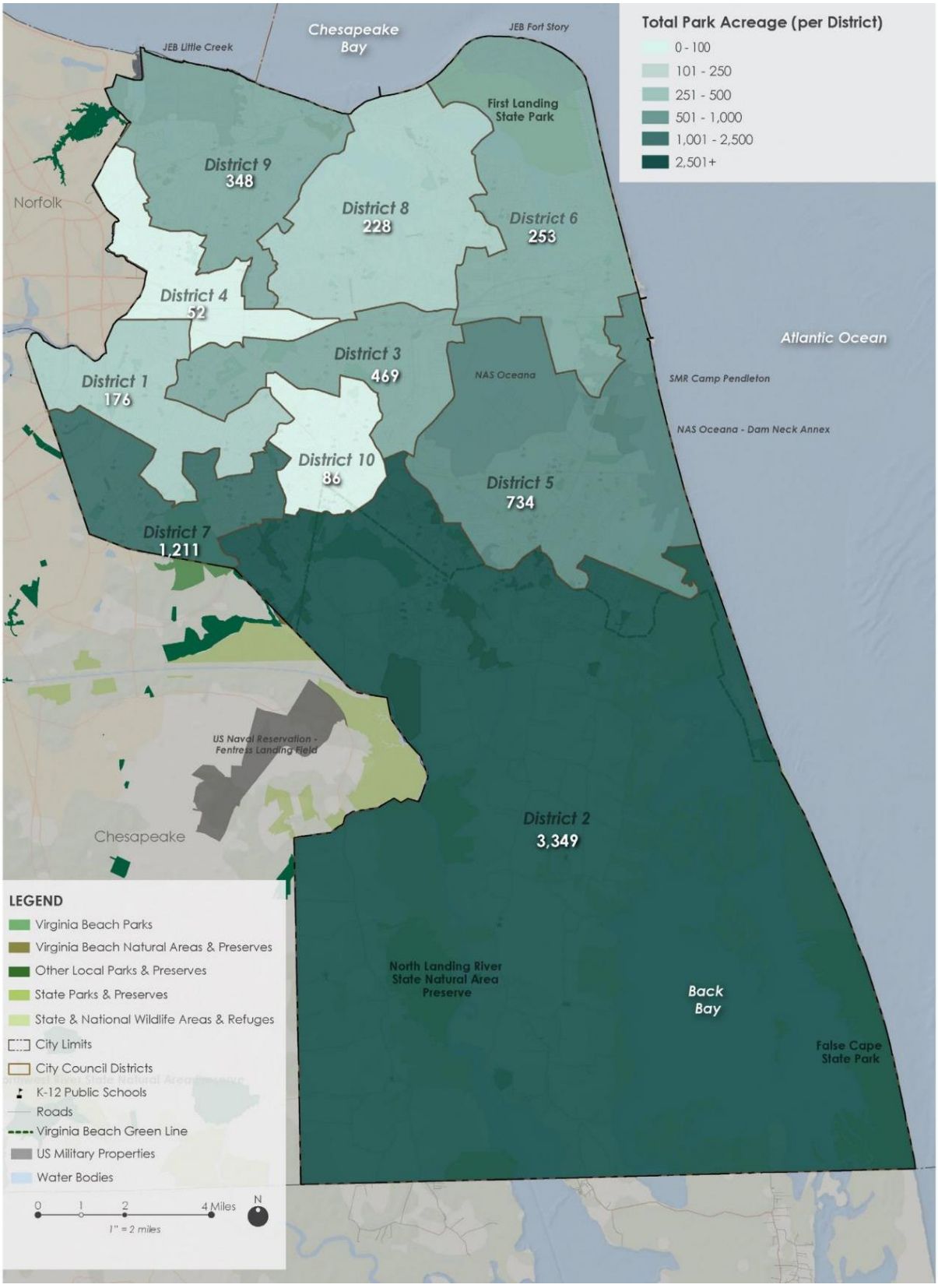
The percentage of land within each Council District that is parkland is a salient indicator of how well parks are serving a community, particularly because Council Districts vary in size, which affects population density. This calculation includes all City parks only, and does not include schools, and public park land by other entities (including state parks, conservation areas, etc). This calculation also excludes all bodies of water. Eliminating these ownership and surface types helps to evaluate the dedicated investment in park and recreation in each district.

Map 4.8 shows the percentage of each Council District, as does Table 4.21 on the previous page. The general range for percentage is 6.63% (District 3) to 1.04% (District 4). District 7 is an outlier, with 20.49% of the total land area being parkland. Of note, the Stumpy Lake Natural Area within District 7 significantly affects that District's results.

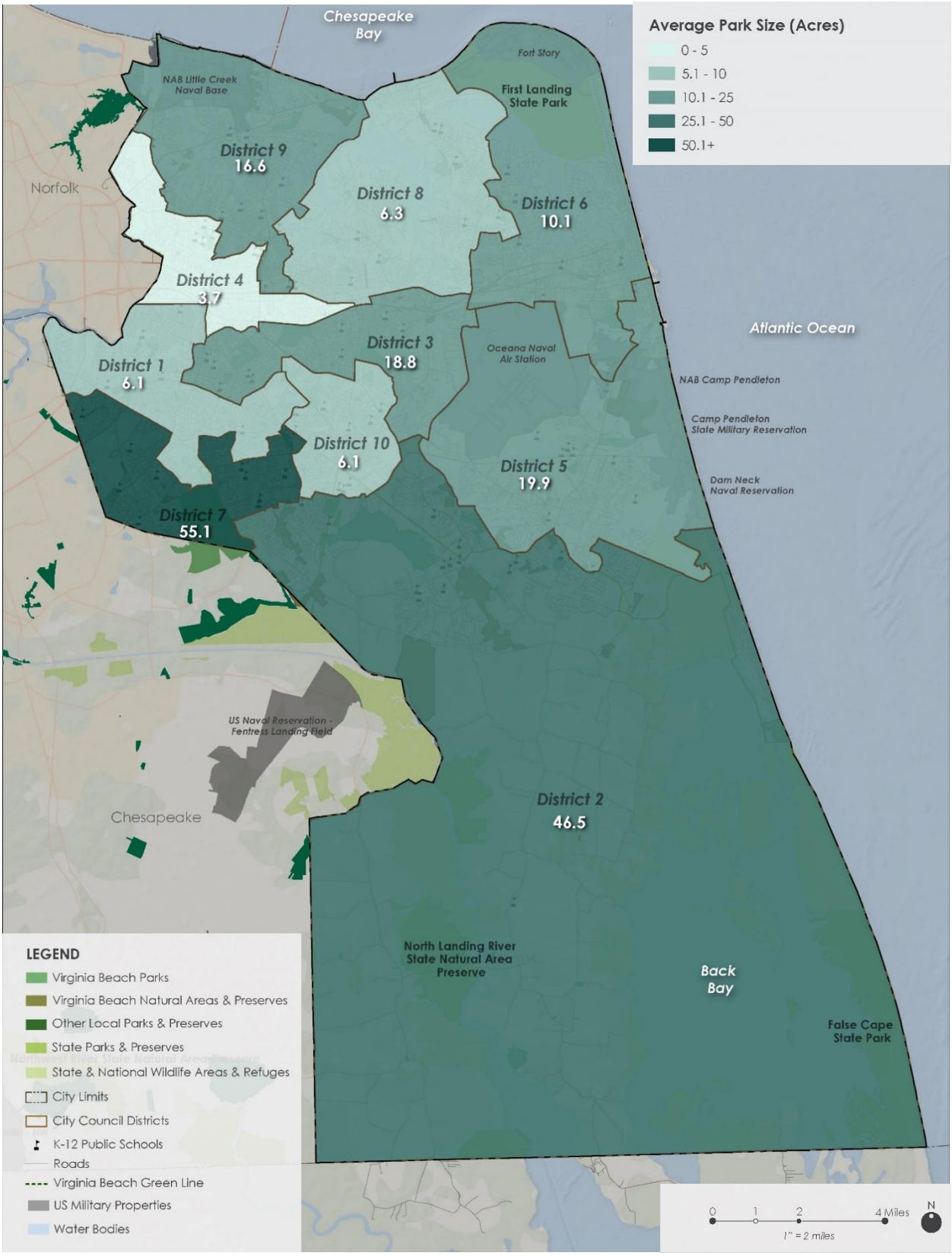


Visitors hiking Marshview Park.

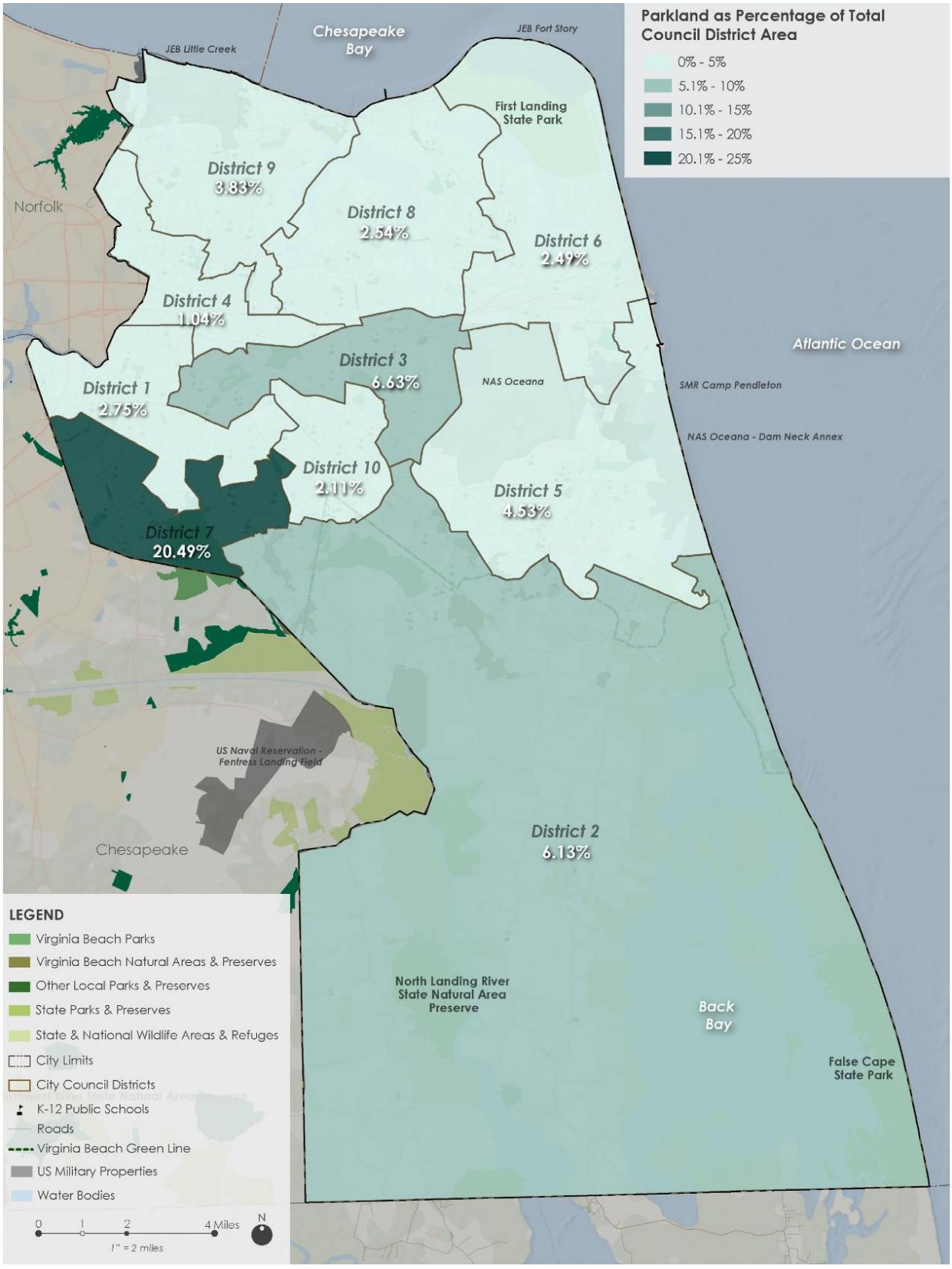
Map 4.6 // Total Park Acreage per Council District



Map 4.7 // Average Park Size per Council District



Map 4.8 // Parkland as a Percentage of Total Land Acreage, per Council District



QUALITY EQUITY

Quality Equity addresses the quality of recreational opportunities available to the public, including upkeep and maintenance, attractiveness, and safety. One of the methods of evaluation for equity in service is to examine the site conditions assessment scores. Map 4.9 displays grades for a sample of parks in each Council District, as tabulated by the consultant team. A full size copy of the map can be found in Appendix G and detailed assessments of each site are in Appendix C. Additionally, an aggregated score for each Council District is displayed, based on the average (mean) of the parks scored in each district. The scores can also be seen in Table 4.22 below.

Results

The Department has set a standard that 90% of parks should score 80% or higher on the conditions assessment evaluation. A sampling of 40 park sites were evaluated using equity-based criteria, and 25 sites, or 62.5%, scored 80% or higher for their quality. The average condition score for parks in six Council Districts was 80% or higher, meeting the standard. The average condition score for the other four Council Districts are within the 70%-79.9% range, indicating that parks in those districts are generally in good condition, with maybe a few sites needing additional improvements.



Little Island Park Playground

Quality Equity – Achievement Metric

Goal: 90% or more of the parks score 80% or higher on conditions assessment evaluations.

Achievement:

63% of parks scored 80% or higher* on conditions assessment evaluations.

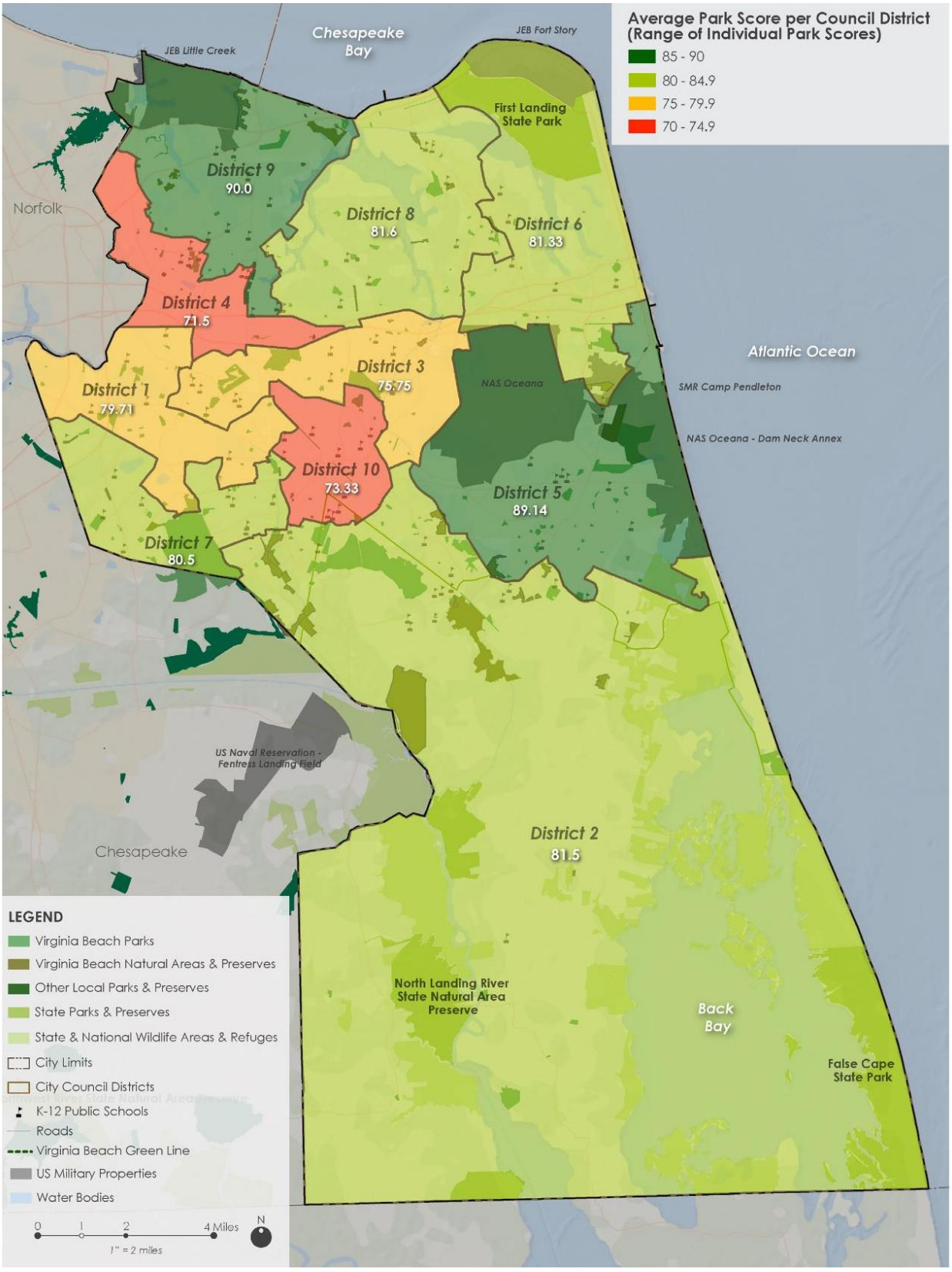
**based on a 2022 sampling assessment of 40 parks located across the City.*

Table 4.22 // Average Park Condition Score per Council District,

(ranked highest to lowest)

District	Averaged Site Condition Score	Goal Score
9	90.0%	80.0%
5	89.1%	80.0%
8	81.6%	80.0%
2	81.5%	80.0%
6	81.3%	80.0%
7	80.5%	80.0%
1	79.7%	80.0%
3	75.6%	80.0%
10	73.3%	80.0%
4	71.5%	80.0%

Map 4.9 // Average Park Condition Score, per Council District



ECONOMIC EQUITY

Mapping how money is allocated in the park system is critical to identifying gaps and inequitable spending across certain parks and areas. Economic Equity addresses the affordability of parks and programming and the investment into parks and programming. One of the methods for evaluating economic equity is to examine the geographic distribution of capital investment spending.

Map 4.10 shows the total capital expenditures, averaged per capita, in each one of the Council Districts. A full size copy of the map can be found in Appendix G. This data is based on the totaled capital expenditures from 2010 to 2021 per park in each district, divided by the population (2020) in that district.

Results

The Department has set the standard that capital investment should be distributed evenly on a per-capita basis. Per capita spending in every district should be within +/-5% of the median per capita spending City-Wide. Parks spanning across multiple Districts were assigned to the District of their geographic center.

Economic Equity – Achievement Metric

Goal: Per-capita capital spending in **each** district should be **within +/-5%** of the median per-capita spending City-Wide.

Achievement:

2 of 10 Districts are within +/-5% of the median per-capita capital spending*.

**based on capital expenditures from 2010-2021.*

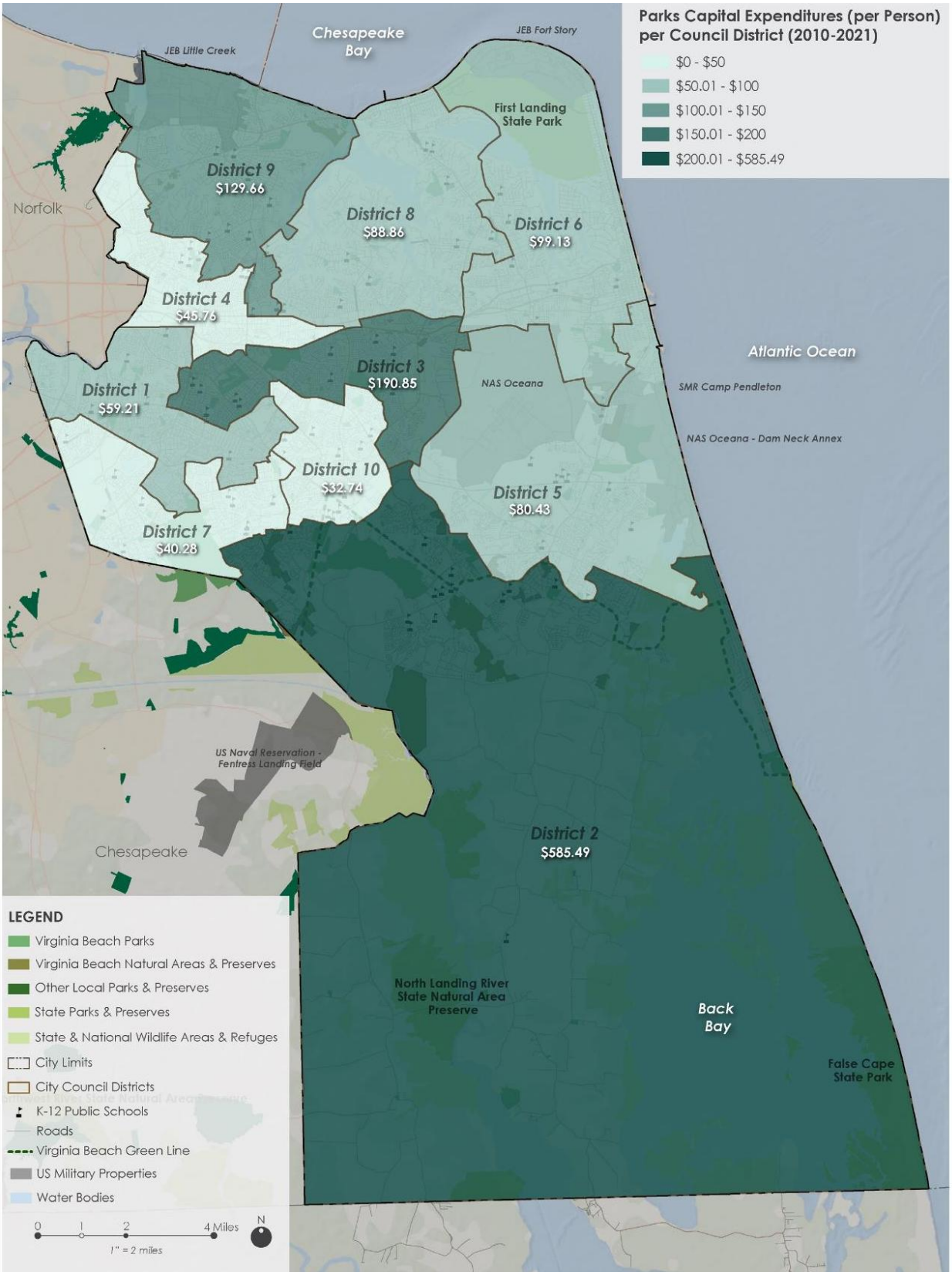
Table 4.23 below shows per capita funding in each district, as well as the percent deviation from the median investment level of $84.85 per person. District 5 ($80.43/person) and District 8 ($88.86/person) are the only districts that fall within the target +/-5% range. The other districts range in deviation from 61% below to 592% above the median spending. Half of all Districts fall below median spending.

District 2 is an outlier for spending per capita, with $585.49 per person, well above the next highest (District 3) with $190.85 per person. This spending is related to the recent significant investment in Princess Anne Gateway Park, Little Island Park, Redwing Park and Pungo Ferry Landing Park (acquisition and improvements). If District 2's spending was excluded from the assessment, the mean investment per capita would be $85.21, which is close to the median per capita investment of $84.65 found in all 10 districts.

Table 4.23 // Capital Spending per Capita per Council District

	Capital Funding per Capita	Percent Deviation from Median
District 1	$59.21	-30%
District 2	$585.49	592%
District 3	$190.85	125%
District 4	$45.76	-46%
District 5	$80.43	-5%
District 6	$99.13	17%
District 7	$40.28	-52%
District 8	$88.86	5%
District 9	$129.66	53%
District 10	$32.74	-61%
Median	$84.65	Goal: +/-5%

Map 4.10 // Parks Capital Expenditures per Capita, per Council District



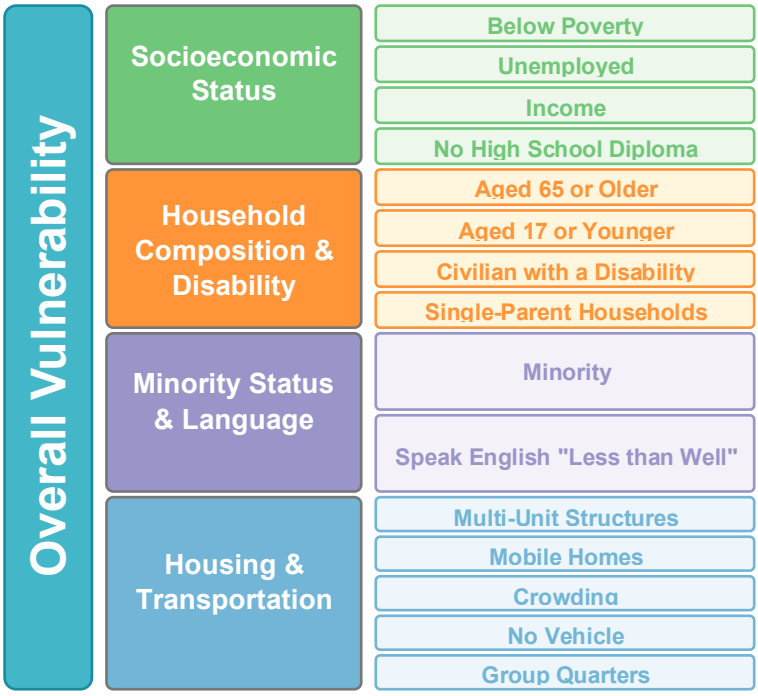
COMPOSITE EQUITY ANALYSIS

Social Vulnerability Index

Socioeconomic conditions form the basis for understanding the equity implications of parks. Historical and ongoing inequities contribute to differing socioeconomic conditions across the city. By understanding how the park system interacts with these conditions, park resources can be allocated to help address inequities in the park system.

In collaboration with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) and the U.S. Census Bureau, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) developed a Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) for every Census Tract in the U.S. The SVI is based on a total of 15 social factors that are combined into 4 related themes: Socioeconomic Status, Household Composition and Disability, Minority Status and Language, and Housing and Transportation. Each Census Tract receives an individual score for each of the four themes, as well as an overall SVI ranking. Figure 4.12 depicts the relationship between the social factors, key themes, and overall SVI.

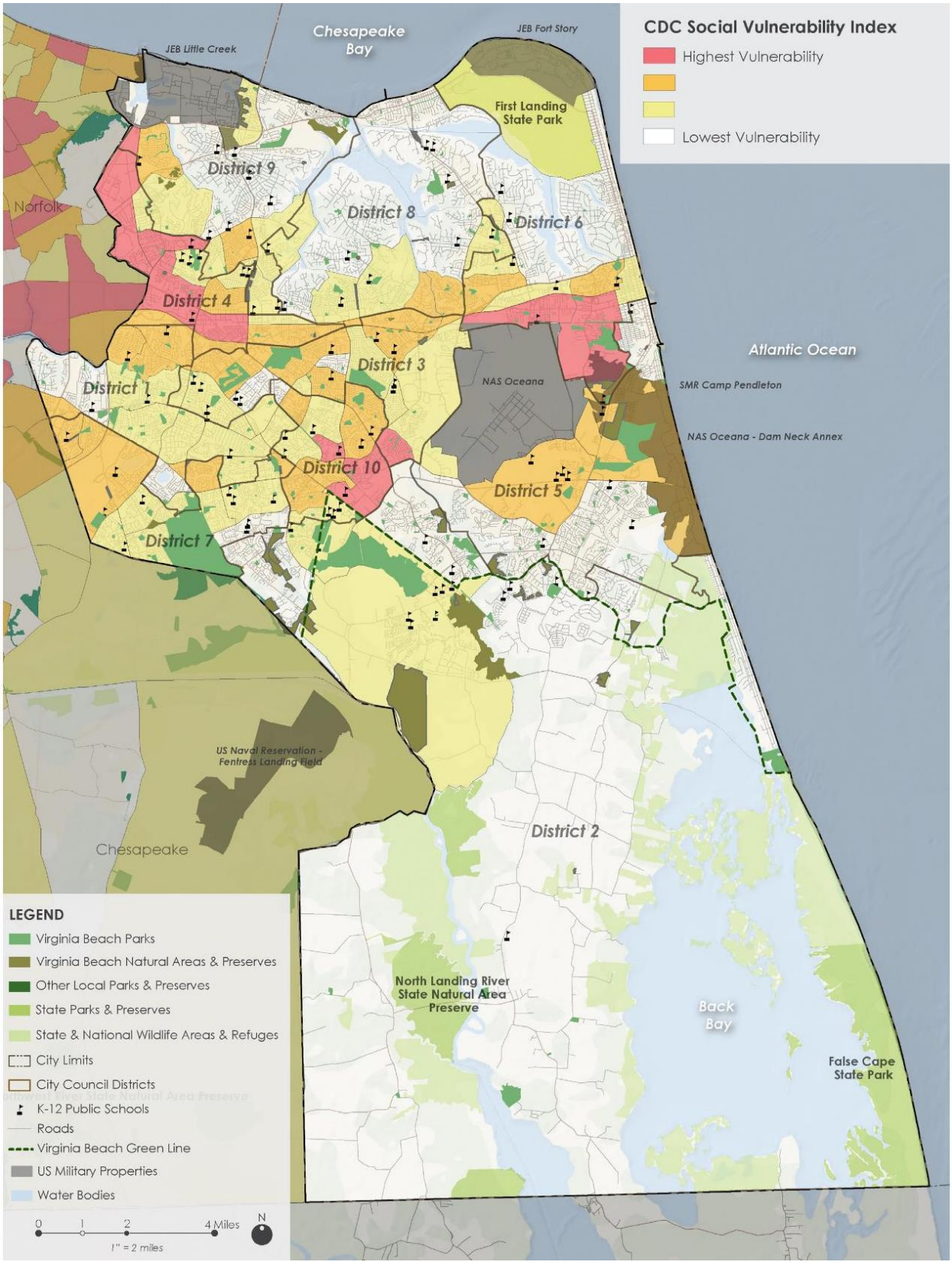
Figure 4.12 // Social Vulnerability Index



Results

Mapping this Index on the City of Virginia Beach identifies the Census Tracts at high, medium-high, medium-low, and low levels of social vulnerability. The areas of social vulnerability can be seen in Map 4.11, and in Appendix G. While not a comprehensive strategy for addressing equity, focusing on the high vulnerability areas can provide a starting point for discussion about the equity implications of providing parks and recreation services, and how those resources are allocated relative to conditions in the surrounding community. The SVI map indicates that the Census Tracts with highest vulnerability are in Districts 4 (with a small area in District 9), District 10 (with a small area in District 3), and District 6. Tracts with Medium-High Vulnerability are located in all Districts except for District 2. These Highest and Medium-High Tracts are clustered along I-264, as well as along Highway 165/Princess Anne Road.

Map 4.11 // Social Vulnerability Index score, per Council District



Composite Equity Assessment Map

The previous equity mapping exercises suggested the existence of certain trends across the city. Notably, Council Districts 4,7, and 10 stand out for falling in the bottom 3 places of the ranking in multiple categories.

District 4 has the:

- Lowest Total Park Acreage
- Lowest Average Park Size
- Lowest Percentage Parkland
- Lowest Average Park Score

District 4 also includes significant areas without access to a park within a 10-minute walk.

District 10 has the:

- Lowest Total Expenditures per Council District
- Lowest Expenditures per Person, and the
- 2nd Lowest Total Park Score

District 7 has the:

- Lowest Total Expenditures per Council District—Per Park Acre
- 2nd Lowest Expenditures per Person
- 2nd Lowest Total Expenditures per Council District

A composite map, Map 4.12, was developed to identify areas with greatest need based on a combination of the factors previously considered. A full size copy of this map can be found in Appendix G.

Methodology

First, the city was divided into hexagons, each 100 acres in area. Then four of the equity factors were normalized on a scale of four points and scored, with a total possible score of 16 indicating highest need:

SVI:

Scores were based on the CDC's standards for quantifying SVI.

- Score < 0.25 (Lowest Vulnerability) = 1 point
- Score 0.25 < 0.5 (Medium-Low Vulnerability) = 2 points
- Score 0.5 < 0.75 (Medium-High Vulnerability) = 3 points
- Score 0.75 < 1 (Highest Vulnerability) = 4 points

Park Access:

- Areas with park access (including all city parks, water access points, and shared use path access points) by a 10-minute walk = 0 points
- Areas WITHOUT park access (including all city parks, water access points, and shared use path access points) by a 10-minute walk = 4 points

Park Funding per Person:

The funding per person (by Council District) was divided into 4 classes using "Natural Breaks (Jenks)."

- Funding of $190.84 - $585.49 = 1 point
- Funding of $129.65 - $190.83 = 2 points
- Funding of $59.21 - $129.64 = 3 points
- Funding of $32.74 - $59.20 = 4 points

Park Quality Scoring:

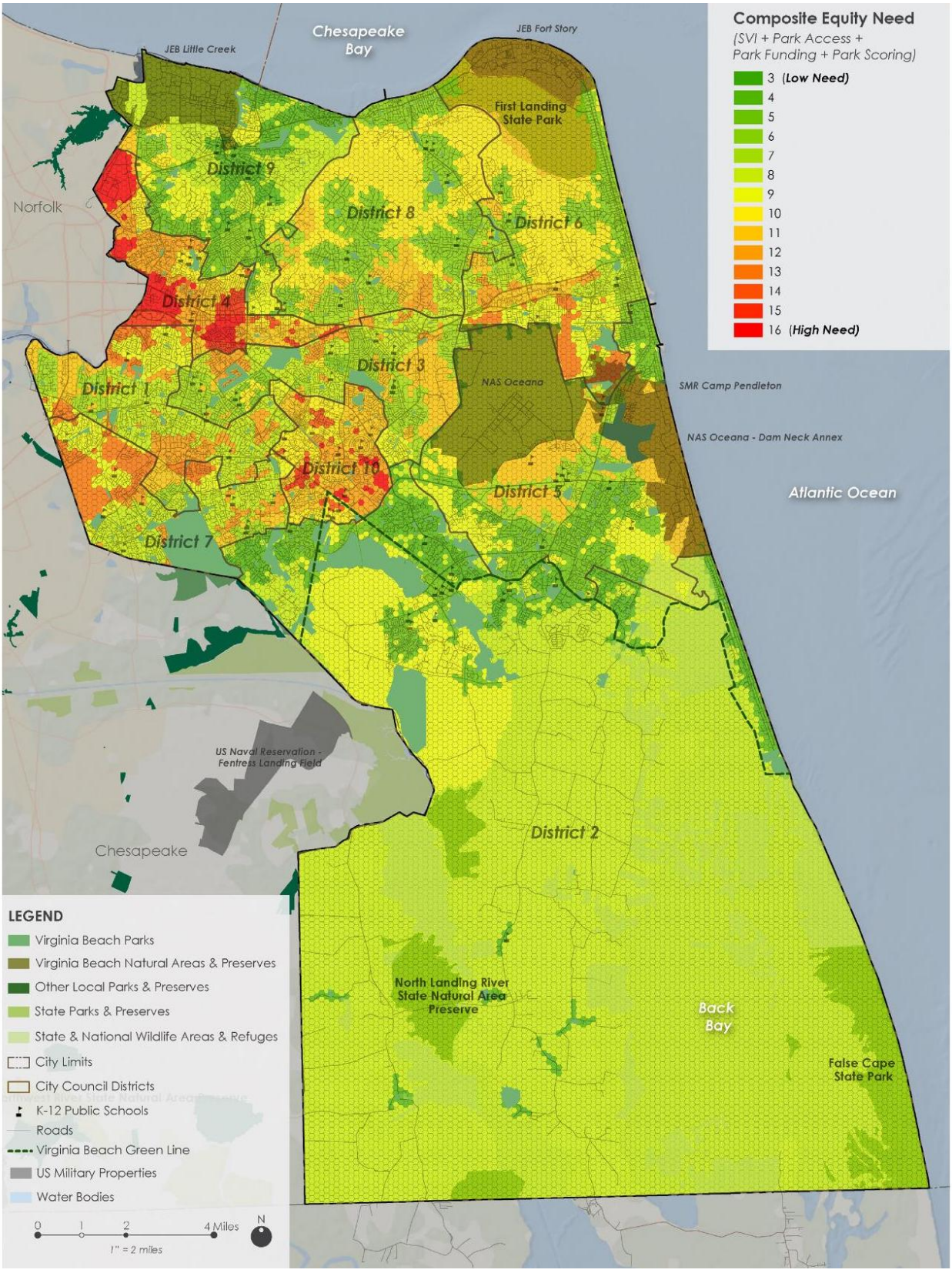
The park quality (by Council District) was divided into 4 classes using "Natural Breaks (Jenks)."

- Score of 81.6 – 90 = 1 point
- Score of 75.75 – 81.5 = 2 points
- Score of 73.33 – 75.74 = 3 points
- Score of 71.5 – 73.32 = 4 points

Results

The resulting map indicates a specific level of need for recreational park facilities in each of the 100-acre areas. Districts 4, 7, and 10 stand out for large areas of high need, as expected, given their low scores on individual metrics. However, the map also identifies locations in each district with greater need than others. As the city prepares to make park investments, this map can serve as one of several tools to identify focus areas and prioritize projects.

Map 4.12 // Composite Park Equity Assessment



CHAPTER 5 // STRATEGY

The Park and Recreation Department's focus over the last two decades is shifting towards an integrated and holistic approach to park, recreation, and open space, exploring the capacity to positively impact the health and well-being of the community and environment. Focusing the development and investment strategy through the lens of equity provides a framework for improvements, prioritization, and funding and spending based on community-wide objectives and shared interdepartmental missions. The City's vision of being a national leader in park, recreation, and open space experiences requires providing high quality service and expanding diverse opportunities for residents and visitors.

5.1 EQUITY-BASED PARK PLANNING

The Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation Department is focusing on services through the lens of equity to better serve the needs of all citizens, as well as visitors, further economic prosperity of the City, and improve environmental services and resiliency. This can best be achieved in a collaborative environment with the Parks and Recreation Department partnering with other departments such as Planning, Public Works, Public Utilities, as well as more initiative focused departments like Economic Development and the Convention and Visitors Bureau.



The cherry blossoms at Red Wing Park draw crowds annually.

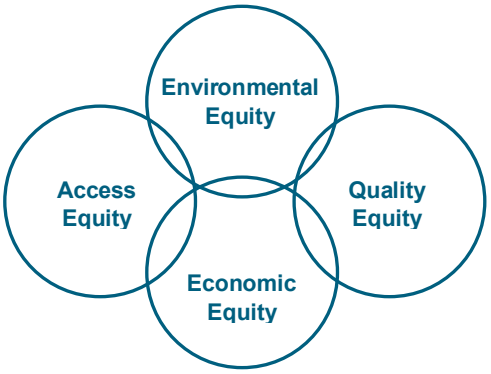
EQUITY-BASED METRICS OF SUCCESS

This report focuses on four areas of equity as the framework for evaluation, investment, and development of the Virginia Beach parks system: access equity, environmental equity, quality equity, and economic equity. Setting clear goals with measurable metrics that address each of those categories of equity brings those aspirations into reality and provides the framework for recommendations and implementation.

Each equity type has multiple aspects or dimensions, many of which are directly related to the City's FY 22-23 Strategic Plan. The dimension is often a concept or a phrase, and the desired future condition is the goal(s) that would achieve it. For each desired future condition there are one or more indictors of success, or measurable metrics, that permit the goal's achievement to be tracked and monitored.

All assessments and recommendations developed in this report reference the four areas of equity, but there were three identified metrics for success that were directly evaluated for equity of access, quality, and economic equity. The dimensions, desired future conditions, indicators of success, and source and frequency of data collection are summarized in the chart below. The metrics of these conditions are explored in the equity mapping in Chapter 4.6.

Figure 5.1 // Four Areas of Equity Assessed





Virginia Beach is updating and replacing aging playgrounds through out the system.

Table 5.1 // Desired Future Condition Equity Metrics

	DIMENSIONS:	DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION:	INDICATOR OF SUCCESS (LOS METRIC):	SOURCE AND FREQUENCY OF DATA COLLECTION:
Access Equity	1.2 Distance to Park	All residents live within desired distance of facility or program (e.g., a ½ mile or 10-minute walk to a park, or a 3-mile drive to a recreation center)	Percentage of residents who live within desired distance of each facility classification	Annual GIS mapping
Quality Equity	3.1 Facility and Amenity Maintenance* (Strategy #1 - 21st Century Infrastructure)	All facilities and amenities are safe, inclusive, inviting, attractive, comfortable, and flexible	Percentage of sites that receive positive performance ratings, e.g., a "4" of "5" rating on a 5-point scale, or ≥80% *	Annual evaluation of sites, based on equity-based criteria
Economic Equity	4.2 Capital Investment	Capital investment is distributed evenly on a per-capita basis, both citywide and within neighborhoods or planning districts	Annual geographic distribution of capital spending per capita and per planning area (e.g., district, region, census block, etc.)	Annual expenditures, GIS mapping



Parks After Dark is a popular series of family friendly programming.

A full list of equity dimensions, desired future conditions, indicators of success, and recommended data sources is in Appendix H. It is recommended that that the City set up a task force to address all dimensions and desired future conditions identified in the equity metrics chart, including setting specific standards and consistently tracking measurements. There are many opportunities for cross-collaboration to achieve the desired park and recreation future conditions, while furthering other department's goals and achieving citywide strategic planning goals. For example, a dimension of Environmental Equity is flood risk, with the Desired Future Condition that parks are designed as green infrastructure to help mitigate flooding and improve water quality where feasible. This is directly related to the City's Strategic Goal #1: "21st Century Infrastructure" of building a flooding and sea level rise resilient community. There are opportunities to partner with other departments including Public Works as well as private and non-profit organizations to develop recreational services at flood infrastructure sites and integrate stormwater services into park in a ways that do not detract from recreational services. The Bow Creek Stormwater project is an excellent example of this sort of collaboration.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations were developed through review of the parks and facilities existing conditions assessments; public, stakeholder, and staff feedback; and analysis of the needs assessment. Recommendations include improvement of existing parks and facilities, addition of new parks and facilities, and land acquisition. Recommendations also address goals for improved equity in the City of Virginia Beach, focusing on Access Equity, Environmental Equity, Quality Equity, and Economic Equity. Each recommendation is coded with an icon based on the equity aspect the recommendation addresses. Refer to the icon coding chart below. The recommendations are loosely ordered based on need and interest. Methods for implementing and prioritizing these recommendations are offered in the Implementation Plan provided in this report.

Access equity

Environmental Equity

Quality Equity

Economic Equity

EXISTING FACILITIES

All parks are to be developed to meet standardized development levels.

Citizens should expect and receive consistent high-quality recreational experiences at every city owned park that they visit. This report identifies standards for amenities, maintenance, and staffing for every type of city park. A conditions assessment should be conducted for every park in the system. The assessment should inventory existing amenities, evaluate the condition of the site and amenities, and make recommendations for improvements, prioritizing improvements to bring the park up the identified appropriate development level. At a minimum, all parks in the system should be developed to the Essential classification.



Kayaking is a popular activity in Virginia Beach.

Address safety hazards.

Safety hazards including tripping hazards, broken railings, damaged wooden fixtures, standing water, trash accumulation, and uneven surfacing should be addressed immediately at all City-maintained sites. The conditions assessments found limited instances of safety hazards but all should be addressed immediately.

A particular issue noted in the site conditions assessment was the frequency of goose droppings present on sidewalks, lawns, and play areas. A collaborative effort with state and federal agencies and non-profits to innovate a benchmark policy plan is encouraged for the long-term management of this pervasive species.

Review and address ADA accessibility.

The Department should continue to implement the City-Wide ADA Transition Plan that is updated every five years. Park staff should conduct a thorough ADA assessment to ensure that each site within the parks system is compliant with all current federal ADA requirements. This includes parking spaces, access (sidewalks), facilities, and restrooms. A recurring issue identified during site inspections was access to raised playground surfacing. The City should ensure that the next update to the ADA Transition Plan brings additional focus to recreation and play.

Increase quantity of universally accessible amenities and design elements.

The City should increase their focus on providing universally accessible elements in the design of new parks, replacement or construction of new features, or addition of amenities. For example, a new park could be designed to include a universally playable ball diamond, aging playground equipment could be replaced with an inclusive playground, and ADA accessible picnic tables could be added to the parks. This effort should be coordinated with the City-Wide ADA Transition Plan.

Construct appropriate stormwater management facilities and erosion control measures.

All new park development or retrofits should follow Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act (CBPA) regulations and the Virginia Stormwater Management Program (VSMP) regulations. Stormwater management features should be integrated into the park program as an amenity that creates spaces, habitat, and educational opportunities. Best management practices (BMPs) should be implemented in existing parks to address stormwater drainage and erosion issues, as well as replace or improve upon existing hard infrastructure like inlets and detention basins. Multiple parks report standing water, bank erosion, washout, or sedimentation of water bodies including Pine Meadows Park, Lynnhaven Park, and Mount Trashmore. Stormwater management techniques like regrading, culvert improvements, bioswales, native plantings in detention basins, and other BMPs should be implemented to address these health and safety concerns and



Constructed wetlands and a daylighted stream provide habitat and stormwater services at Bow Creek Recreation Center.

provide proper stormwater drainage. Erosion management techniques like fencing, regrading, planting, and erosion control matting may be appropriate for the site situations. Stormwater management improvements can be spot improvements or integrated with site redevelopment, depending on the extent of the problem and the Department's plan for site redevelopment.

Besides addressing drainage issues, there are opportunities to install landscape buffers to improve water quality on sites that drain directly to water bodies. These buffers would be continuous landscape beds of native plants, potentially shrubs, trees, grasses, or perennials. They would intercept runoff entering the river, reducing the total runoff, filtering pollution and trash, reducing sedimentation, stabilizing banks, and providing wildlife habitat. The Department should develop an improvement schedule to address existing stormwater issues at managed parks and facilities. The planning of these landscape buffers should be part of the parks' Natural Resources Management Plan and the development and maintenance protocols coordinated interdepartmentally to ensure longevity and success.



Landscape buffers peserve and improve water quality.

Track equipment age, schedule routine maintenance, and plan for equipment replacement.

The City of Virginia Beach has an extensive park system with a vast number of amenities. The City should expand and include additional detail in the amenity and equipment database and increase data integration between all of the record. They should also ensure that the database tracks installation date, routine maintenance, and replacement date. Scheduling and performing routine maintenance will extend the lifespan of equipment and increase safety. It was noted during conditions assessment that playground safety surfacing is being worn down faster than the current maintenance schedule. At some point the equipment will need to be replaced rather than repaired. The Department's budget must take this into account and begin to set aside funding.

Increase connectivity and access to parks and recreational facilities.

One of the standards that the Department has set is the goal that 80% of residents live within a 10-minute walk (1/2 mile) of a park or other recreational facility. Currently only 67% of City residents live within those 10-minute radii, with District 10 the only locality that meets the walkability goal. The Department should pursue methods to increase the accessibility of parks and recreational opportunities. Improvement methods include adding or improving sidewalks or multi-use trails to create linkages and by developing new facilities.

Increase access to shade at all parks.

As the frequency and intensity of high-temperature days increase, access to shade features becomes even more important. Shade features should be integrated into the design of all new parks and existing parks should be retrofitted with shade elements over seating, picnic, and activity areas. Options include shade sails, structures, new tree planting, or preservation of existing shade trees during design and development. A first priority focus should be on City-Wide type park facilities and higher usage, destination level playgrounds.

Update park entrance sign standards.

The current park sign standard is a two-post sign, frequently set in a lawn area. It is recommended destination quality parks have monument style signs and all other parks have landscaping beds added around the park identification sign.



The current standard park identification sign.

Improve soft surface trail conditions and surfacing.

The soft surface trails in City parks are well used and require regular maintenance to address rutting, tree roots, and washouts. Trails should be improved with resurfacing, base material reconstruction with aggregate, edging, retrofit with trail best practices for construction, or realigned for better slopes and runoff, as appropriate in each situation. Standards and best practices described in the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's Greenways and Trails Toolbox should be followed for trail improvement and all new trail construction. A regular trail maintenance schedule should be developed and sufficient funding should be included in the annual budget. Organize volunteer groups and local trails groups to assist with trail maintenance.

Continue to replace park perimeter 2-rail fencing with 4x10 single-rail fencing throughout the park system.

The park system has adopted an updated fencing standard of a 4x10 single-rail fencing at new park developments. Continue to replace all existing 2-rail fences remaining in the system with the updated standard.

Improve casual water access points with dedicated constructed facilities.

Access to water is highly valued by park visitors and in several parks visitors have improvised access for fishing, boating, or wildlife viewing. It is recommended that the department improve these access points with defined park facilities for trail access, piers, put-ins, or overlooks as appropriate. This will provide safe and high-quality features for users, as well as protect water banks from erosion.



The new basketball court at Seatcak Community Park.

Continue to add landscaping to casual sports fields.

Many parks boast large, open play fields which have long-established layouts for league sports such as soccer. Coordinate with leagues on field layouts and identify gap spaces or corners where native landscape buffers or trees could be added for increase ecological function and shade for visitors while still maintaining high quality turf play surfaces.

Establish a Natural Resources Team that will develop a Natural Resources Management Plan for implementation at all park sites.

The Natural Resources Management Plan should be developed by certified arborists and horticulturalists in conjunction with maintenance professionals to provide optimal growing conditions, enhance ecological health, and present a landscape of outstanding quality for visitors. The plan will set standards for management and maintenance for park landscapes, including classifications of management; standards for tree trimming, mulching, and replacement; invasive species management, native meadow creation and management; soft trail conditions and maintenance; and wildlife management, include goose management.

Improve park perimeter landscapes.

Naturalized and informal landscapes define park edges, ditches, and creeks. There is an opportunity to expand active management of these landscapes for increased views, vistas, screening, access, aesthetics, and ecological function. The Natural Resources Management Plan should identify appropriate goals and standards for these areas system-wide, and where appropriate, develop site-specific management plans. These standards may address thinning, cleaning, limbing, and planting edges and borders to maximize the amenity. The Department has already implemented a turf to meadow conversion plan at sites across the City with educational signage. There is the opportunity to continue and build upon this practice with perimeter landscapes.

NEW AMENITIES

Many of the following facilities will be added to the Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation system as part of the natural process of constructing new parks. There will also be opportunities to add these amenities into existing parks that are undeveloped as well as to existing parks where there is space and a local need for the facility. The City overall has a very high walkability percentage score for access to parks and recreation facilities and this percentage will increase as new parks are developed and trails constructed, filling in those gaps in access.

Increase in Amenity Service Level

The following amenities are currently provided within the Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation system, but their quantities fall short of current and/or future service levels. Increasing the quantity of these amenities at strategic locations across the City will address use and access needs.

Develop undeveloped park sites as appropriate to site conditions and context.

The City has 40 undeveloped park sites. This plan identifies 18 sites that are recommended to be developed as Local or City-Wide parks. The City should evaluate the other 22 sites for development as Special Use Parks, Natural Areas, or alternative uses, and create master plans for their use and develop as appropriate for the sites' conditions and context.

Expand paved trail system.

Paved multi-use trails are highly valued in Virginia Beach and the City needs an additional 47 miles to address current needs, rising to 56 miles in 2036. The Department should pursue the development of new paved trails, adding them to existing parks and connecting parks to the surrounding communities. The Department should also continue plans for linear parks trails or greenways in support of the City's Active Transportation Plan.



Boardwalks offer a different type of trail experience.

Construct additional soft surface trails.

The City of Virginia Beach currently faces an extreme shortfall of soft surface trails, requiring 38 additional miles to meet current need, rising to 42 miles in 2036. The Department should plan to construct new or expand existing hiking trail networks in parks with trails outside the park. Loop trails should be part of each park. Neighborhood trails may serve the residential community and connect to destinations like schools, parks, commercial, and retail areas. Partner with the Planning department to encourage trail development as part of subdivision planning.

Create publicly accessible pickleball courts.

Pickleball is a rapidly growing sport and the City needs an additional 25 courts by the year 2036 to meet demand. The Owl Creek Tennis Center, a privately run facility with user fees, currently operates 25

pickleball courts. The City may be able to pursue an agreement where fees are waived for City residents as a more economical solution. If new public facilities are constructed, they should consist of clusters of 6-8 pickleball courts at new parks and as infill amenities at existing parks. Refer to district level LOS shortfalls for additional guidance on where to locate new courts.



Parks After Dark is one of the many types of programming offered by the Department.

Construct additional playgrounds.

There is a high public demand for playgrounds, and the current inventory is below the existing and future target level of service, requiring 17 additional sites to meet current demand and 30 total new sites to meet future demand. Shortfalls vary between districts. Playgrounds may be integrated into new Local and City-Wide parks, as well as included in park expansions. Themed playgrounds would diversify experiences. Playgrounds should be designed for inclusive and universally accessible play. As playgrounds are replaced, universal access play apparatus should be added.

Create publicly accessible soccer fields.

The City as a whole needs an additional 24-25 soccer fields to meet LOS standards. The Hampton Road Soccer Complex is operated by an outside vendor and field use fees are required. The City may be able to pursue an option for field fees to be waived for residents as a more economic approach to address the shortfall.

Address district-level shortfalls of park amenities.

Each district has unique needs for a variety of park amenities, including hard courts, athletic fields, picnic shelters, and fitness equipment. Refer to the Level of Service analysis for specific needs and construct the needed amenities as infill at existing parks or part of the development of new parks.

Develop additional water access sites

Identify and develop additional water access to provide small scale public boat ramps, non-motorized boat launches, swimming areas, and fishing access. These new facilities should be in alignment with current planning projects and paddling trails. Existing and undeveloped park sites with potential for water access have been identified in Map 5.5 **Priority Parks for Water Access Development**. onnectivity through multiple transportation modes

Expansion of Amenity Types

The following amenities are not currently provided by the Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation system. Expanding the park system's offerings to include these facilities will meet public demand, keep pace with recreational trends, and provide recreational opportunities commensurate with similarly sized cities.

Create blueways.

The City should develop and market additional blueway trails. Blueways should be designed for variable length trips for a variety of skills levels, with appropriate signage, put-ins, parking, and support amenities. The City should market and advertise the blueways system to encourage resident and visitor use. The blueways should be integrated into the City's Active Transportation Plan to ensure connectivity through multiple transportation modes.



Blueways are designated water trails with improved access points

Develop two Nature Education Centers.

Virginia Beach encompasses two distinct and unique ecological regions, the tidal coast and the coastal plain uplands, and is split by the two of the largest estuaries in the United States, the Chesapeake Bay and the Albemarle-Pamlico Estuary. Comparable cities and park systems include nature education centers, making this a distinct need in Virginia Beach. A nature education center should be constructed in each ecological region to interpret the geology and ecology. The Department should conduct an assessment of existing natural areas to determine potential locations.

Construct a cricket field.

The City does not currently offer cricket fields as a recreational option at any parks. The City should expand the recreational opportunities for residents to construct a cricket field at a centralized park location.

Construct archery ranges.

The City should expand recreational options and construct two archery ranges. The City should consider construction of a FITA style target archery range up to 90 meters and a field archery course for general shooters.

Develop community gardens.

Interest in gardening and fresh food access is rising. The Department should pursue the development of five community gardens dispersed through the City. The gardens should be developed and managed in conjunction with newly developed Friends of the Garden or other special interest groups to take care of day-to-day functioning and continuity of the garden. Locating gardens in food deserts or in socially vulnerable areas should be prioritized.



It is recommended that Virginia Beach expand its system to include community gardens.

Develop outdoor recreational pools.

The City does not currently have any public outdoor pools. The Department should begin feasibility studies and CIP planning for the construction of two outdoor pools, located to maximize access to citizens.

Develop a splash playground in every District.

The public indicated a strong need for additional recreational aquatic facilities. To equitably provide recreational aquatic facilities as well as increase the type of amenities offered in the City, the Department should construct new spraygrounds. The spraygrounds should be located to match access and geographical distribution needs. The geographic distribution of other aquatic facilities should be considered when locating the spraygrounds to ensure equitable access to aquatics throughout the City.



Splash playgrounds expand water-based play opportunities and are very popular.

LAND ACQUISITION



Enhance the recently reinstituted Open Space Acquisition Initiative, adding a minimum of 287 acres throughout the city.

Land purchases will be situational and as available, but wherever possible, add conservation open space acreage in districts with extreme shortfalls, including Districts 2, 3, 5, 6, 9.



Pursue opportunities to develop additional Local park sites to bring all Districts up to per capita acreage standards.

Several districts in Virginia Beach face current shortfalls of Local Parks or are expected to by the year 2036, including Districts 4, 6, 7, 9, and 10. Other districts are anticipated to face minor shortfalls of local park acreage by the year 2036, including Districts 1 and 5. These acreage shortfalls are based on per capita evaluations and while a district may meet or exceed per capita service, there may be areas of the district that are underserved. Refer to the walkability and access maps for those areas and for when planning acquisition of new park land.

There are a variety of potential methods to address acreage shortfalls in each district, including developing undeveloped park sites, designating portions of Special Use or Natural Area sites as Local Parks and developing with appropriate amenities, purchasing new land to be developed as Local Parks, and the potential for future opportunities for co-development with other City departments to address multiple needs.

The chart below summarizes the shortfalls predicted in 2036 based on per capita service, the acreage associated with potential solutions, the estimated shortfall or surplus assuming full build out of the solution opportunities, and then the approximate number of new parks necessary to address any remaining shortfalls. As can be seen, some district-level park acreage shortfalls can be addressed through site development and park reassignment.

Table 5.2 // Local Parks Shortfall Solution Assessment

District	2036 Shortfall/ Surplus	Undeveloped Local Park Acreage	Land Available in other parks	Shortfall/Surplus Assuming Full Build-out	Approximate Number of Local Parks Needed		
1	-3	2.9	-	0.0			
2	67	12.7	-	80.0			
3	3	0.0	-	3.0			
4	-80	4.2	3	-72.7	5	to	24
5	-4	8.2	-	4.5			
6	-65	0.0	8	-57.1	4	to	19
7	-24	2.1	0	-21.9	1	to	7
8	26	2.1	-	28.2			
9	-69	0.0	3	-66.0	4	to	22
10	-58	0.0	0	-58.0	4	to	19
Overall	**-168**	**32.1**	**14**	**-121.0**	**18**		**92**

Potential solutions to address shortfall of Local Park acreage

1. *Develop undeveloped park sites as Local Parks.*

The City of Virginia Beach has 40 undeveloped park sites. When evaluating the size and condition of the sites, some are appropriate for development as Local Parks. Developing these parks will reduce the shortfall of Local level parks in a shorter timeframe, since the Department already owns the land. The sites that could be developed as Local Parks include:

- Country Haven parcel (2.87 acres, District 1)
- Champion Oaks parcel (0.23 acres, District 2)
- Holland Pines West parcel (3.73 acres, District 2)
- Buffington/Whitehurst parcel 1 (8.69 acres, District 2)
- Margate Avenue Park (0.30 acres, District 4)
- Thalia Trace Oaks Park (1.28 acres, District 4)
- Amhurst Park (2.61 acres, District 4)
- Ocean Lakes North Park (2.06 acres, District 5)
- Rudee Heights parcel (0.73 acres, District 5)
- Strawbridge North Park (5.43 acres, District 5)
- Charlestown Lakes South Park (2.08 acres, District 7)
- Saw Pen Point Park (2.11 acres, District 8)

2. *Investigate developing portions of Special Use or Natural Area parks as Local Parks.*

Developing portions of existing parks with Local Park amenities and standards is a way to improve access to local parks and address shortfalls without needing to acquire additional land. The sites and areas considered for development should be evaluated to ensure that the primary purpose of the property is not impinged upon. After evaluation, it may be found that play equipment and picnic areas could be added to a boat launch or near trailheads of a natural area, for example. Consultant evaluation of Special Use parks and Natural Areas found the following parks may be suitable for development as Local Parks:

- Thalia Creek Greenway (4.2 acres, District 4)
- Owl Creek Boat Ramp (6.9 acres, District 6)
- Laskin Park Gateway Park (1.0 acres, District 6)

3. *Acquire new park land.*

The City's need for additional Local Park land cannot be completely addressed through development of existing sites. New parks will need to be purchased and developed to address acreage shortfalls and to ensure distributed access and walkability. The City should seek to purchase park land in currently underserved areas. Refer to **Local Park Priority Locations Map** for recommended areas in each district to investigate new park land acquisition.

4. *Continue to pursue development partnership opportunities with other City departments and regional organizations.*

The Department currently partners with non-profits, other City departments, and public agencies to provide recreational opportunities to the public. The Department should continue and expand these partnerships wherever possible and pursue new partnerships to collaborate on new projects that include recreational opportunities in conjunction with other initiatives. This creates efficiencies in development costs and recreational access. The Parks and Recreation Department should have open lines of dialogue with the other departments and be ready to suggest opportunities for partnership. The Department should also maintain open communication with regional enterprises and utility companies and be ready to discuss the potential for collaboration. The Woodstock Park Improvement Project, a collaboration between Parks & Recreation and HRSD, completed in 2021, is an example of a very successful combined park and infrastructure improvement.



Autumn in the Air is a popular Virginia Beach festival.

Pursue opportunities to develop additional City-Wide park sites to bring all Districts up to per capita acreage standards.

Every district in Virginia Beach, except for District 2, faces current shortfalls of City-Wide Parks, with the shortfall expected to increase by the year 2036. These acreage shortfalls are based on per capita evaluations.

There are a variety of potential methods to address acreage shortfalls in each district, including developing undeveloped park sites, designating portions of Special Use or Natural Area sites as City-Wide Parks and developing with appropriate amenities, purchasing new land to be developed as City-Wide Parks, and the potential for future opportunities for co-development with other City departments to address multiple needs.

The chart below summarizes the shortfalls predicted in 2036 based on per capita service, the acreage associated with potential solutions, the estimated shortfall or surplus assuming full build out of the solution opportunities, and then the approximate number of new parks necessary to address any remaining shortfalls. As can be seen, some district-level park acreage shortfalls can be addressed through site development and park reassignment.

Table 5.3 // City-wide Parks Shortfall Solution Assessment

District	2036 Shortfall/ Surplus	Undeveloped City-Wide Park Acreage	Land Available in other parks	Shortfall/Surplus Assuming Full Build-out	Number of City-wide Parks Needed		
1	-170	0.0	-	-170.0	2	to	11
2	23	1000.6	-	1024.4			
3	-70	0.0	125.0	55.0			
4	-226	0.0	0.0	-226.0	3	to	15
5	-84	131.9	-	48.0			
6	-104	38.6	0.0	-65.4	1	to	4
7	-181	24.2	30.0	-126.8	2	to	8
8	-143	0.0	15.0	-128.0	2	to	9
9	-187	0.0	15.0	-172.0	2	to	11
10	-216	0.0	0.0	-216.0	2	to	14
Overall	**-1,373**	**1195.2**	**185.0**	**8.2**	**13**		**74**

Potential solutions to address shortfall of City-Wide Park acreage

1. *Develop undeveloped park sites as City-Wide Parks.*

   The City of Virginia Beach has 40 undeveloped park sites. When evaluating the size and condition of the sites, some are appropriate for development as City-Wide Parks. Developing these parks will reduce the shortfall of City-Wide level parks in a shorter timeframe, since the Department already owns the land. Several suitable potential City-Wide park sites are located in District 2, which has no per capita acreage shortfall. Developing those sites would not address district-level acreage, but would address the acreage shortfall on a city-level analysis. Some of the sites, like Owl Creek Preservation Area, are currently designated as a Natural. The sites that could be developed as City-Wide Parks include:

   - Three Oaks Park (40.26 acres, District 2)
   - North Landing Park (772.48 acres, District 2)
   - Matthews Green Park (17.29 acres, District 2)
   - Prosperity Park (131.91 acres, District 5)
   - Owl Creek Preservation Area (38.61 acres, District 6)

2. *Investigate developing portions of Special Use or Natural Area parks as City-Wide Parks.*

   Developing portions of existing parks with City-Wide Park amenities and standards is a way to improve access to local parks and address shortfalls without needing to acquire additional land. The sites and areas considered for development should be evaluated to ensure that the primary purpose of the property is not impinged upon. After evaluation, it may be found that hard courts, play equipment, picnic areas, trails, and other specialty features included in a standard City-Wide Park could be added to a sports complex or near the entrance of a natural area, for example. There is also the potential to redevelop a Special Use facility entirely, like the redevelopment of the Bow Creek Golf Course into the Bow Creek Stormwater Park, which began construction in 2024. Consultant evaluation of Special Use parks and Natural Areas found the following parks may have portions suitable for development as City-Wide Parks:

   - Bow Creek Golf Couse (110.0 acres, District 3)
   - Kempsville Green Golf Course (15 acres, District 3)
   - Stumpy Lake Natural Area (15 acres, District 7)
   - Stumpy Lake Golf Course (15 acres, District 7)
   - Lynnhaven Baseball Complex (15 acres, District 8)
   - Pleasure House Point Natural Area (15 acres, District 9)

3. *Acquire new park land.*

   An individual Districts' need for additional City-Wide Park land cannot be completely addressed through development of existing sites. New parks will need to be purchased and developed to address district-level acreage shortfalls and to ensure distributed access and walkability. The City should seek to purchase park land in currently underserved areas. Refer to **City-Wide Park Priority Location Map** for recommended areas in each district to investigate new park land acquisition.

4. *Pursue development partnership opportunities with other City departments and regional organizations.*

   There is opportunity for partnerships between City departments and between area organizations to collaborate on new projects that include recreational opportunities in conjunction with other initiatives. This creates efficiencies in development costs and recreational access. The Parks and Recreation Department should have open lines of dialogue with the other departments and be ready to suggest opportunities for partnership. The Department should also maintain open communication with regional enterprises and utility companies, and be ready to discuss the potential for collaboration. The Bow Creek Stormwater Park redevelopment project is an excellent example of collaboration between City departments to address City-Wide needs, addressing stormwater and flooding while also increasing recreational services.

5.3 PRIORITIZATION

Virginia Beach enjoys an extensive parks, recreation, and open space system. Maintaining, improving, and expanding the parks system in a manner that increases equity is an important goal of the Parks and Recreation Department. Developing a prioritized action plan is essential to direct resources to where they are most needed and can have the greatest impact.

PRIORITIZATION STRATEGY

Existing Park and New Amenity Construction

All recommendations for improvements to existing parks and new amenity construction were quantifiably evaluated based on equity metrics, feasibility, and cost. Points were assigned in each category and totaled into a priority scoring, categorized into high, moderate, and some priority groupings.

The equity point scoring criteria is described in the following section and in Tables 5.4 and 5.5. The project's feasibility was assigned a point value with low numbers being less feasible and higher numbers more feasible. A high feasibility score indicates the project can be easily planned, easily phased, and no specialized equipment or labor is required. A project with a low feasibility score will require extensive planning, no opportunities for phased installation, and specialized services will be required. Each project was also assigned points associated with the project cost, where a higher score equates a lower project cost. The highest score (5 for existing parks and 15 for new amenities) equates with a project estimated to be $300,000 or less and a score of 0 equates with a project estimated at $10,000,000 or more. Refer to Table 5.6 for the prioritization scoring for existing park projects and to Table 5.7 for the prioritization scoring for new park amenities.

The prioritization score and designation is a tool to help prioritize projects, but it does not dictate the order of implementation. Other factors that went into the recommended implementation phasing include public need, alignment with City goals, and an ethos of investing in existing resources.

Equity Scoring

All recommended improvements to existing parks and for new amenity construction were scored based on metrics for access, environment, quality, and economic equity. Criteria were set in each category with points assigned for the level that the type of project met the criteria. The points were totaled for an equity score for each type of improvement. This equity score was one of the factors that went into the final priority

score. The equity scoring criteria for improvement projects at existing parks is shown in Table 5.4 and Table 5.5 shows the equity scoring criteria for amenity construction.



Mount Trashmore is a popular park for kite flying.

Table 5.4 // Equity Scoring Criteria for Improvements to Existing Parks

Access Equity

Criteria	Criteria Description	Points	Metric	Weight
Accessibility	Does the project present an opportunity to enhance universal accessibility?	0,3,5	Low, Medium, High	
Facilities LOS Gap	Does the project address a Facilities LOS need city-wide?	0,3,5,7	Low, Medium, High, Very High	
Priority Facility Need	Does the project address a Statistically Valid Survey (SVS) Priority Investment Ranking (PIR) facility need?	0,3,5	Low, Medium, High	
Priority Program Need	Does the project address a Statistically Valid Survey (SVS) Priority Investment Ranking (PIR) programmatic need?	0,3,5	Low, Medium, High	

Environmental Equity

Criteria	Criteria Description	Points	Metric	Weight
N/A	N/A	3	No Impact	3

Quality Equity

Criteria	Criteria Description	Points	Metric	Weight
Park Condition	Would the project improve the condition of the park?	3	Yes	**3**
Achievement of Park Standard	Does the project help improve the standardized level of development as identified in the park classification standards?	0,3,5	Premiere, Enhanced, Essential Amenity	

Economic Equity

Criteria	Criteria Description	Points	Metric	Weight
Achievement of Park Standard	Does the project help improve the standardized level of development as identified in the park classification standards?	0,3,5	Premiere, Enhanced, Essential Amenity	
Partnership	Does the project provide an opportunity to leverage partnerships?	0,3,5	No, Capital, Capital and O&M	
Staffing and Financial Resources	What is the project's impact to staffing and funding resources?	0,3,5	High Impact, Medium, Minimal	

Table 5.5 // Equity Scoring Criteria for Amenity Construction

Access Equity

Criteria	Criteria Description	Points	Metric	Weight
Accessibility	Does the project present an opportunity to enhance universal accessibility?	0,5,7	Low, Medium, High	
Priority Facility Need	Does the project address a Statistically Valid Survey (SVS) Priority Investment Ranking (PIR) facility need?	0,3,5	Low, Medium, High	
Priority Program Need	Does the project address a Statistically Valid Survey (SVS) Priority Investment Ranking (PIR) programmatic need?	0,3,5	Low, Medium, High	

Environmental Equity

Criteria	Criteria Description	Points	Metric	Weight
Water Quality	What is the project's potential impact on water quality?	0,3,5	Negative Impact, No Impact, Positive Impact	
Water Quantity	What is the project's potential impact on managing water quantity?	0,3,5	Negative Impact, No Impact, Positive Impact	
Tree Canopy	What is the project's impact to the tree canopy and urban heat island?	0,3,5	Negative Impact, No Impact, Positive Impact	

Quality Equity

Criteria	Criteria Description	Points	Metric	Weight
Health, Safety, Welfare	Does the project address physical safety hazards of facilities or amenities that may fail and cause harm to the public?	0,5,7	Low, Medium, High	
Facility Condition	Does the project address a subject of significant disrepair or would be a capital improvements to preserve necessary operability?	0,3,5	Low, Medium, High	

Economic Equity

Criteria	Criteria Description	Points	Metric	Weight
Partnership	Does the project provide an opportunity to leverage partnerships?	0,3,5	No, Capital, Capital and O&M	
Staffing and Financial Resources	What is the project's impact to staffing and funding resources?	0,3,5	High Impact, Medium, Low Impact	

Un- and Under-Developed Parks

Priority un- and under-developed parks were identified through a mapping overlay of the Composite Park Equity Map (Map 4.12) with the locations undeveloped and underdeveloped City-Wide and Local parks. Sites that were in or adjacent to high need areas were identified as priority investment parks.

Park Land Acquisition

To evaluate the priority regions for additional Local park and City-Wide park land acquisition, a composite map was developed for each park type, which overlays the Composite Park Equity Map with a scoring of park acreage shortfall by district. Areas of high need, not adjacent to existing facilities, were identified as regions to seek additional park land by Local or City-Wide park type. A further evaluation by the Department will be necessary to evaluate potential suitable parcels for acquisition and development.

Water Access

Providing equitable water access is a priority of the Department, and relates to environmental and access equity provision. To determine potential priority points for water access development, locations of parks with water access facilities and parks without water access facilities but adjacent to water bodies were overlayed onto the Composite Park Equity Map. Park sites with potential for water access development that were a distance removed from existing water access points were identified for pursual with priority given to any sites that were also in a high equity need area.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following items are priority projects and development based on equity needs. The prioritization was developed through quantitative and geographic analysis. The full set of priority location mapping can be found in Appendix I.

Table 5.6 // Prioritization Scoring for Improvements to Existing Facilities

Recommendation	Equity Score	Feasibility	Cost	Total	Priority
Universally accessible amenities and design elements	38	5	2	45	High Priority
Review and address ADA accessibility	37	5	3	45	
Improve soft surface trail conditions and surfacing	35	5	5	45	
Address safety hazards	36	5	1	42	
Increase connectivity and access to parks and recreational facilities	34	3	4	41	
Improve casual water access points with dedicated constructed facilities	34	3	4	41	
Increase access to shade at all parks	29	5	3	37	Moderate Priority
Establish a Natural Resources Team that will develop a Natural Resources Management Plan for implementation at all park sites	29	3	5	37	
Improve park perimeter landscapes	28	5	3	36	
All Parks to meet standardized development levels	34	1	1	36	
Track equipment age, schedule routine maintenance, and plan for equipment replacement	31	5	0	36	
Construct stormwater management facilities and erosion control measures	31	3	1	35	
Continue to add landscaping to casual sports fields	23	5	4	32	Some Priority
Update park entrance sign standard	14	5	5	24	
Continue to replace park perimeter 2-rail fencing with 4x10 single-rail fencing throughout the park system	14	5	1	20	

Prioritized Improvements to Existing Park Facilities

The highest scoring priorities for improvements to existing park facilities are increased ADA access and availability of universally accessible design elements, improvements to soft surface trails, addressing safety

hazards, increased connectivity between parks or recreational facilities and the surrounding communities and destination points, and increased and improved water access. The scoring for the projects can be seen in Table 5.6.

These items all have high equity scoring, are phaseable, and generally have low to moderate project costs.

The Department is currently working on comprehensively improving accessibility in the park system and has an ADA transition plan in place. ADA accessibility barriers identified in the site assessments are minor, like the lip of a mulch containment barrier at playgrounds, that can be addressed by installing a modular ramp. Any safety concerns identified in the site assessments are also minor, and can include loose equipment, missing railings, or compacted playground surfaces.

Table 5.7 // Prioritization Scoring for Development of Park Amenities

Type of Amenity	Equity Score	Feasibility	Cost	Total	Priority
Playground	39	15	12	66	High Priority
Canoe/Kayak Launch	35	15	15	65	
Soft Trails (miles)	35	15	15	65	
Paved Trails (miles)	34	15	12	61	
Outdoor Fitness	33	15	12	60	
Dog Park	31	15	12	58	Moderate Priority
Archery Range	30	10	15	55	
Community Gardens	24	15	15	54	
Shelters	27	15	12	54	
Pickleball	30	10	12	52	
Skate Spot	25	15	12	52	
Basketball	25	10	15	50	
Boat Ramp	33	10	6	49	
Volleyball	21	10	15	46	
Fishing Piers	35	10	0	45	
Rectangular Field	23	10	9	42	
Cricket Field	22	10	9	41	
Soccer	22	10	9	41	
Diamond Field	24	10	6	40	
Pump Track	28	10	2	40	
Splash Playground	27	10	2	39	
Tennis	17	10	12	39	Some Priority
Outdoor Pools	30	5	1	36	
Skate Park	23	10	3	36	
Field Hockey	18	10	1	29	
Nature Center	21	5	0	26	
Outdoor Stage	14	5	1	20	

Prioritized New Amenity Construction

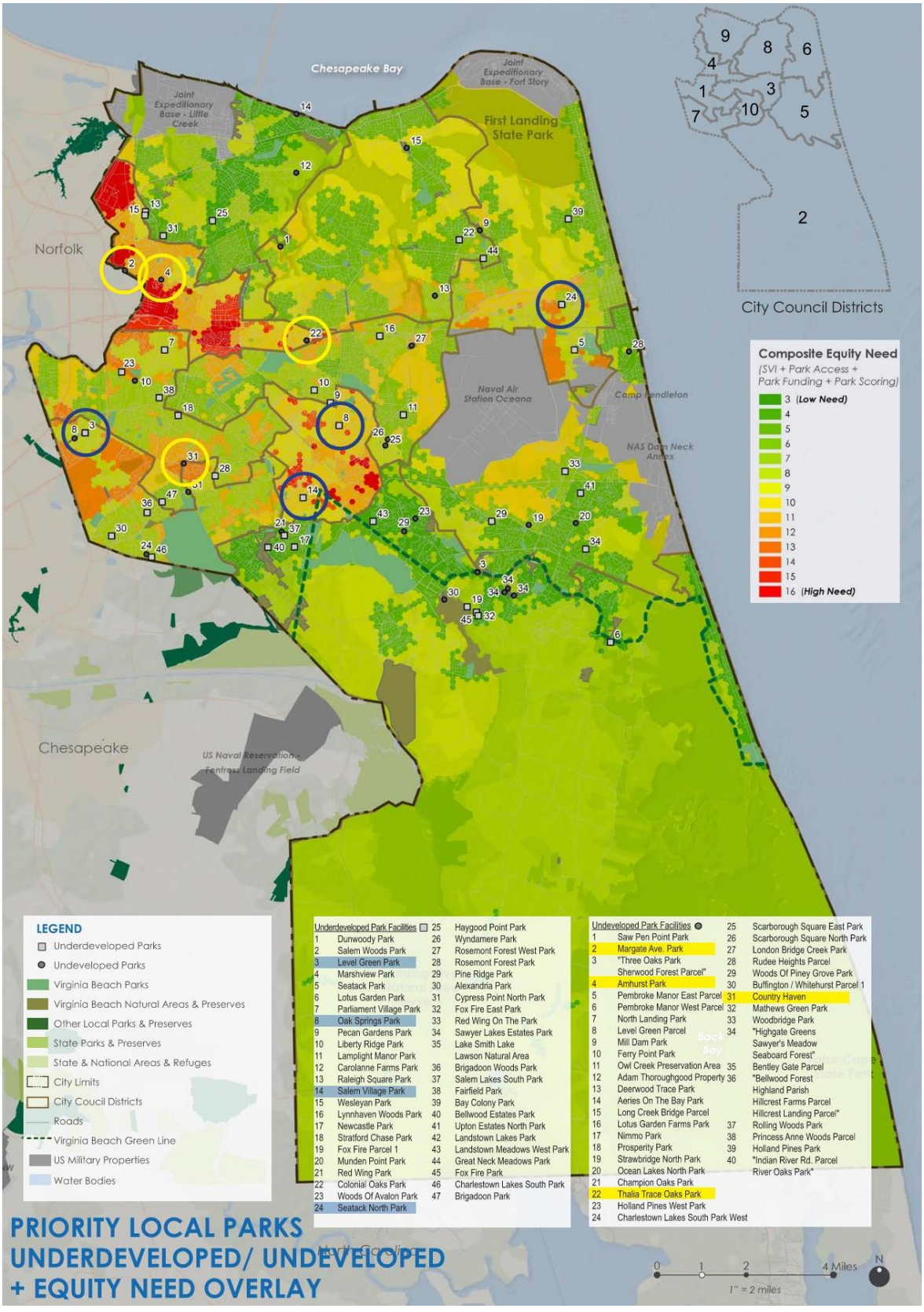
The highest scoring priorities for new amenity construction are playgrounds, canoe/kayak launches, soft surface and paved trails, and outdoor fitness areas. These all have high equity scores, have been identified as priorities by the community, are highly feasible, and have low project costs. The scoring for the projects can be seen in Table 5.7.

Prioritized Un/Under-Developed Parks

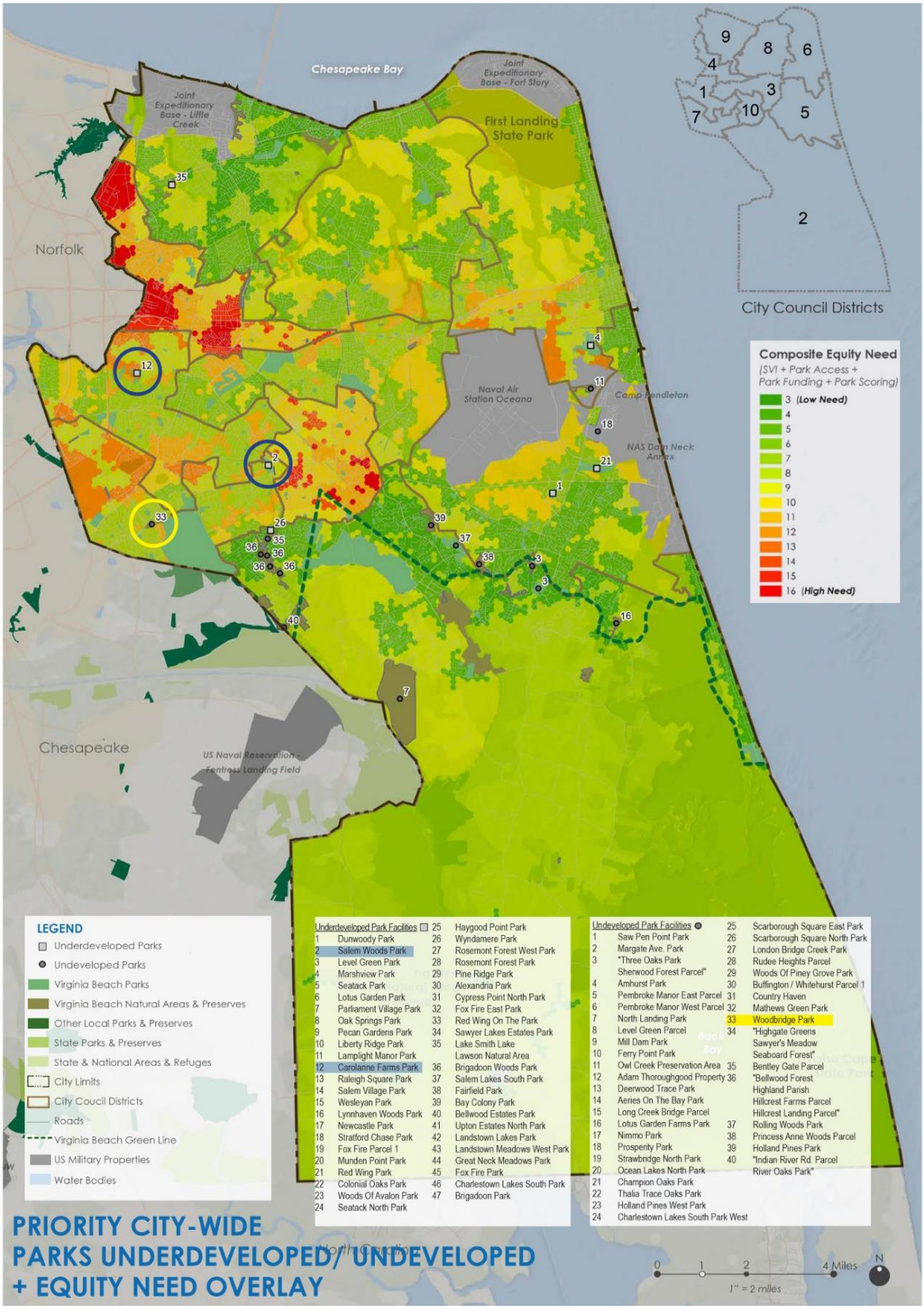
The City has over 40 each of un- and under-developed park sites. By overlaying the Composite Park Equity Map with these park sites, the parks with the greatest impact, and thus priority, are identified. High priority underdeveloped Local parks are: Level Green Park, Oak Springs Park, Salem Village Park, Seatack North Park. Please note, Level Green Park is scheduled for a $4.5 million renovation which will transform it into a City-Wide park, based on the type and diversity of amenities that will be constructed in the park. Refer to Map 5.1 for the location assessment of priority local parks.

High priority underdeveloped City-Wide parks are Salem Woods Park, Marshview Park, and Carolanne Farms. High priority undeveloped local parks are Margate Ave. Park, Amhurst Park, Thalia Trace Oaks Park, and County Haven. There are no undeveloped City-Wide parks located in a high priority area. Refer to Map 5.2 for the location assessment of priority City-Wide parks.

Map 5.1// Priority Local Parks for Development



Map 5.2 // Priority City-Wide Parks for Development



This prioritization narrows a list of over 80 park sites down to a list of twelve parks for priority investment and development. Further prioritization is recommended to focus on improving City-Wide type parks. Virginia Beach has a greater shortfall of City-Wide type parks than Local type parks, so addressing this need first is a priority. From an impact perspective, City-Wide parks have more amenities, specialty amenities, and reach a larger number of people than Local parks. While City-Wide parks are more expensive to build, their return on investment is greater.

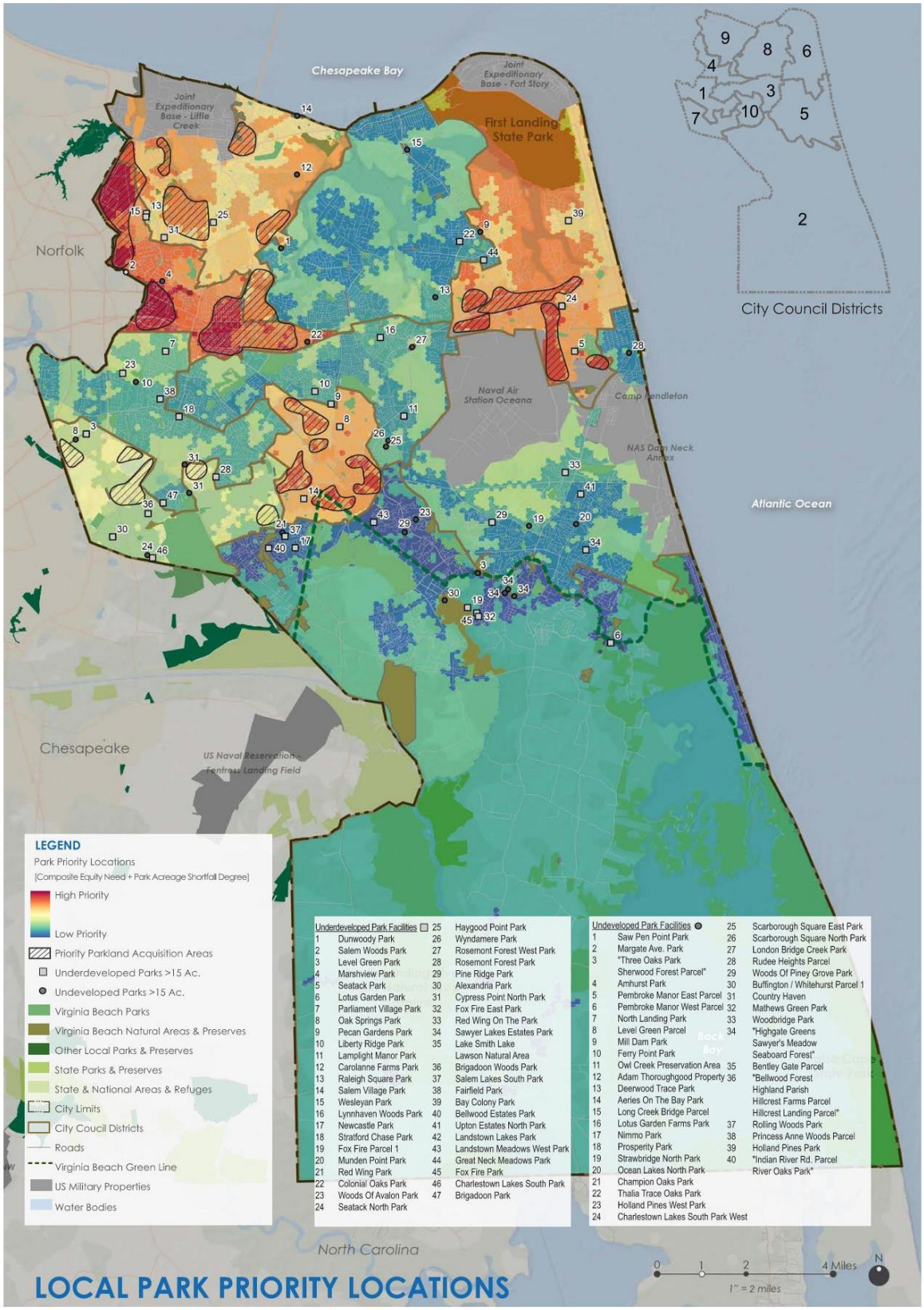
Prioritized Park Land Acquisition

The acquisition of additional park land will likely be necessary to resolve park acreage level of service shortfalls, meet public need, and address equity now as the City's population continues to grow, even with using alternative solutions to purchasing. It is estimated that even with implementing alternative solutions like partnerships, reclassification, and infill development of Special Use and Natural Area parks, an additional 121 acres of local park land and 992 acres of City-Wide park land will be needed by 2036. Districts 4, 6, 7, 9 and 10 face shortfalls of local park acreage and Districts 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 face shortfalls of City-Park land. There is the potential for District 3 to address shortfalls through existing park acreages. The areas where additional Local Park land and City-Wide Park land could be acquired and address access equity are shown on Map 5.3 and Map 5.4. Parks are not required to be built in every one of the outlined areas, these are guidelines to focus the search for land for however many are necessary.

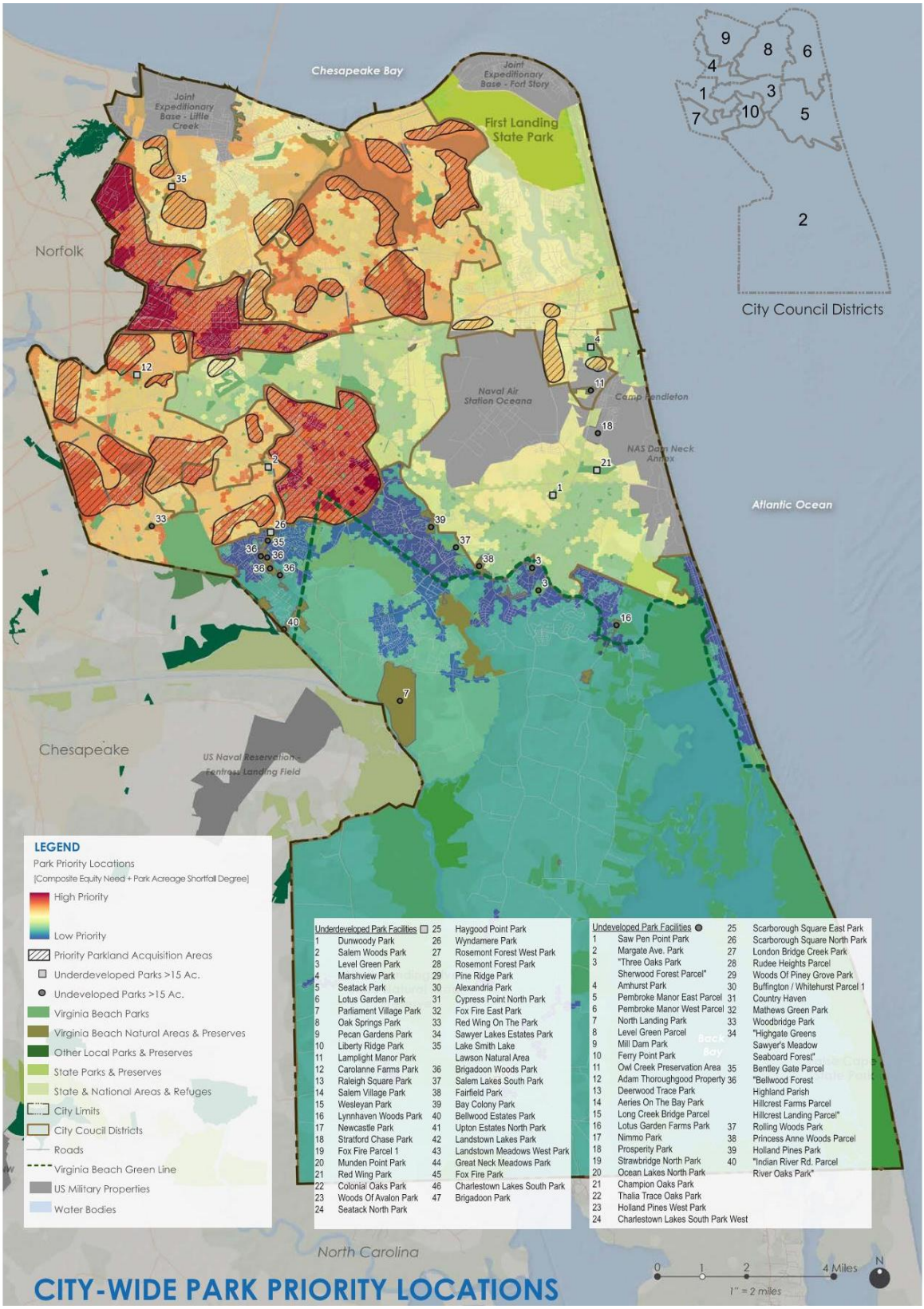
Prioritized Water Access Points

Providing additional water access, such as boat ramps, canoe/kayak launches, boardwalks, piers, fishing access, or scenic viewing, is a priority for Virginia Beach. Map 5.5 analyzes all existing parks and undeveloped parks to identify which parks have water access and which sites could support new water access. Priority sites were identified based on water adjacency, distance from existing water access, and the Composite Equity Need Analysis. Underdeveloped parks that could potentially support water access development are Salem Woods Park, Oak Springs Park, Lamplight Manor Park, and Rosemont Forest Park. The undeveloped Margate Ave. Park may also be able to support a water access features, which should be explored during site master planning.

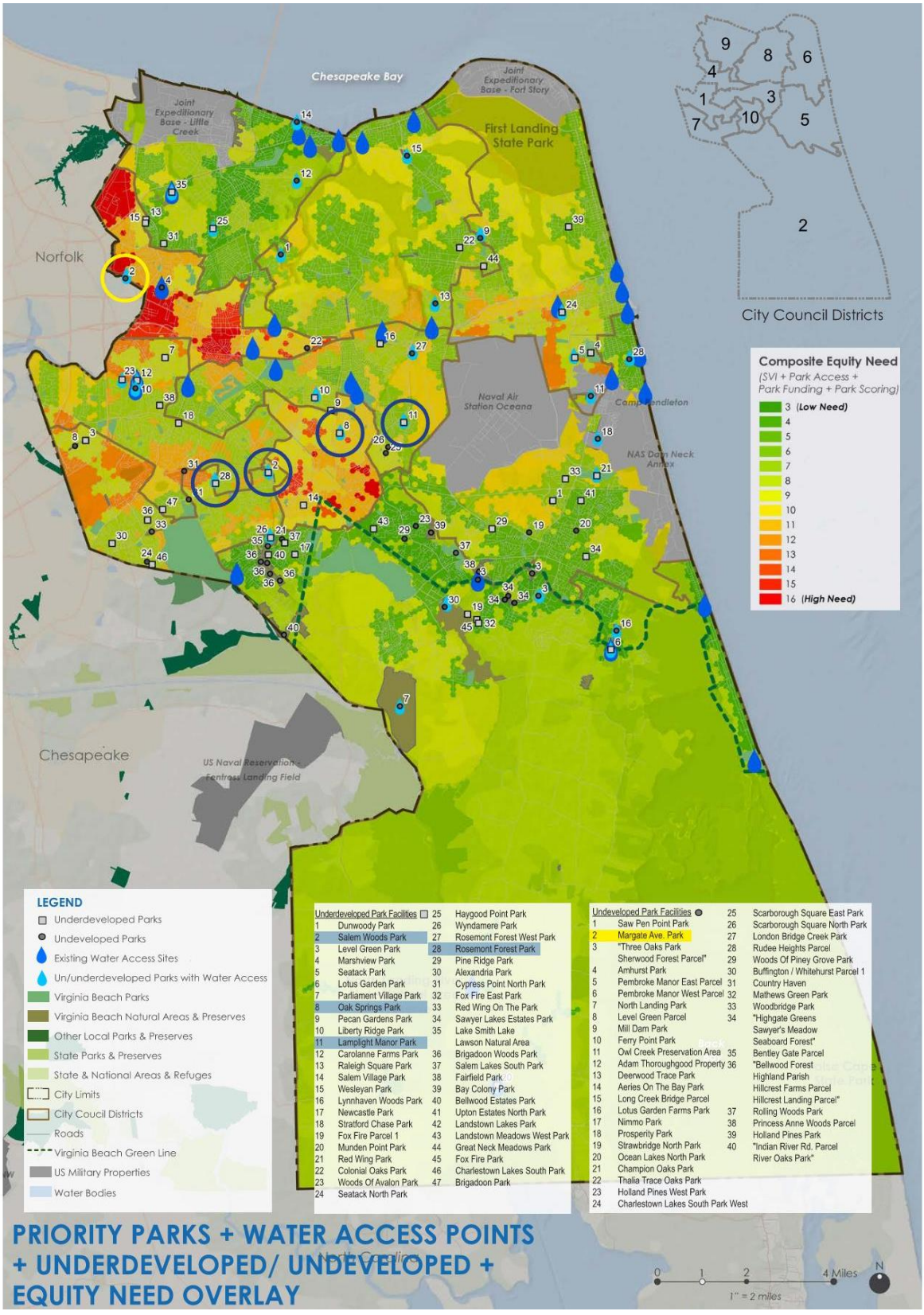
Map 5.3 // Priority Areas for Local Park Land Acquisition



Map 5.4 // Priority Areas for City-Wide Park Land Acquisition



Map 5.5 // Priority Parks for Water Access Development



5.4 IMPLEMENTATION AND BUDGET PLAN

Implementation planning takes recommendations made in earlier sections and converts them into tangible results. The plan includes prioritization of recommendations and a phased cost estimate. The goal of the plan is to identify the most efficient way to sequence and fund the priority recommendations to balance increased equity of services, citizen needs, and City resources. Refer to Appendix J for additional information.

IMPLEMENTATION PHASING

Phasing is determined by overlaying equity needs and shortfalls, City goals, public need, project cost, feasibility, and order of repairs over the list of recommendations for sustaining the parks system. The result is a 10-year phasing plan to implement key park priority improvements. For example, recommendations that address safety, code or access, or could be implemented easily with low cost are categorized into the short-term time frame, to be completed within the next 5 years. Projects that involve in-depth consideration, compilation of larger funding amounts, and extended demographic shifts or long-range planning are categorized in the long-term time frame, the next 11-15 years.

Recommendations that should be addressed in the short-term, or the next 0-5 years, are safety and accessibility improvements, lifecycle replacement and maintenance backlog, the construction of high-priority amenities, and the development and investment in priority City-Wide parks. Recommendations that should be addressed in the mid-term, or the next 6-10 years, are park appearance, continuation of lifecycle replacement and maintenance backlog, construction of high- and medium-priority amenities, and the investment in priority Local and City-Wide parks. Recommendations that should be addressed in the long term, over the next 11-15 years, include all recommendations in the mid-term category as well as park land acquisition. Refer to Table 5.9 for a summary spreadsheet of phasing recommendations and associated costs, and Appendix J for the full detailed list of projects in each phase.

Phasing Plan

5 Years SHORT-TERM	6-10 Years MID-TERM	11-15 Years LONG-TERM
Recommendations that Address safety, code or access, or could be implemented easily with low cost. • Safety and accessibility improvements Lifecycle replacement and maintenance backlog • The construction of high-priority amenities • The development and investment in priority city-wide parks	• Park appearance • Continuation of lifecycle replacement and maintenance backlog • The construction of high- and medium-priority amenities • The investment in priority local and city-wide parks	*Projects that involve in-depth consideration, compilation of larger funding amounts, and extended demographic shifts or long-range planning.* • All recommendations in the mid-term category • Park land acquisition

The order of recommendations should be reviewed every year to reflect budgets, staffing levels, new policies, usage trends, citizen demand, and metrics associated with equity goals. Phasing may shift if opportunities arise to implement recommendations sooner than listed in this plan. To track and stay on top of changing priorities and need, the Park Needs and Development Strategy Plan should be updated every five years and coordinated with other city departments and planning documents.

ANALYSIS OF COST

An important piece of the plan is to determine how much to budget for the recommended improvements identified in the conditions assessments, shortfalls identified in the Level of Service analysis, and the recommended system-wide improvements. The Department is currently facing a maintenance backlog in parks and recreation facilities of over $30 million, with an anticipated $227.8 million of lifecycle replacement costs required over the next 10 years. Further investment beyond this is required to expand recreational offerings within existing parks and develop new parks and open space to meet the public's needs and to provide a world-class parks system. A comprehensive assessment of capital investment costs with an achievable implementation plan is essential for CIP planning. The cost analysis in this report shows gross approximate figures and is not intended to be used for specifical financial determinations. The purpose of this analysis is to provide the Department enough information to initiate discussion related to priorities and funding planning.

Methodology

The general approach to preparing this section was to identify current and proposed costs, including lifecycle and capital costs. Lifecycle cost are expenses incurred to maintain and improve a park or facility to prevent it from falling into disrepair, and then to replace the amenity once it reaches the end of its lifecycle. Capital costs are typically larger expenses for one-time improvements or new additions. The full spreadsheet of costs is presented in Appendix J.

Costs were prepared using a menu of facilities developed in the Needs Assessment and put forth in the recommendations. Costs do not include any existing CIP line items, except for the Virginia Beach Trail. The lifecycle costs are based on a Departmental inventory of all amenities. Existing facility improvements estimates of probable costs are in order of magnitude based on observations during site conditions assessments. Proposed improvements, including park land and open space acquisition and development, are based on shortfalls identified in the Level of Service Analysis. The cost of feature and amenity improvements is an approximation based on current material and project costs. The actual cost of a feature will vary dependent on site condition, level of service provided, and local construction environment. The accumulated costs developed for the proposed features does not include site specific planning costs such as utilities, entrance roads, amenities, surveying, meriting, or engineering fees. A contingency of 25% was added to cover these costs.



Ribbon cutting at Pine Meadow Park.

Costs have been classified into seven categories, to aid in understanding of project scope and in preparation of funding resources. The categories are existing facility improvements, lifecycle replacement,

amenity construction to meet the 15-year Level of Service standards, construction of undeveloped parks, development of underdevelopment parks, new park land acquisition, and the previously planned project of the Virginia Beach Trail.

Detailed cost estimates and planning studies will need to be prepared for each proposed park and facility as the City commits to implementation. The estimated cost of developing existing undeveloped and under-developed park sites is based on meeting the minimum level of Virginia Beach park development standards. It is likely that many parks will be developed with additional amenities to meet the LOS shortfalls or needs of the adjacent neighborhood, resulting in a higher capital investment amount than identified in this estimate.

Costs for each improvement type are categorized into short term (0-5 years), mid-term (6-10 years), and long term (11-15 years) implementation phases. Projects were categorized based on the factors described in the phasing and priority ranking methods described earlier in this chapter.

Overview of Costs

Implementing all recommendations within the plan will require significant funding resources. The order of magnitude estimate of probable cost is $837,650,000, calculated in 2024 dollars. Based on inflation, labor costs, material cost variability, and other factors, the actual implemented construction cost will be higher.

The identified priority projects were phased into three categories, short-, mid-, and long-term projects. Total estimate order of magnitude cost for the prioritized projects over a 15-year period is $483,630,000. The cost in each phase is stepped, with the smallest amount in the short-term phases and the largest estimated cost in the long-term category, to allow the City to plan funding strategies and project development for larger scale projects. Refer to Table 5.9 for more detail on the recommended funding for different project types in each of the three phases.

Table 5.8 // Virginia Beach Park Recommendations Order of Magnitude Estimate of Total Probable Cost

Recommendation	Cost
Existing facility improvements	$18,440,000
Lifecycle Replacement (10-year)	$227,810,000
Amenity construction (15 year LOS)	$268,410,000
Undeveloped Parks	$57,310,000
Underdeveloped Parks	$14,130,000
New park land acquisition and development	$191,550,000
Planned Project: Virginia Beach Trail	$60,000,000
Grand Total Cost of Recommendations	**$837,650,000**

Note: VB Trail project cost does not include $15M of federal grant money awarded in 2024

These costs are significantly greater than the Department's current operating budget or planned CIP projects. Addressing funding shortfalls will become a balancing act between increasing funding requests from the City, asking residents to help pay for the amenities they are requesting, and identifying new sources of money. These new sources may be bonds, tax increases, development based-proffers, new or increased user fees, or corporate partnerships that are not currently in place. The Parks and Recreation Department has pursued partnerships with other City departments in the past, and should continue to foster such opportunities to mutually achieve goals through diversified resource investment into a project, including land resources, easements, funding, and special services.

It is important to allocate additional maintenance funding to support capital expenditures and system expansions. These cost estimates do not include additional maintenance funding that will be required.

Table 5.9 // Virginia Beach Park Recommendations Order of Magnitude Estimate of Probable Cost – 15-year Phased Priority Implementation

Virginia Beach Park Recommendations Estimate of Probable Cost - Phased Prioritization			
Recommendation	**Short-Term (0-5 years)**	**Mid-Term (6-10 years)**	**Long-Term (11-15 years)**
Existing facility improvements	$7,090,000	$4,460,000	$4,090,000
Lifecycle Replacement (10-year)	$79,110,000	$79,110,000	$69,590,000
Amenity construction (15 year LOS)	$11,410,000	$44,530,000	$72,180,000
Undeveloped Parks	$5,040,000	$11,450,000	$16,930,000
Underdeveloped Parks	$2,820,000	$3,030,000	$1,560,000
New park land acquisition			$14,230,000
Planned Project: Virginia Beach Trail	$10,000,000	$10,000,000	$40,000,000
Total Cost of Recommendations	**$115,470,000**	**$152,580,000**	**$218,580,000**
Grand Total Cost of Recommendations		**$486,630,000**	

Note: VB Trail project cost does not include $15M of federal grant money awarded in 2024

The Department should maintain and expand pursuit of grant funding whenever possible. It should be noted that, with limited exceptions, grant funding cannot support parks and recreation improvements on a system-wide scale or for the long term.

Also, please note that these estimates in this report represent 2024 dollars. Costs will need to be re-examined in subsequent years for increases in material and labor costs and inflation.

Funding Strategies

Municipal parks and recreation agencies across the United States today have learned to manage revenue options, especially with the limited availability of tax dollars. The Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation Department can no longer rely on taxes as their sole revenue option and have developed new revenue sources/options to help support capital and operational needs.

Virginia Beach has learned to use Parks and Recreation facilities, amenities, programs, and events to generate revenue and support economic development. Virginia Beach recognizes that people will drive for quality recreation facilities such as sports complexes, recreation centers, and tournaments, if the facilities/events are professionally managed and properly marketed.

To continue to build and maintain the Parks and Recreation system, funding should be pursued for capital investments, such as those presented in this plan. It is recommended that Virginia Beach Parks and

Recreation continue to collaborate with the City's Departments of Budget and Management Services and Finance to identify the specific capital project needs and the necessary funding strategies to meet the needs on an annual basis. Some, if not all, of these sources should be considered as an option to support the capital and operational needs of the Department.

While numerous funding strategies are listed below, due to the size and scope of the need, anything other than a general obligation bond, new dedicated funding, or significant federal grants are not going to substantially reduce the need as it exists today.

Funding Strategies Currently Utilized

The department currently utilizes an extensive list of funding strategies to fund capital improvement projects that include:

- Dedicated funding
- Referendum $.03476 Real Estate Tax for recreation centers only
- **Outdoor Initiative $.0047 Real Estate Tax** for parks, special use facilities, greenways, natural areas, tennis courts, athletic field lighting, and playground renovations.
- Open Space Initiative $.0044 Meal Tax for open space acquisition
- **Special Revenue Fund** for recreation centers and contractual obligations (golf courses and Lynnhaven Boat Ramp & Beach Facility)
- **General Fund** for bikeways and trails, park infrastructure replacement, special use facilities, and emergency repairs and Sportsplex
- **Charter Bonds** for Sportsplex and trail renovations
- **Federal, state, and local grants** for trails, boat ramp, and park improvements
- **Developer cash-in-lieu** to meet the Open Space Requirement
- **Land Leases/concessions*** for leases of land, cell towers, and concessions
- Various user fees*
- **Parking fees** to support special events, festivals, and sports tournaments
- **Permit fees** for picnic shelters, sports fields, and special events
- **Program and membership fees** for programs, recreation center memberships, athletics, childcare, etc.

* *Offset operating expenses*

Other sources

- **Business/resident Donations** from corporations and private citizens are accepted to support specific improvements and amenities
- **Nonprofit organizations** provide support for green space and parks in various ways through volunteers/community service workers
- **Corporate sponsorships** fund a component, or all the cost of an event, program, or activity based on their name being associated with the service and are typically title sponsors, presenting sponsors, associate sponsors, product sponsors, or in-kind sponsors
- **Adopt-a-Programs** are two-year commitments for individuals, organizations, groups, businesses, and families who perform a minimum of one cleanup every other month maintaining a specific area of a park or an amenity.

- **Advertising revenue** from the sale of ads in the parks and athletic fields

Funding Strategy Utilized for the Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation Foundation (VBPRF)

The VBPRF operates as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, working on behalf of Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation, to raise needed dollars to support its vision and operational needs. Funds raised by the foundation are tax-exempt.

- **Promote specific causes, activities, or issues** the Department needs to address and offer a variety of means to fund projects, including capital campaigns, gifts catalogs, fundraisers, endowments, sales of park-related memorabilia, etc.
- **Private donations** may be received in the form of cash, land, facilities, recreation equipment, art, or in-kind services
- **Estate donations** such as wills, estates, and trusts may also be dedicated for use in developing and/or operating facilities and park infrastructure

Funding Strategy Opportunities

- **Tourism Investment Program (TIP)** receives dedicated revenue streams to fund tourism and other economic vitality related operating costs and capital projects. Revenues in this fund are primarily generated from 5% of the hotel tax and $1 of the $2 Hotel Flat Tax, 1.06% of the meal tax, $.05 per pack of the cigarette tax, and 100% of the amusement tax
- **Tourism Advertising Program (TAP)** receives dedicated revenue streams to fund tourism advertising. Revenues in this fund are primarily generated from $1 of the $2 Hotel Flat Tax, 1% hotel tax, and .5% of the meal tax
- Request General Obligation Bond Referendum for park facilities only
- **Increase the percentage of Outdoor Initiative Real Estate Tax** for parks, special use facilities, greenways, natural areas, tennis courts, athletic field lighting, and playground renovations.

Of these potential new funding strategy opportunities, securing a general obligation bond will secure the significant quantity of funding required for the 10-year investment in developing the priorities identified in this report. A 1.28 cent increase will result in $100,000,000 in bond funding, while a 1.63 cent increase will result in $150,000,000 in bond funding.

Further investigation would be required before issuing a bond referendum to determine what the public's key interests and priorities are, which may include recreation centers as well as park facilities. The bond will likely need to account for some special interest groups and projects outside of only park facilities to secure an affirmative vote by the public.

Increasing the percentage of Outdoor Initiative Real Estate Tax will open up an expanded and consistent revenue stream immediately. This has the advantage of supporting more immediate needs, as well as sustained funding for ongoing maintenance, lifecycle replacement, and park improvements.

These funding strategies address the capital investment and may also cover park and amenity maintenance and lifecycle replacement, but with the expansion of the park system there is also increase staffing and operations cost. The Department must consider funding sources to address this increased inventory of park facilities to continue high quality service to its citizens post construction.



Sunset at Virginia Beach.

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