

Chapter 9: Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources

9.1 Introduction

The quality of life enjoyed by Manassas residents is inextricably tied to the condition and accessibility of parks and recreation and the vitality of arts and culture. With more than 233 acres of parkland, 7 historic and cultural sites, and numerous partnerships with area recreation and arts providers, Manassas provides a robust system of such resources. Through thoughtful planning and investment, Manassas has an incredible opportunity to capitalize on the many benefits that parks, recreation, and cultural resources can provide.

The availability of parks, recreation, and cultural opportunities is vital to the physical, social, and environmental health of communities. Parks and open space provide active and passive recreation opportunities that support the health and happiness of residents by increasing the frequency of exercise, improving mental health, and strengthening the social and cognitive abilities of children. These amenities also provide opportunities for community involvement that can help create strong communities, stabilize neighborhoods, and reduce crime. Moreover, parkland conserves environmentally sensitive land and habitat and provides numerous ecological services, such as pollution abatement, cooling, and stormwater management, all of which help make the City a safer place to live and can also reduce the cost of providing infrastructure.

Benefits of Parks

Parks provide intrinsic environmental, aesthetic, and recreation benefits to our cities. They are also a source of positive economic benefits. They enhance property values, increase municipal revenue, bring in homebuyers and workers, and attract retirees.

Source: American Planning Association (2002) "City Parks Forum Briefing Papers: Economic Development"

VEDP's Economic Development Triangle



Source: Virginia Economic Development Partnership

Parks, recreation, and cultural resources are also critical to the economic vitality of communities. Not only do they bring positive impacts on home values and associated municipal tax revenues, the attraction and retention of businesses and qualified workers is increasingly linked to placemaking and quality of life. As demonstrated by VEDP's Economic Development Triangle, these factors form the

foundation for local economic development, without which other business recruitment and development efforts are likely to fall short. Furthermore, cultural and historic resources are key to the City's unique regional and national identity and important for generating tourism in the historic downtown and beyond.

Recognizing these benefits, the City has recommitted to parks, recreation, and culture, and has recently undertaken several planning efforts to guide both maintenance and capital investments in this area. Most notably, a system-wide Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Facilities Needs Assessment was completed in 2016. This assessment, through extensive public outreach and facility and level of service analysis, identified key strengths, deficiencies, and opportunities for improvement. Specifically, the needs assessment and citizen surveys highlighted the need to: 1) Increase quality of services to citizens by improving and expanding our inventory of available resources, 2) Protect our investment in existing facilities through enhanced maintenance, and 3) Plan for the impacts on parks, recreation, and cultural resources that result from development and redevelopment. These findings serve as the basis for the goals, objectives, and level of service standards presented in this chapter.

9.2 Goals and Objectives

Manassas offers many parks, recreation, and cultural resources that support the quality of life of residents. The following goals, objectives, and strategies offer a road map for ensuring existing resources are preserved and maintained while adding new amenities in accordance with projected needs and available resources.

Goal

The City of Manassas offers family-oriented recreational and cultural opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities and provides access to safe, well-maintained parks, open space, trail facilities, and cultural and historical resources.

Objectives and Strategies

- (Objective 9.1) Preserve, improve, and expand parks, recreation, and cultural opportunities that reinforce the economic and quality of life goals of the City.
 - (Strategy 9.1.1) Initiate strategic investments in facilities and amenities that extend the service life of existing assets and/or correct level of service deficiencies, while ensuring no net loss or decline in current levels of service.
 - (Strategy 9.1.2) Develop and implement master plans for City park sites, prioritizing implementation of the Dean Park and Stonewall Park Master Plans.
 - (Strategy 9.1.3) Address deficiencies at the E.G. Smith ballfield complex by providing new or renovated facilities.
 - (Strategy 9.1.4) Expand the City's greenway and trail network to encourage pedestrian and bicycle access to parks, cultural resources, and regional trails. Develop five miles of new trails in the next five years in accordance with the Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan. Review, and update as necessary, the Bike and Pedestrian Trails Master Plan.
 - (Strategy 9.1.5) Enhance the City's historically significant sites and structures for the cultural, educational, and economic benefits they provide to residents and visitors.
 - (Strategy 9.1.6) Promote partnerships with local agencies and volunteer citizen organizations to provide new and unique cultural events and venues that promote the City, draw tourists and visitors, and promote a sense of community among our residents.
 - (Strategy 9.1.7) Prioritize reinvestment in library facilities based on the results of the City's joint service agreement and needs assessment.
 - (Strategy 9.1.8) Formalize agreements with the City School Board ensuring public access to facilities for compatible recreation activities, maximizing their use and cost efficiency and supporting level of service goals.

- (Strategy 9.1.9) Evaluate underutilized City-owned properties, flood plains, and easements for recreation potential that can be developed in accordance with citizen needs and level of service standards.
- (Strategy 9.1.10) Evaluate and incorporate trails and passive recreation into all stormwater management upgrades and stream restoration projects, encouraging the use of innovative and aesthetic solutions such as vegetated bioswales and constructed wetlands in City parks.
- (Strategy 9.1.11) Develop the means to acquire additional property such as vacant schools, churches, historic resources, land, and/or buildings that meet recreational and cultural objectives, or preserve the City's historic identity.
- (Strategy 9.1.12) Integrate accessibility and safety into park and facility design to ensure that parks are safe and inclusive for all users and that playgrounds are ADA accessible and multigenerational.
- (Strategy 9.1.13) Provide for unstructured play in natural areas through planning and accommodation of unregulated green spaces and natural playscapes within City parks and historic sites.
- (Strategy 9.1.14) Emphasize placemaking through the artistic design of public spaces and right of ways by incorporating public art, landscaping, and street furnishings.
- (Strategy 9.1.15) Incorporate consistent signage and wayfinding throughout City parks and historic sites to help connect residents and visitors to available amenities.
- (Strategy 9.1.16) Support research into and preservation of the City's archaeological resources.
- (Strategy 9.1.17) Reevaluate the parks, recreation, and cultural needs assessment on a ten-year basis.
- (Objective 9.2) Protect the City's investment in existing facilities by ensuring City parks, recreation, and cultural facilities are routinely and continuously maintained.
 - (Strategy 9.2.1) Develop and implement an inspection and maintenance plan to ensure that parks and facilities are inspected on a routine schedule and maintained according to industry standards.
 - (Strategy 9.2.2) Improve safety in existing park, recreation, and cultural facilities by correcting deficiencies identified in the 2016 Needs Assessment and prioritizing safety issues identified during routine inspections.

- (Strategy 9.2.3) Promote the citizen “ownership” of parks by engaging public-private partnerships and community volunteers in maintenance and litter cleanup activities and programs, such as “Adopt-A-Park”.
- (Objective 9.3) Ensure that parks, recreation, and cultural resources are appropriately addressed during development, redevelopment, and preservation.
 - (Strategy 9.3.1) Ensure that public and private development does not reduce the areas already designated for parks, recreation, trails, and cultural resources within the City.
 - (Strategy 9.3.2) Ensure that planning for all new development and redevelopment provides for trails, open space, parks, and recreational land that meet or exceed adopted level of service standards.
 - (Strategy 9.3.3) Ensure that adequate public park space and recreation facilities are available within a 15-minute walking radius of all residential development.
 - (Strategy 9.3.4) Provide strong incentives that encourage developers to include dedicated lands and connected greenways in all new development projects.
 - (Strategy 9.3.5) Ensure that every new school provides recreation facilities that are available to the public outside of normal school hours.
 - (Strategy 9.3.6) Ensure that new development integrates public art and civic spaces that enhance the visual environment and commemorate the City’s rich history.
 - (Strategy 9.3.7) Ensure that new development within historic districts is sensitive to the character and context of these areas.
 - (Strategy 9.3.8) Continue to work with, support, and provide incentives for private sector investment in the preservation and restoration of landmark and historic structures.
 - (Strategy 9.3.9) Continue educating property owners about the legal requirements for renovating or demolishing historic structures, and discourage demolition of historic structures.
 - (Strategy 9.3.10) Review historic preservation policies at least every five years to ensure that goals for preservation and compatible new construction are being addressed.

9.3 Level of Service Standards

To ensure that current and future residents have access to adequate parks and recreation services, the City has adopted the Level of Service (LOS) standards provided in Table 9-1. These standards are based upon existing conditions in the City and upon recognized and accepted national, state, and regional standards and benchmarks. They also reflect resident demand for these facilities as identified in the 2016 Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Facilities Needs Assessment. The standards will be regularly updated through the 5-year Comprehensive Plan update process to reflect changes in population and the availability of facilities.

The LOS standards serve as the basis for developing the City’s Capital Improvement Program and for analyzing the impacts of new development on parks and recreation in the City. To ensure that LOS is addressed, all new development shall assess impacts specifically attributable to the development and in excess of existing parks, recreational, and cultural facilities. Sufficient mitigation shall be provided to offset such impacts.

Table 9-1: Level of Service Standards

FUNCTION/ ACTIVITY	LOS STANDARD	EXISTING FACILITIES IN MANASSAS	EXISTING DEFICIT BASED ON LOS (2015)	PROJECTED DEFICIT BASED ON LOS (2025)
Park Acreage	8 ac. / 1,000	5.5 ac. / 1,000	104 ac.	186 ac.
Basketball	1 / 5,000	8	0	2
Diamond Field: Adult	1 / 20,000	2	0	1
Diamond Field: General/Softball/ T-Ball	1 / 3,000	13	1	4
Dog Park	1 / 30,000	0	1	2
Playgrounds	1 / 3,000	12	2	5
Rectangle: Football	1 / 15,000	1	2	2
Rectangle: Multipurpose	1 / 4,000	1	9	12
Swimming (Indoor/Outdoor)*	1 / 20,000	2*	0	1
Skate Parks	1 / 25,000	1	1	1
Tennis	1 / 3,000	13	1	4
Trails	1 mi / 4,000	5.4 mi	5 mi	8 mi
Volleyball (Indoor/Outdoor)	1 / 20,000	0	2	3

* Includes George Mason Freedom Aquatic and Fitness Center