

# Introduction

Established in 1978 as a relatively small Park Authority providing a few basic sports fields, the Prince William County Park Authority has grown into a diverse system of recreational opportunities and modern facilities ranging from small parks, which provide a tranquil oasis for neighborhood gatherings to large regional facilities, which attract a wide variety of families seeking high-quality recreation alternatives. The Authority now hosts over 2.5 million paid visitors to our parks, centers and programs each year plus uncounted casual visitors to our open parks and ball fields. The Prince William citizenry has tripled since 1978 as the county has grown from a rural, primarily farm community to a sophisticated modern county attracting high-technology businesses and highly educated, specialized workers. It has been the consistent goal of the Park Authority to remain a significant contributor to the high quality of life that our citizens have come to know and expect from our agency, as we progress into the future. This document directs that future-focused progress.

Our mission statement is the cornerstone of our Strategic Plan, which is a set of goals, objectives and strategies, which direct our course for the next five years, and build on the successful foundation of our past. It is supported by a number of additional documents and plans. One plan in particular, the Business Plan, identifies in more specific detail measurements as to how the agency will determine success, or the lack of it, in our future endeavors.

This document identifies five distinct opportunity areas that the Park Authority recognizes as having a potential significant impact on how we operate as a public service agency, and how the services we provide are administered in the future. These opportunity areas are:

1. Service delivery: How recreation is administered, with primary focus placed on the customer.
2. Citizen Involvement: Recognition that our mission starts with citizen input, and is improved through participatory communication with all interested citizens on a continuous basis.
3. Synergy through collaboration: With ever increasing demands and the need for increased efficiency by all government agencies, the mission of the Park Authority cannot be completed without teamwork by and through a collaborative effort with the community.
4. Changing demographics: Our county, the seventh fastest growing in diversity in the nation, cannot thrive unless the Park Authority increases it's effort to ensure a wide variety of services and products which grow in diversity as the population increases.
5. Changing landscape: Our once wide-open county has not been immune to the growth in the region and will be continually impacted by development into the foreseeable future, with irreversible consequences.

Recently, the County Executive directed the development of a Strategic Issues Analysis. Park Authority staff members were invited to participate on several different task forces. This analysis identified 23 different strategic issues. Citizens ranked recreation 9th out of these 23 issues in order of importance. The Park Authority Strategic Plan is therefore an important guiding tool that citizens expect will be effective in guiding the development of future recreation opportunities in the county.

The Strategic Plan assumes that a certain level of service will be provided through general tax support and that this level of support will directly improve the quality of life for the general population. In 1994, that level of support amounted to 2.3% of the total county General Fund. In 2004, ten years later, the Park Authority had grown significantly in the number of services provided and facilities maintained. However, the transfer to the agency from the General Fund had dropped to approximately 1% of the overall county budget, a reduction of nearly 130% as a percentage of total local government expenditures. Reliance on entrepreneurial management, sound financial management and effective use of resources will increase as the agency continues to rely on self-generated revenue to support recreation services.



The Park Authority recognizes that if our agency is to remain a viable organization contributing to the quality of life that our citizens demand, future funding for parks and recreation is a critical issue that will need to be addressed. As critical as funding, long-range planning has surfaced as a strategic issue that requires increased attention. Our land heritage (open space), is being depleted rapidly. Citizens' desire for development of "community" is growing in every district. Eastern-end vs. Western-end development policies impact future recreation delivery more each day. Once developed, open land is lost for general public use. These policies are complex, and require serious thought and action if the Park Authority is to contribute it's fair share in providing for future generations.



# The Strategic Planning Process

The Park Authority takes a very systematic approach in developing its Strategic Plan. Building on past accomplishments, the Authority uses a market approach – the search for new opportunities - in successive plans. In 2002, the Park Authority conducted a countywide recreation demand and facilities use survey. The first ever for Prince William County, this survey polled over 3000 citizens, 400 from each district, and asked them sixty questions regarding their opinions of our facilities, programs, use, evaluation and perceived benefits of services of the Park Authority. The effective response rate of 41.6%, high for this industry, of polled citizens chose to respond to the survey, providing the agency a solid base of information regarding citizen-directed management of recreation in Prince William County. It should be noted that this survey was completed by park users and non-users alike, and is the first complete survey of its type for our agency. This countywide survey is complimented annually by a variety of park facility and program internal customer surveys, the results of which staff incorporate into their daily planning cycle.

Adding to that wealth of information, a cross-section of highly qualified staff completed an extensive internal and external analysis of recreation growth trends, regional and local growth of the population, increasing county diversity, land development trends, communication out of and in to the agency, and service delivery standards, procedures and policies. A current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis was also completed which helped staff focus on future opportunities available to our agency.

From this analysis, five major issues were identified as opportunities that the agency would focus on as we moved into the next five years of service.

A draft report was provided to the Park Board of Directors at a combined Board/Staff work session. Board comments were incorporated into the final draft, and Board adoption was achieved in June of 2004. This five-year plan (2005-2010) forms the basis for our Business Plan, Budget Plans, Capital and Maintenance Improvements Plans, Capital Equipment and Information Technology Plans. It is essentially the base from which our organization conducts business and coordinates the future of the Park Authority.



# OPPORTUNITY #1 – SERVICE DELIVERY

## Opportunity Statement

The Park Authority will strive to enhance service delivery to citizens by providing and maintaining safe, secure, equitable and affordable leisure facilities and activities that will improve the quality of life of our citizens. With sufficient financial and technological resources and through improvement of the organizational culture and structure that attracts and retains a high quality, customer service oriented, diversified workforce, the Prince William County Park Authority will be empowered to accomplish the goals in the PWCPA Strategic Plan.

### **GOAL 1: The needs of the residents of Prince William County will be met through the provision of a variety of quality leisure programs.**

Objective 1.1: Facilities and programs will meet the needs of emerging recreation trends, growth markets, and changing demographics.

Measures: *Customer Satisfaction Rating is 90% as reported in the Countywide UVA survey.*  
*Participation in Park Authority programs increases by 10% over 2004 figures.*



- Strategy 1.1.1: Determine trends and demographic changes on a continual basis and provide programs to fulfill needs.
- Strategy 1.1.2: Explore expansion of program opportunities for natural and cultural resource offerings and provide as needed.
- Strategy 1.1.3: Emphasize customer retention by soliciting and responding to customer feedback on programs, facilities and service delivery.

### **GOAL 2: Organizational culture and structure will attract and retain a high quality, customer service oriented, diversified workforce.**

Objective 2.1: A diverse and responsive workforce will reflect the community make-up.

Measures: *Workforce reflects the community by percentage in ethnic, racial age and gender mix as appropriate.*

- Strategy 2.1.1: Identify and eliminate barriers that impede access to underrepresented populations.
- Strategy 2.1.2: Continue to incorporate targeted recruitment by collaborating with groups representing older workers and minorities.

Objective 2.2: The Park Authority will have a mix of benefits and HR support systems that make it an attractive place to work

Measures: *Turnover rate of employees is less than 20%.*  
*Recruitment needs are satisfactorily met.*



Strategy 2.2.1: Assess, analyze and influence HR procedures to support equity and diversity.

Strategy 2.2.2: Ensure that compensation and benefit plans contribute to the retention of high quality employees.

Strategy 2.2.3: Develop and identify preferred practices in performance management, employee development, employee relations and work life balance.

Objective 2.3: Tomorrow's integrated workforce will be developed through programs that ensure readiness.

Measures: *Employees participate in training opportunities in the Park Authority, at specified levels.*

Strategy 2.3.1: Exhibit a commitment to continuous improvement through staff development.

Strategy 2.3.2: Develop a mix of physical and virtual learning environments.

Objective 2.4: A culture of leadership that supports high performance will be created.

Measures: *Customer and employee satisfaction with Park Authority management practices and leadership will be 80% or better.*  
*Maintain or exceed current level of satisfaction in the County survey as conducted by UVA. (Currently 89.5% in 2004).*

Strategy 2.4.1: Train supervisors to manage, motivate, and retain employees and provide sufficient resources to accomplish goals.

Strategy 2.4.2: Enhance staff recognition programs.

### **GOAL 3: Adequate technological resources will be provided to accomplish service delivery goals in the PWCPA Strategic Plan**

Objective 3.1: Greater opportunities to serve the Park Authority's wide-ranging clientele will be provided.

Measures: *Customer satisfaction survey meets or exceeds goals.*

Strategy 3.1.1: Develop and implement enhanced communication methods to service our citizens' recreation needs.

Objective 3.2: Enhanced technological resources will be provided to staff to ensure effective service delivery.

Measures: *Customer satisfaction ratings regarding access through technology will meet established goals.*

Strategy 3.2.1: Develop and implement enhanced communication tools for staff such as Internet, Intranet, and POS Systems.

**GOAL 4: The goals of the Prince William County Park Authority strategic plan will be accomplished through efficient and effective utilization of financial resources.**

Objective 4.1: Service delivery goals will be accomplished through efficient and effective utilization of financial resources.

Measures: *Complete capital projects within budget.  
Operate within adopted budget.  
Fund identified reserves.*

Strategy 4.1.1: Utilize demand survey to determine what products should be self-supporting.

Strategy 4.1.2: Identify specific maintenance and renovation needs that impact customer satisfactions with parks, facilities and programs.

Strategy 4.1.3: Plan for the 2006 General Obligation Bond projects.



**GOAL 5: Safe and Secure leisure facilities and activities will be provided and maintained.**

Objective 5.1: Safety/security at all Park Authority sites will be enhanced.

Measures: *Meet or exceed defined targets in risk/safety operations.*

Strategy 5.1.1: Enhance safety-training programs for staff.

Strategy 5.1.2: Maintain and improve facilities to enhance safe user and staff environments.

Strategy 5.1.3: Implement current Risk Assessment items and update annually.

## OPPORTUNITY # 2 – CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

### Opportunity Statement

The Park Authority recognizes that it will need to enhance its ability to actively pursue citizen participation and input into the decision making process to enable the continued positive growth of recreation in Prince William County. The Park Authority will increase the provision of recreation programs/facilities that citizens have actively requested and supported by increasing the communication flow into and out of the organization through effective marketing and public relations initiatives combined with citizen involvement initiatives in all development, delivery and operation processes.

### **GOAL 1: Through input from community/citizen involvement in the planning and development processes of the organization the needs of the community will be represented.**

Objective 1.1: Opportunities for citizen input at all stages of facility planning, design, and construction will be identified and implemented.

Measures: *Citizen input is an established part of facility development process. Citizen input/involvement in planning and development increases; 20% more citizen meetings are held.*  
*The Park Planning Process includes at least three citizen input points in all park development plans.*

Strategy 1.1.1: Re-evaluate the master plan process and ensure that opportunities are provided for public comment and citizen input throughout the process.

Strategy 1.1.2: Expand opportunities for citizens to submit comments on-line (via the website)

Strategy 1.1.3: Develop and incorporate citizen focus groups for pre-planning analysis of needs/wants.

Strategy 1.1.4: Educate staff regarding the benefits of soliciting citizen input in all significant service delivery issues.



**GOAL 2: The Park Authority garners public support for our facilities, programs, and operations.**

Objective 2.1: Citizen advocacy groups are organized to support the Park Authority and its mission.

Measures: *Public support for the Park Authority budget occurs at budget hearings.  
Current agency satisfaction ratings are maintained or exceeded.  
Citizens support and approve the planned 2006 GOB package for parks and recreation.*

Strategy 2.1.1: Secure funding and administer a continued countywide recreation needs assessment survey.

Strategy 2.1.2: Incorporate citizen input strategies into the CIP and GOB processes.

Strategy 2.1.3: Identify and implement means of disseminating information addressing the successes of the organization (i.e. agency satisfaction survey, park openings, etc.).

Strategy 2.1.4: Establish series of meetings between Park Board and citizens, by district, to disseminate information on Park Authority projects and “hot topics”.



## OPPORTUNITY #3 – INCREASE SYNERGY THROUGH COLLABORATION

### Opportunity Statement

The Park Authority recognizes that recreation products and programs can be enhanced through collaboration with a multitude of external organizations and agencies. The Park Authority will seek to increase collaboration with external stakeholder groups that can add value to the customer experience. Local funding availability for recreation, similar to funding availability for all local government services, continues to lag behind identified needs. The Park Authority will continue to seek out and develop partnerships with the community, community leaders and external agencies/businesses that can help the Authority achieve greater levels of service and increase the return on the investment in recreation in our community.

### **GOAL 1: Recreation products and programs will be enhanced through building collaboration with other agencies, external organization and businesses.**

- Objective 1.1: Support for the Park Authority Mission will be increased through communication, education and partnerships with the Board of County Supervisors, other County agencies, and external organizations.
- Measures: *Park Authority budgets are approved as submitted, within the confines of available resources.*  
*Public will support Park Authority initiatives.*  
*New products and programs are offered that are the direct result of partnerships.*  
*The net effect of increasing the number of agencies/organizations partnering with the Park Authority will increase participation by 20%.*
- Strategy 1.1.1: Continue to participate in the County's management initiatives (i.e. High Performance Organizations training, LEADS program, etc.).
- Strategy 1.1.2: Develop an effective process for on-going communication between the Park Authority Board and the Board of County Supervisors.
- Strategy 1.1.3: Identify agencies and organizations that would be beneficial partners and develop parameters for these partnerships.
- Strategy 1.1.4: Develop partnerships with other governmental agencies such as the Cities of Manassas and Manassas Park, to increase recreational services/opportunities.
- Objective 1.2: Recreational opportunities provided to the citizens of Prince William County will increase through public/private partnerships with businesses.
- Measures: *10 New or enhanced recreational facilities/opportunities will be provided as the result of a partnership.*  
*5 new public/private partnerships are established.*

Strategy 1.2.1: Identify opportunities for new business partnerships that can result in enhanced/improved Park Authority products or services.

Strategy 1.2.2: Develop a package of benefits for private businesses to encourage partnerships with the Park Authority.

**GOAL 2: Enhanced community use of School fields and facilities will be provided through improved partnerships with the Prince William County Schools.**

Objective 2.1: Improved access for community use will be provided through the revision of the Cooperative Use Agreement between the Schools and the Park Authority.

Measures: *Park Board and School Board will accept a revised and improved Cooperative Use Agreement.*

*The County will recognize school facilities as community use facilities.*

Strategy 2.1.1: Facilitate meetings with Schools and community user groups/organizations to determine the full extent of access that is needed to school and park facilities.

Strategy 2.1.2: Negotiate with Schools and County to determine the appropriate service levels that can be provided by each agency (i.e. Parks, Schools, County).

Strategy 2.1.3: Negotiate a comprehensive maintenance plan for all community use facilities with the schools and County.

Strategy 2.1.4: Revise the Cooperative agreement ensuring all agencies will be held accountable for meeting the objective of the agreement.



## OPPORTUNITY #4 – CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

### Opportunity Statement

The Park Authority recognizes that Prince William County is a rapidly evolving community. Creativity, inclusion and entrepreneurial initiatives need to thrive if we are to succeed and continue to provide the correct mix of quality recreation facilities and programs that customers desire. The steady increase in population not only places a demand on the Park Authority for more services, but in turn, also generates a demand for more parkland (see Changing Landscape Issue). The County’s population is also becoming more racially and ethnically diverse while the teen/youth population has continually been outpacing the elderly population. There are also new growth centers being created in the County as a direct result of residential development that will demand new recreation services. With these factors, the Park Authority will therefore need to seek out new programming opportunities and identify the new and emerging sports that will best serve our changing population, as well as provide more recreational opportunities within appropriate service distances of the new growth centers. The Park Authority will need to balance the traditional recreational uses against the demands for new and emerging sports/programs, as the County’s population grows and diversifies.



### **GOAL 1: Partnerships with and outreach efforts to ethnic, minority and special interest groups/populations will be developed.**

Objective 1.1: Working relationships with key user groups/populations to promote Park Authority facilities and programs will be established.

Measures: *A Contact list of key groups/populations including contact person for each group is developed and utilized.*

- Strategy 1.1.1: Develop an advisory group of members from key user groups/populations to address facility and program needs.
- Strategy 1.1.2: Develop communication tools to promote facility/program awareness among key interest groups and minority populations.
- Strategy 1.1.3: Partner with groups/agencies to improve accessibility of programs and facilities among these key user groups/populations.

### **GOAL 2: The demand for new and emerging sports/programs with traditional recreational activities/programs is balanced.**

Objective 2.1: The Park Authority’s range of recreational offerings ensures that the program / facility mix reflects the needs and demands of the changing demographics of the County.

Measures: *Customer satisfaction ratings meet established goals.  
New facilities/uses are added to inventory to address emerging needs/demands.*

- Strategy 2.1.1: Determine methodology for identifying “new and emerging” sports/programs and establishing standards for these activities.

Strategy 2.1.2: Identify parameters as to when a “new and emerging” sport or program should be considered for inclusion in the Park Authority’s offerings.

Strategy 2.1.3: Identify parameters as to when a “traditional” recreational activity should be considered for replacement by a “new and emerging” sport or program.

**GOAL 3: Programs/opportunities meet the passive and active demands of user groups by age and service delivery area.**

Objective 3.1: Age-appropriate programs/opportunities are identified and developed to address changing needs/demands of the County’s population.

Measures: *Participation in programs/activities increases 10%.*  
*Customer satisfaction ratings meet established goals.*

Strategy 3.1.1: Conduct targeted research to identify the needs/demands of residents based on age groups.

Strategy 3.1.2: Identify recreational preferences/expectations of various age groups and compare to existing offerings to identify true demand.



Objective 3.2: Opportunities to expand recreational offerings within service areas of new growth centers will be identified.

Measures: *10 new opportunities for additional/new programs/facilities will be identified within service area of new growth centers.*  
*2 new parks will be opened and/or programs offered within service delivery areas.*

Strategy 3.2.1: Conduct targeted research of the recreational preferences and service expectations of citizens in new growth centers.

Strategy 3.2.2: Identify preferences/expectations in comparison to existing facilities to identify true demand.

Strategy 3.2.3: Identify opportunities to provide new recreational activities/programs within existing parks/facilities in these service areas.

## OPPORTUNITY #5 – CHANGING LANDSCAPE

### Opportunity Statement

The changing landscape of Prince William County places an increased demand on the protection and acquisition of parks, recreation, and open space areas. The County's increasing population is significantly altering the makeup of the County from what was primarily an agricultural and open landscape, particularly in the western end of the County, into a highly developed suburban environment. With this increased population and development there are increased demands on the Park Authority to provide more recreational areas, both passive and active, as well as more protection of the County's natural resources. The Park Authority recognizes the increased need to acquire additional parkland due to increasing costs and the loss of land to development interests. The Park Authority has further identified that the impacts of the steadily increasing population, due to insufficient development proffers and the lack of a parkland acquisition budget, is becoming more critical with each passing year. Staffing levels will need to be addressed more critically to ensure the organization's ability to conduct appropriate long-range analyses of these impacts and position the organization so that it can successfully meet a larger portion of the citizen's future needs.

### **GOAL 1: Provide for increased stewardship of the County's natural resources, through the protection, enhancement and promotion of these resources on the lands that we own and manage.**

- Objective 1.1: A plan and policy statement for protecting, enhancing, and promoting natural resources on Park Authority lands will be developed.
- Measures: A definition and list of existing natural resources on park property; a natural resource protection plan; Natural resource protection policy or similar statement is drafted for Park Board adoption.
- Strategy 1.1.1: Define parameters for a natural resource inventory and establish definitions for data to be inventoried.
- Strategy 1.1.2: Survey and map the natural resources inventory/data for each park site.
- Strategy 1.1.3: Formulate a natural resource protection plan and/or policy statement for Park Board adoption.
- Objective 1.2 A Countywide plan for protecting, enhancing, and promoting natural resources will be developed through collaboration with County agencies charged with their protection.
- Measures: *Park Authority staff is assigned to a County agency task force to address this issue.*  
*A countywide plan for natural resource protection, enhancement, and promotion is developed with Park Authority participation.*

Strategy 1.2.1: Assist County Planning Office /others with identifying areas of concern regarding the protection of natural resources and open space.

Strategy 1.2.2: Establish standards for open space within the Park Authority and County comprehensive plans.



**GOAL 2: The land acquisition plan addresses parkland acreage deficits and improves land acquisition opportunities.**

Objective 2.1: Best methods/opportunities for the Park Authority to acquire additional parkland and/or open space are identified and evaluated.

Measures: *A comparison of different public agency's processes for land acquisition, including format for evaluation and staffing levels is completed.  
An acquisition plan that targets "areas of interest" is developed.*

Strategy 2.1.1: Evaluate parkland acquisition methods for neighboring jurisdictions to determine appropriateness for our use.

Strategy 2.1.2: Work with County staff and Board of County Supervisors to determine funding opportunities for the direct purchase of property.

Strategy 2.1.3: Identify grant resources for parkland acquisition and development and develop a utilization plan for these resources.

Strategy 2.1.4: Evaluate opportunities/benefits of establishing a charitable donations program and/or foundation (i.e. 501(c)(3) format).

Objective 2.2: Lands that may be suitable for acquisition by dedication and/or purchase from development proffers are identified and evaluated.

Measures: *New parcels of land are requested for dedication increasing available parkland by 10%.  
New properties are added to inventory as a result of development proffers enabling the Park Authority to increase programming by 10%.*

Strategy 2.2.1: Work with Planning Office to identify parcels that have potential to be acquired through development proffers.

Strategy 2.2.2: Facilitate meetings with development community to establish cooperation and assistance for acquiring additional parkland through development proffers.

Strategy 2.2.3: Work with Planning Office to better define processes for requesting land dedications in lieu of monetary contribution.

**GOAL 3: Planning processes and/or standards adequately address the increasing demands for active recreation areas and open space preservation.**

Objective 3.1: Appropriate standards for park acreage and facilities are determined.

Measures: *Park Authority standards are modified and approved by Park Board. The results of Countywide Recreation Needs Assessment are verified.*

Strategy 3.1.1: Verify existing standards by comparing existing standards against current use levels and/or against existing regional/state standards.

Strategy 3.1.2: Evaluate land and facilities needs against existing inventory every 5 to 7 years.

Objective 3.2: The Park Authority utilizes the best model for improving and preserving the County's open space (i.e. green infrastructure) while also meeting demand for public recreation.

Measures: *Park Authority and County reach consensus on recreational uses permitted within "open space".*

*The Park Authority Board approves a policy providing a percentage of each park site is held in an open space/preservation category.*

*A Countywide Open Space plan is developed.*

Strategy 3.2.1: Work with County Planning Office and other departments to develop a County Open Space Plan that includes methods for protecting, preserving, managing, and maintaining the County's open space.

Strategy 3.2.2: Develop methodology and/or standards for leaving a portion of all new parkland as undeveloped open space.

Strategy 3.2.3: Develop a Park Authority definition for open space and the recreational opportunities, if any, which might be permitted to occur within this open space (i.e. trails, picnic facilities, etc.).

Strategy 3.2.4: Re-evaluate amount of developed versus undeveloped acreage and determine if this level is appropriate to address needs identified in Citizen Demand Survey.

