



Parks & Recreation System Long Range Planning

**Fairfax County Planning Commission
Parks Committee
October 3, 2019**



Fairfax County Parks at a Glance



American Alliance of Museums



2019 National Gold Medal Award Winner
Class I: Park System Excellence (400,001+ Population)

23,550



ACRES OF PARKLAND AND OPEN SPACE

427

PARKS

93%



OF COUNTY RESIDENTS CONSIDER PARKS EXTREMELY OR VERY IMPORTANT TO THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE

87%



OF COUNTY RESIDENTS USED PARKS IN THE PAST YEAR



204

PLAYGROUNDS

320



MILES OF TRAILS

SUMMER PERFORMANCE SERIES



FEATURING

177

PERFORMANCES AND MOVIES



Mission & Vision

The master plan guides the Park Authority in aligning all agency plans, programs and initiatives to support its mission and vision.

Park Authority Vision

The Fairfax County Park Authority strives to inspire and sustain a passion for parks and leisure experiences that enhances our community's quality of life.

Park Authority Mission

To set aside public spaces for and assist citizens in the protection and enhancement of environmental values, diversity of natural habitats and cultural heritage to guarantee that these resources will be available to both present and future generations.

To create and sustain quality facilities and services which offer citizens opportunities for recreation, improvement of their physical and mental well-being, and enhancement of their quality of life.



Countywide Strategic Plan Alignment



Cultural and Recreational Opportunities*



Economic Opportunity**



Education and Lifelong Learning**



Effective and Efficient Government*



Health and Environment*



Housing and Neighborhood Livability*



Mobility and Transportation*



Safety and Security*



Self-Sufficiency for People with Vulnerabilities*

***Direct Relationship to Parks**
****Indirect Relationship to Parks**



Long Range Planning Process

Multi-Year Planning Process:

- **2016:** Parks Count! Needs Assessment
- **2017:** Parks and Recreation System Master Plan
- **2018:** FY 2019 – 2023 Strategic Plan
- **2019 – Now:** Implementing the Strategic Plan

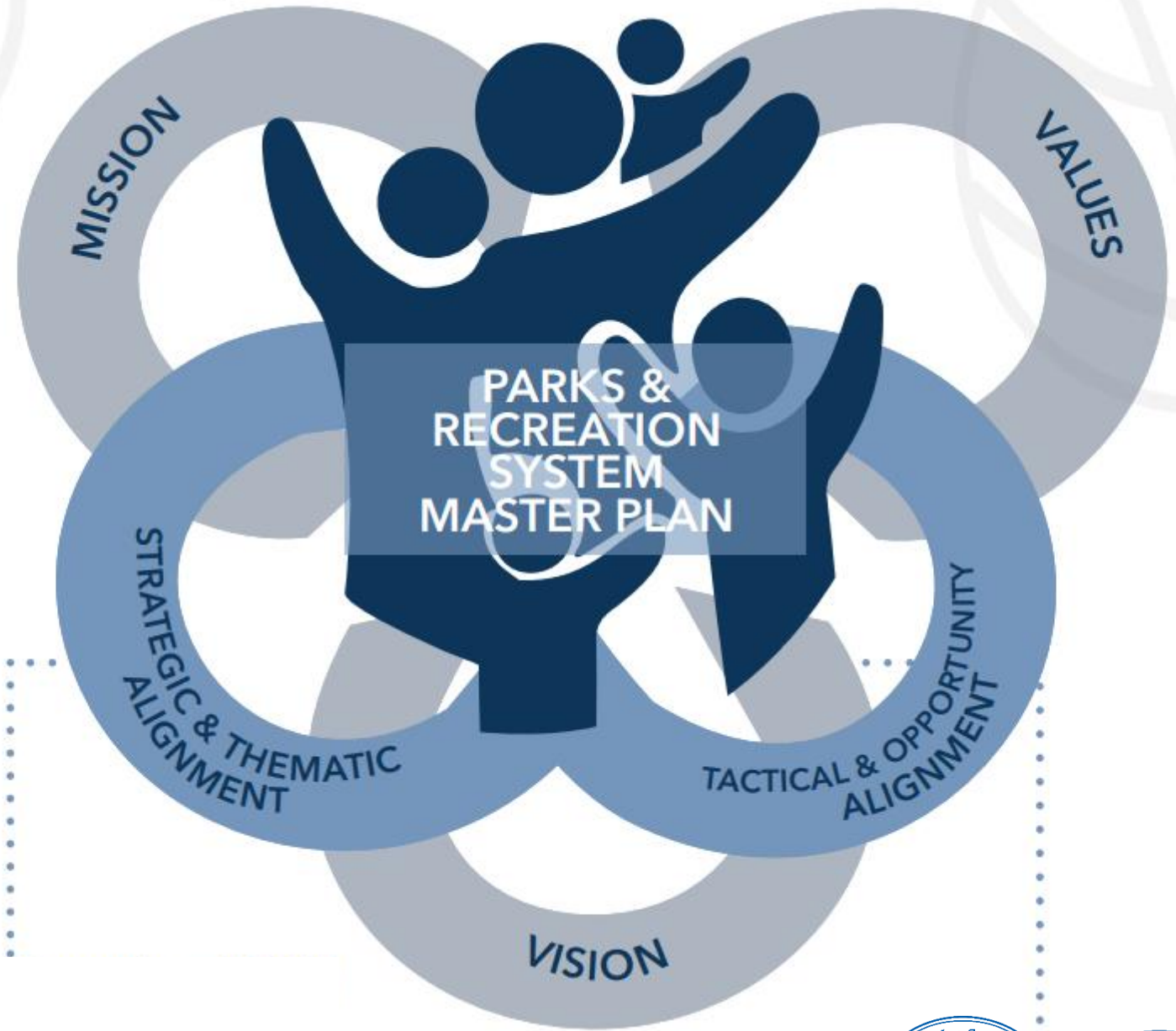
Purpose: to understand community needs and establish 5 and 10-year plans to meet those needs



Master Plan Alignment

Alignment with:

- BOS and County Priorities
- Park Authority Planning
- Needs Assessment Findings
- Community Input



Master Plan Alignment

Board of Supervisors (BOS)/ County Plans Referenced for Alignment

- + BOS Vision & Priorities
- + BOS Environmental Vision
- + BOS Economic Success Strategic Plan
- + Community Health Improvement Plan
- + Comprehensive Plan
- + Fairfax First
- + Human Services Needs Assessment
- + One Fairfax
- + Tree Action Plan
- + 50+ Plan



Alignment of agency planning, programs and initiatives is critical for the long-term sustainability of the park system. The master plan aligns the broader strategic direction of the Park Authority with county priorities.

Park Authority Plans Utilized in Alignment

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan
- Asset Management Plan/Total Cost of Ownership
- Capital Improvement Plan
- Cultural Resources Management Plan
- Division Operations Plans
- Energy Management Plan
- Financial Management Plan
- Natural Resources Management Plan
- Parks Count! Needs Assessment
- Park-Specific Master Plans
- Park Authority Policy Manual
- Recreation Programming Plan
- Strategic Plan
- Trail Development Strategy Plan



Parks & Recreation System Master Plan

- 10-Year Plan
- Established FCPA policy based on Needs Assessment Findings and County Priorities
- Mission & Vision
- 6 Goals
- 32 Recommendations



Master Plan

Guiding Principles



Parks and Recreation System Master Plan

Guiding Principles, Goals and Recommendations

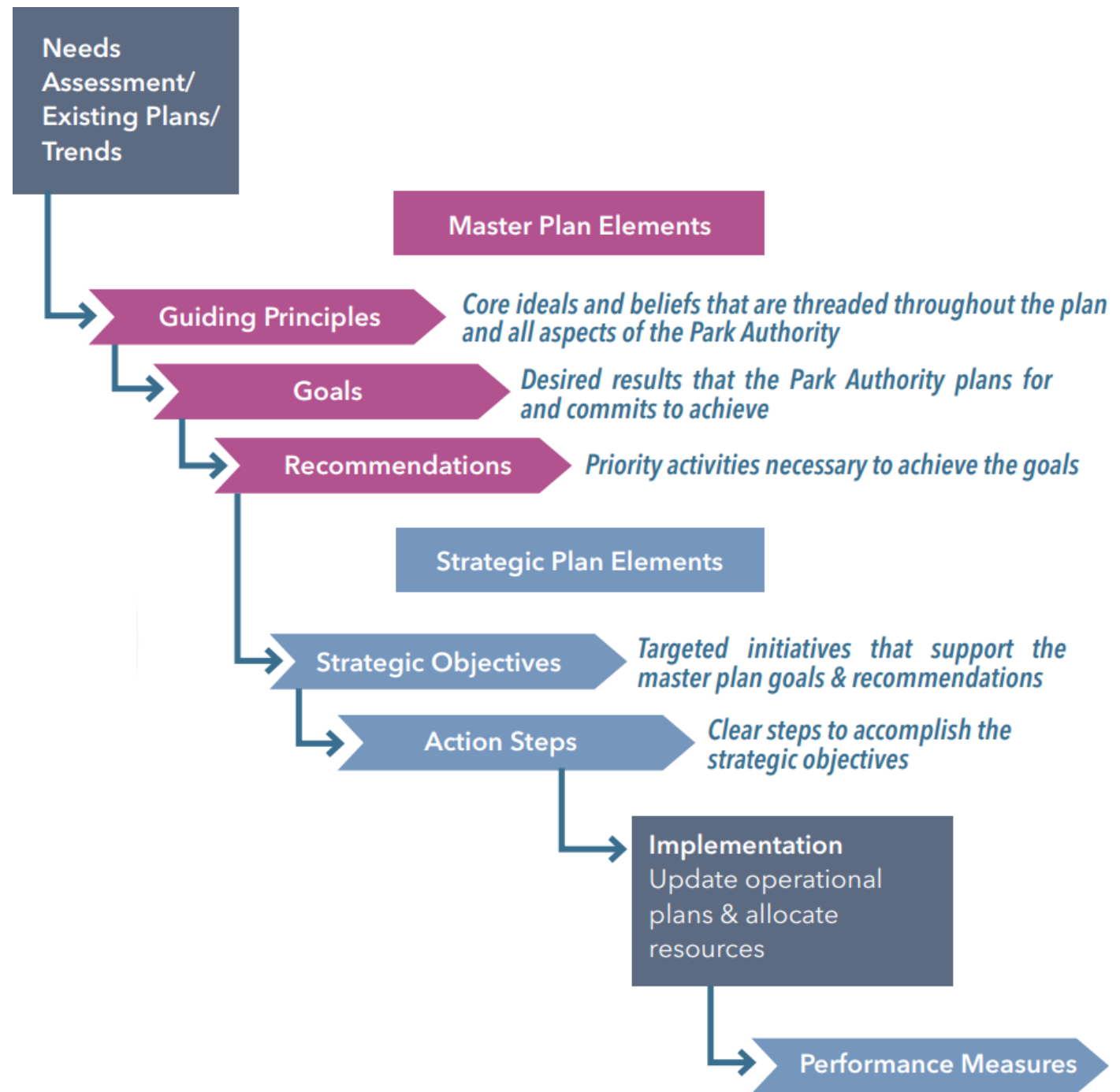


FY 2019 – 2023 Strategic Plan
12 Strategic Objectives and Action Steps for each (83 total)
Roadmap for staff



Guiding Framework

- Strong connection between long-range policy (Master Plan) and 5-Year tactical plan (Strategic Plan)



Master Plan/Strategic Plan Alignment

Master Plan Goals

Improve and promote natural resource protection and management

Ensure protection, conservation, preservation, and interpretation of cultural resources

Strategic Plan Objectives

Increase the Park Authority's land holdings based on a proactive and informed decision-making strategy

Balance natural resources, cultural resources, recreational needs, and equity in planning and developing a sustainable park system



Master Plan/Strategic Plan Alignment

Key findings from the 2016 Parks Count! Needs Assessment support this Strategic Objective.

Building from the community priorities identified in the 2016 Parks Count! Needs Assessment, the Park Authority aims to focus efforts in areas with greater need based on factors including health disparities.

Health disparities are differences in health status among distinct segments of the population, including differences that occur by gender, race, ethnicity, education, income, disability, or geographic location.

Preserve Open Space & the Environment is most important for the Park Authority to do for the future of Fairfax County, according to 60% of survey respondents.

(Based on the percentage of respondents' top three selections in the 2016 Parks Count! Needs Assessment statistically-valid survey.)

Priority Needs by Age Group



Master Plan/Strategic Plan Alignment

Master Plan Goals

Improve access and opportunities for healthy and active lifestyles

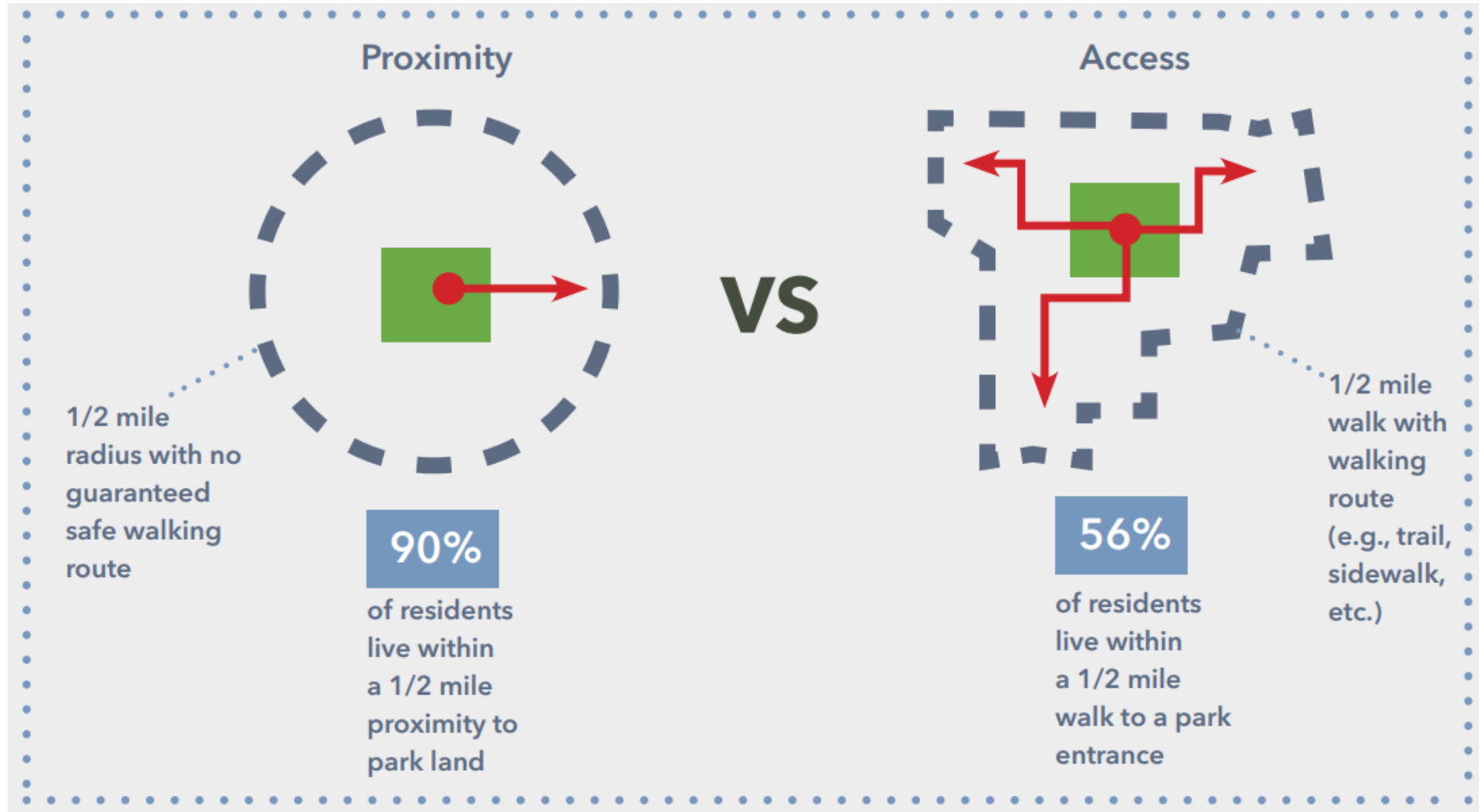
Strategic Objectives

Position the Park Authority as the model organization for increasing physical activity and wellness in Fairfax County

Increase walkable access (1/4 mile or 5-minute walk (urban) and 1/2 mile or 10-minute walk (countywide)) by County residents to park or facility entrances, or trailheads to connect people to nature and recreational experiences



Master Plan/Strategic Plan Alignment



Master Plan/Strategic Plan Alignment

Master Plan Goals

Enhance and maintain park system quality and condition

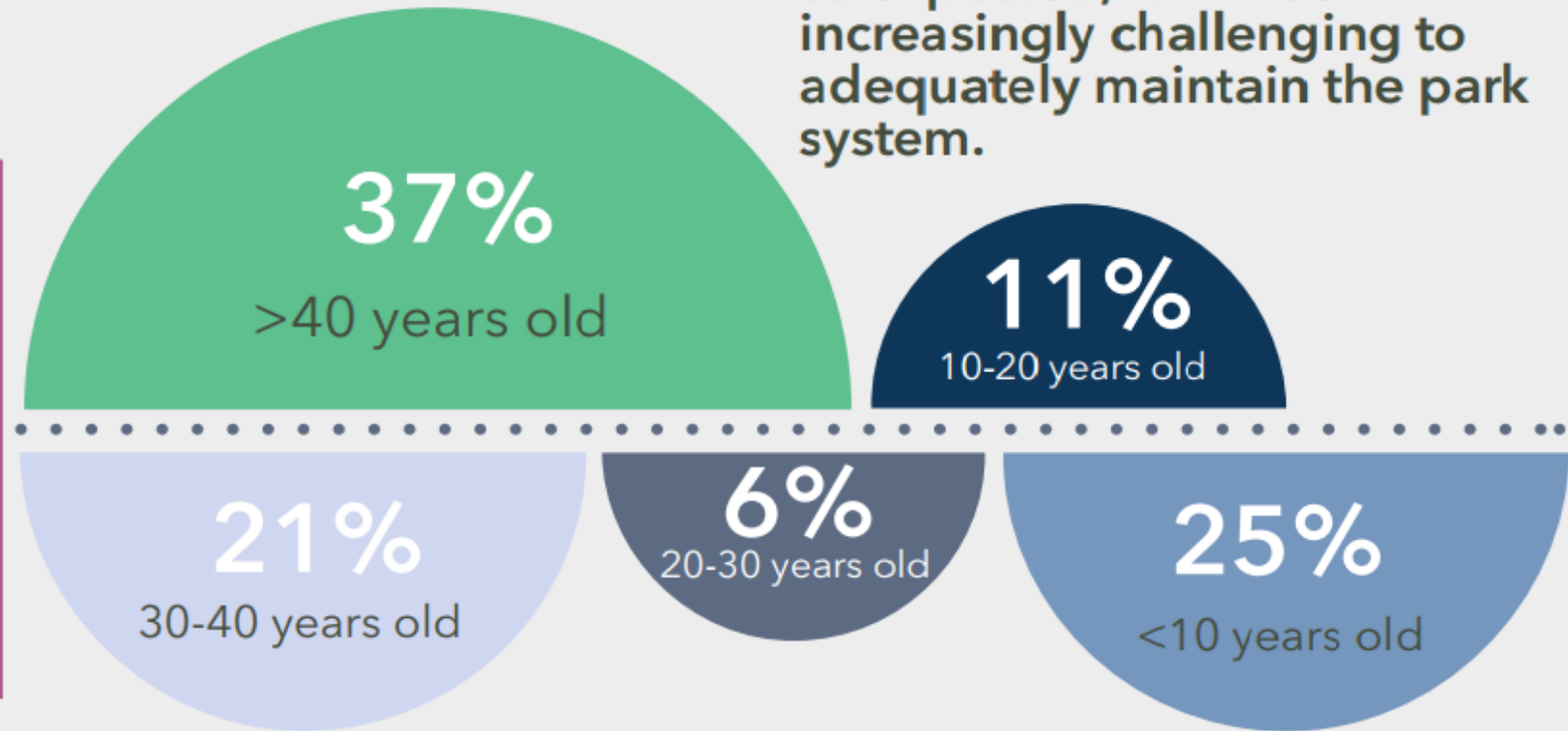
Strategic Objectives

Implement an asset management program to guide reinvestment, maintenance, and upgrades to infrastructure and capital equipment



Age of Park Structures

Of the 374 structures in the park system, 58%, or 217 structures, are 30+ years old.



If trends of park use, county population growth and fiscal constraint continue as expected, it will be increasingly challenging to adequately maintain the park system.



Master Plan/Strategic Plan Alignment

Master Plan Goals

Advance as an innovative, responsive, and adaptable organization

Strategic Objectives

Develop an IT infrastructure that coordinates data management, analysis, technology and business needs to support the operations and goals of the Park Authority and enables sound decision making and transparency

Provide training and leadership development for employees at all levels to ensure a high-performing organization

Reinforce and sustain a culture of accountability to advance the mission and vision



Master Plan/Strategic Plan Alignment

With a workforce of over 2,400 staff and thousands of park volunteers providing an extensive diverse array of services, a strong commitment to continual training and professional development is essential to meet community needs and sustain the agency.

As the use of electronics and mobile devices grows, the Park Authority has more opportunities to engage and educate park users, as well as a greater ability to utilize data.



Master Plan/Strategic Plan Alignment

Master Plan Goals

Provide sustainable financial management to advance the Park Authority Mission

Strategic Objectives

Develop and implement an advocacy strategy to increase dedicated funding and resources from the County

Collaborate with the Park Foundation to increase annual donations and provide greater support to the Park Authority

Develop and adopt a comprehensive and cross-divisional approach to business planning to improve financial performance

Establish a sponsorship program to secure, sustain, and continually increase alternative funding available for agency priorities



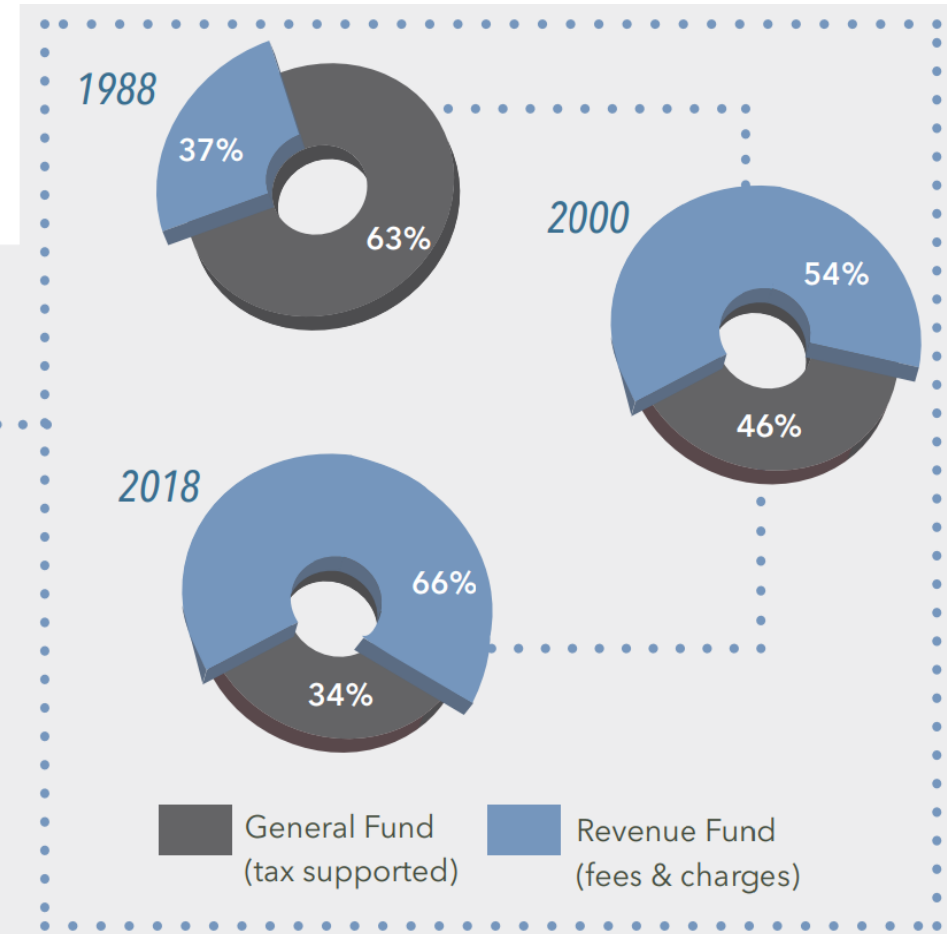
Master Plan/Strategic Plan Alignment

All parks are free for the public to use and are enjoyed by about 90% of the County's 1.2+ million residents.

However, the park system operating costs are supported by less than 1% of the County operational budget.

Since the 1980s the proportion of the Park Authority's operations that is funded by fees and charges has continued to increase.

Most Park Authority programs and facilities must be financially self-sustaining.



Strategic Objective

Increase the Park Authority's land holdings based on a proactive and informed decision-making strategy.

Example Related Action Steps:

- Develop an overall Open Space Plan to comprehensively look at open space, equitable access, connectivity of environmental corridors, and cultural resource preservation.
- Allocate capital funding for land acquisition that connects and enhances a non-fragmented network of natural habitat and biodiversity.
- Allocate capital funding for land acquisition that provides new parks and/or access to parks in areas of greatest need (based on health outcomes, income, population, and existing parkland, trails, and infrastructure).



Strategic Objective

Increase walkable access by County residents to park or facility entrances or trailheads to connect people to nature and recreational experiences.

Example Related Action Steps:

- Create a Park System Access Plan that identifies gaps and strategies to increase walkable park access and seek to incorporate it into the Comprehensive Plan.
- Benchmark best practices for bicycle access standards to provide trail connections.
- Partner with other County agencies and affiliates to adopt and promote a walkability standard and provide trail connections outside of parkland.
- Prioritize trail improvement projects that provide access to parks based on health outcomes and percentage of residents with walkable access to parks.



What's Next: Implementing the Strategic Plan

The Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Access Analysis:

- Where to locate parkland and facilities?
- What amenities provide the greatest health and equity benefits? How is this measured?
- How to leverage new and emerging data/analysis?
- How to build upon the findings of the 2016 Needs Assessment using an equity lens?
- How to strategically approach investments in land acquisition and capital improvements?
- How to align with Countywide strategic planning and initiatives?
- How to incorporate best practices?



What's Next: Implementing the Strategic Plan

Informing the Park Authority's Functional Planning and Actions:

- Update to the Parks and Recreation Policy Plan and related Area guidance in the Comprehensive Plan
- CIP/bond process, budget requests, and funding sources
- Land acquisition criteria
- Planning processes
- Development review & proffer negotiation
- PROSA is the link to the County's planning (Strategic Plan, CHIP, Trails, Bike Master Plan)



Additional Information



Contact:

Ryan Stewart

Park Planning Supervisor, Park Planning Branch

ryan.stewart@fairfaxcounty.gov 703-324-8787

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/publications-plans>

