

Parks and Recreation

Overview

The City of Manassas Park contains a diverse and well-maintained network of public parks and public open space areas, including athletic fields, natural areas, informal open spaces, recreation facilities, and a system of trails and greenways that meet a variety of the active and passive recreational needs of the citizens.

Manassas Park has 12 parks located on approximately 169 acres of land. Within the context of the Comprehensive Plan, these parklands and recreational facilities play a key role in shaping both the landscape and the quality of life through conservation of natural and heritage resources, protection of environmental quality, provision of public facilities and human service, and management of urban growth.

The existing and proposed system of parks, recreation and open space is intended to offer residents, workers and visitors the opportunity to make constructive use of their leisure time, utilizing safe, accessible and enjoyable parks, community recreational facilities and programs.

Adverse impacts of development on parks and recreation resources are pervasive and growing. These concerns necessitate a comprehensive and integrated approach to the planning for City parks, recreation and open space

systems utilizing the resources of the public and, to some degree, the private sector, to maximum agency potential.

History

As a town, Manassas Park acquired several land assets for recreational purposes, including Signal Hill, Costello Park, the Birmingham Tract and the Bobby Tract, through various processes.

In 1979, not long after Manassas Park was incorporated as a city, the Governing Body decided to establish a recreation budget to support an organizational structure that would direct an ongoing and active parks and recreational program.

From 1979 until 1982, the small agency operated with one full-time employee and several part timers with an average budget of \$18,000, approximately \$2.71 per capita expenditure. Costello Park was the primary City Park, while Independence Elementary School provided facility space to implement a few programs. Recreation programming included: fireworks on July 4th, the Fall Festival, men's drop in basketball, Recreation Adventures (a free after school and summer program), extended care, a small preschool, a playground outreach program at The Pines townhouse complex, and then swimming in the summer at Costello Pool.

The City also made use of Signal Hill Park (purchased from Prince William County in 1972 with grant funding), then a passive natural resource park, and Union Mill Park, a heavily forested park with over eight miles of nature trails.

As the City continued its growth, so did citizens' expectations for quality leisure services. From 1982 through 1987, as commercial and residential development ensured the viability of Manassas Park, the Governing Body renewed its commitment to enhance the quality of life of each resident and continued to increase the departmental budget. Programs such as the annual Independence Day event and the Fall Festival emerged as regional events. The Extended Care program was licensed and successfully serves the needs of our citizenry with a low cost alternative to private/commercial daycare.

The Recreation Department began to take shape in late 1988 when the city broke ground on a community center in Costello Park. Staffing levels increased to two full-time positions, one director and one programmer, with various part-time support personnel, to maintain and enhance the park assets of the City. In 1990, the Costello Park Recreation Center was officially dedicated, providing further evidence of the City's continued commitment to making Manassas Park a full service city with a high quality of life for its residents.

Staffing

The Parks and Recreation Department has a full time staff of sixteen: one director, one deputy director, one parks superintendent, two programmer coordinators, one recreation specialist, four crew leaders, four childcare coordinators, and one administrative assistant.

Additionally, the Department employs 40 part-time staff in the off-season and 90+ during the summer months.

The seven-member Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission advises the Parks and Recreation Department. The membership of PRAC includes five citizens.

Virginia Outdoors Plan

The City follows standards set in the Virginia Outdoors Plan (VOP). The VOP is Virginia's guide to all the levels of government and the private sector that endeavor to meet the conservation, outdoor recreation, and open space needs of Virginia. Implementing recommendations from the VOP plan can ensure that the rich outdoor heritage for which Virginia is known is passed on to future generations.

In addition, the VOP meets the criteria the National Park Service requires for Virginia, to participate in the Land and Water Conservation Fund program that provides 50% matching funds to localities for the

acquisition and development of outdoor recreation resources.

The VOP plan also serves as a guidance document for protection of lands through actions of the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation. Important natural, cultural, and open space resources are identified in each of the 21 planning regions of the state.

Through the plans, identification of resources and those who play a role in managing them can be made. Following the plan can contribute to a seamless delivery of recreation services. The public does not often distinguish between the levels of government that provide parks and

Table 6.1 VOP Facility Standards 2002				
Park Type	Acres/1000 persons	Size (Acres)	Service Area (miles)	Population Served
Regional	6.0	100+	10+	17,000
Community	4.0	20 -100	2 -10	7,000 – 17,000
Neighborhood	1.0	5 - 20	1.5 – 2	3,000 – 7,000
Special Use	2.8	Varies	20+	25,000+
Vest/block	<1.0	Varies	.5 or less	1,500

Source: Virginia Outdoors Plan

open space. It is, therefore, most important that citizens' expectations be met in the care and management of these resources with respect to allowable public utilization.

Types of City Parks

The City's parks fall into five distinct categories, as defined by the Virginia Outdoors Plan:

- Regional Parks
- Community Parks
- Neighborhood Parks
- Special Use Parks
- 'Vest Pocket' or 'Block' Parks

Regional Parks

Regional Parks are large parks designed to serve a wide geographic area with a diverse range of equipment and facilities. Signal Hill Park, which with 108 acres, provides active and passive recreational opportunities the region.

Community Parks

Community Parks are larger recreation parks designed to serve urban and rural residents and include a wider range of equipment and facilities. Costello Park provides these active and passive recreational opportunities.

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood Parks are relatively small local parks designed to serve densely populated areas that include

specialized equipment and facilities. The City's only neighborhood park is the 10-acre parcel that was previously Independence Elementary School.

Special Use Parks

Special Use Parks are highly specialized parks designed to serve the entire City with unique facilities and activities, such as marinas, historic areas, recreation centers, golf courses, equestrian facilities, greenway and equestrian trails, and similar facilities. The Conner House, Camp Carondelet, Signal Hill, the three-acre parcel at the corner of Manassas Drive and East Carondelet, Baker Street Park and various independent trail segments are the special use parks currently in the City.

Vest / Block Parks

Also known as 'mini-parks', they take advantage of odd-sized parcels of land, vary in size and serve neighborhoods by providing open space and play areas. Vest/Block parks includes Scott Drive Park, Polk Street Park, and Independence Park.

Current Park Assets

Costello Park

Costello Park is a 25 acre park featuring a recreation center, a community pool, a playground, five baseball fields, two softball fields, two tennis courts, an outdoor basketball court, a skate park, several picnic areas with grills and a covered

pavilion. Costello Park is open year round from 7:30 a.m. until dusk.

Signal Hill Park

Signal Hill Park is a 108-acre site home to Signal Bay Water Park. Signal Hill Park has four multipurpose fields, an ASA regulation softball field, a playground, one mile of asphalt

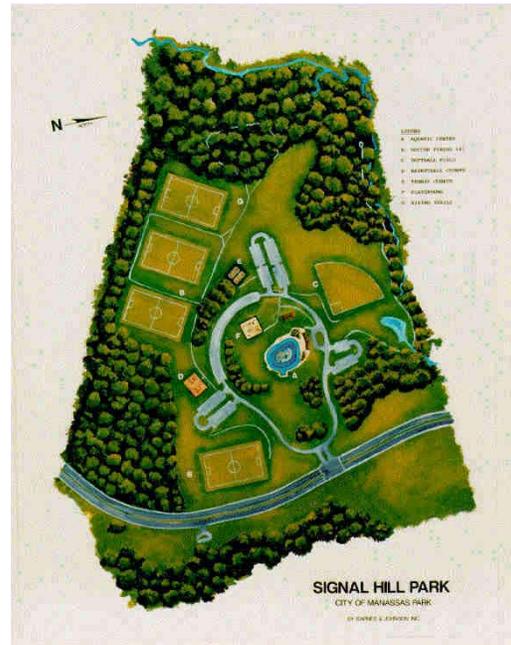


Figure 6.1 Map of Signal Hill Park

trails, a large pavilion with restrooms, pond areas and several picnic areas with grills. Signal Hill Park is open year round from 7:30 a.m. until dusk.

Independence Elementary School Site

10 acres of open space that will be utilized in the future.

Baker Street Park

Baker Street is a 2-acre block park with a composite play structure, a covered pavilion and generous open space. Baker Street Park primarily serves the residents in close proximity to the park and is open from 7:30 a.m. until dusk.

Scott Drive Park

Scott Drive is 0.15 acres in size with a composite play structure and several picnic tables. Scott Drive Park primarily serves residents in close proximity to the park and is open from 7:30 a.m. until dusk.

Polk Street Park

Polk Street Park is 0.35 acres in size with a composite play structure, one basketball court and generous open space. Polk Street Park primarily serves residents in close proximity to the park and is open from 7:30 a.m. until dusk.

Independence Park

Independence Park is 0.15 acres in size and is a passive site, with landscaping features in memoriam to those who have served the city.

Manassas Drive & East Carondelet

3-acre parcel. Currently green space.

Historic Sites

The Department of Parks and Recreation also serves as the

custodian for the historic resources located in Manassas Park.

Current Facility Assets

A community center is a facility or combination of facilities that are used for social, cultural and recreation needs of individuals or groups.

The City of Manassas Park has one dedicated community center, Costello Park Recreation Center, located in Costello Park. The Recreation Center has a gymnasium, an activity room, two classrooms and also serves as headquarters for the Park Department.

Use of the Recreation Center is free for all residents of Manassas Park. Many of the 270 yearly programs offered to the residents of Manassas Park are implemented at the Recreation Center. Additionally, the School System allows the Department, through a Memorandum of Understanding, to utilize school facilities on an 'as requested' basis if the space is readily available. This partnership allows the Department to expand its program offerings in an effort to maximize participation. In response to the growing demand for recreation programs, leisure services, and general facility space, the Department will break ground on a new recreation center in April 2006 and anticipates a fall 2007 completion.

The aquatic facility of today, responding to the growing demand of users, evolved from a traditional

‘box of water’ to the ‘leisure pool’. Highly interactive with beach (or zero depth) entries, the leisure pool concept introduced creative active play in the swim environment. Shallower by design, the leisure concept endeavored to maximize the user experience through play and marked the end of pools as places to simply swim laps.

Signal Bay Water Park, developed at Signal Hill in 1996, responded to this trend by providing the residents of Manassas Park with a 27,000-gallon activity pool featuring water cannons, slides, play features and a lazy river.

With over 20,000 visitors a season, Signal Bay Water Park, a multi-million dollar venture, provides a regional attraction for the City. Costello Park Pool has been serving Manassas Park since 1972. As one of the two remaining community pools in the region, Costello Park Pool offers the traditional summer outdoor swimming opportunities with four (4) 25-meter lanes and a deep well of 9 feet. A small wading pool complements the larger pool so the entire family can enjoy a day at the pool.

The Department, in response to community needs, has proposed a renovation to the current pool design to transform the facility from a seasonal outdoor pool to a year round indoor facility.

The department’s most recent addition is a Skate Park at Costello Park. This 4500 square foot facility includes a series of jumps, ramps,



Figure 6.2 Signal Bay Water Park

and rails for the recreational skateboarder, biker and skater. The culmination of a three-year process initiated by the teens of Manassas Park, this additional facility is reflective of the City’s responsive nature to community recreation.

Trails and Greenways

The majority of the trails in the City are multipurpose recreational trails located in Costello Park and Signal Hill Park, although several connector segments do exist throughout the City.



Figure 6.3 Nature Trail

These trails serve the citizens by providing alternatives to traditional modes of transportation, encourage environmental awareness and

provide safe areas to perform continuous exercise (jogging, biking, skating). Please refer to the transportation chapter for additional information.

Generals Ridge Golf Course

Located in Manassas Park but not operated by the Department, the Generals Ridge Golf Course provides an 18-hole, 6,651-yard

championship course for the golf enthusiast. The Department collaborates with Generals Ridge to provide camps and programs for the youth of Manassas Park.



Figure 6.4 Generals Ridge Golf Course

Analysis of City Parks

To complete an analysis of the adequacy of the City Parks, a Parks and Recreation Inventory was conducted. This inventory was weighed against the Virginia Outdoors Program which identifies

space standards for facilities in each park. Based on the Virginia Outdoors Plan standards, the supply of city parkland, as well as the distribution and range of park types, more than adequately meets the needs of city residents.

Table 6.2 Parks and Recreation Inventory 2004											
	Size/ Acres	Pool	Trails	Picnic Shelter	Recreation Center	Public Restroom	Playground	Skate Park	Athletic Fields/Courts	Historic	Open Space
Costello Park	25	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼		▼
Signal Hill	108	▼	▼	▼		▼	▼		▼		▼
Independence Park	.15										▼
Independence School	10								▼		▼
3-acre Parcel	3										▼
Baker Street	2			▼			▼		▼		
Polk Drive	.35						▼		▼		▼
Scott Drive	.15			▼			▼				▼
Camp Carondelet	8		▼							▼	
Georgia Cemetery	.10									▼	
Signal Hill	12		▼							▼	
Conner House	.1									▼	

Source: Parks and Recreation Department

Table 6.3 Local Park Area Standards & Results

<i>Active Facilities</i>	<i>Net Acres required</i>	<i>Units per Population</i>	<i>City Need</i>	<i>City Supply</i>	<i>Surplus (deficit)</i>
Archery (range)	.85	1 per 50,000	-	-	*1
Baseball	3.0	1 per 6,000	2	5	3
Basketball	.15	1 per 5,000	2.48	4	1.52
Community Center*2	Varies	1 per 25,000	1	1	-
Field Hockey	1.6	1 per 25,000	1	0	(1)
Football	2.25	1 per 10,000	1.24	1	(.24)
Golf	50 acre/9 holes	9 holes per 25,000	-	-	*3
Hiking and Jogging Trails	Varies	2 miles per 1,000	12.4	Approx. 2 miles	(10.4)
Horseshoes	.4	1 per 10,000	1.24	1	(.24)
Outdoor Theatre	Varies	1 per 20,000	1	0	(1)
Picnicking	Variable	10 tables per 1,000	12.4	50+	37.6
Racquetball	.15	1 per 20,000	1	0	(1)
Soccer	2.25	1 per 5,000	2.48	3	(.52)
Softball	2.10	1 per 3,000	4.13	4	(.13)
Skate Park	.25	1 per 25,000	1	1	-
Skating Rink	.4	1 per 30,000	-	-	*4
Swimming Pool					
25-meter Junior Olympic	.5	1 per 10,000	1.24	1	(.24)
50-meter Olympic	.75	1 per 20,000	1	0	(1)
Tennis	.2	1 per 2,000	6.2	4	(2.2)
Track Quarter mile		1 per 20,000	-	-	*5
Volleyball	.1	1 per 1,000	12.4	1	(11.4)
*1 Regional service provided by NVRPA					
*2 Not based on facility square footage					
*3 Community service provided by Generals Ridge through PWCPA					
*4 Community service provided by Manassas City outdoors and PWCPA indoors					
*5 Community serviced by MPHS and Osbourn Park High school in PWC					

Note: These are state standards and do not account for needs assessments or community survey responses. Although the city records an 11.4

deficit for volleyball courts, Department statistics indicate there is little demand in our community for this amenity.

Goals, Objectives & Action Strategies

The intent of the Parks and Recreation Plan is to ensure that a system of well-maintained parks, park and recreation facilities, public open space, and recreational programming are readily achievable and meet the variety of active and passive recreational needs of the citizens of Manassas Park. In this regard, the plan is to be used to facilitate the development, implementation, maintenance, and improvement of recreation, park and leisure services and do this in a way as to support the Department Mission:

“The Department of Parks and Recreation is committed to the improvement of public understanding of the significance of leisure in a full and meaningful life. Facilities will be made available to provide every citizen of Manassas Park the freedom to enrich their lives through recreational activities and leisure opportunities.”

Goal PR1

Provide a park system and program of a quantity, variety, and quality appropriate to meet the needs of the Citizens of Manassas Park within the next five years.

Objective PR1.1

Establish level of service standards to ensure adequate sites and facilities carry out effective park and recreation programs.

Action Strategy PR1.1.1 Implement baseline level of service (LOS) standards and criteria for park sites and facilities based on characteristics of the development and proximity of parks sites and facilities encouraging such standards to apply during the development review process.

Action Strategy PR1.1.2 Ensure the consistency and coordination of interagency planning techniques provide for an appropriate quantity, variety, and quality of park sites and facilities.

Action Strategy PR1.1.3 Create and maintain records of participation rates and demand for services for use in future park analysis.

Action Strategy PR1.1.4 Create and maintain an inventory of existing private sector and regional parkland facilities for use in future park analysis.

Action Strategy PR1.1.5 Provide current and updated demographic data relevant to parks and facilities on a regular, ongoing basis.

Action Strategy PR1.1.6 Coordinate where feasible, park and facility planning with the recommendation of the VOP, to optimize the information gains and other benefits associated with coordinated intergovernmental planning.

Objective PR1.2

Maintain current facilities, park acreage, future facilities and park development at a rate consistent with population growth, in accordance with adopted standards, through an appropriate development process.

Action Strategy PR1.2.1 Encourage voluntary monetary contributions from developers in lieu of land dedications that do not meet minimum acreage standards for each park category.

Action Strategy PR1.2.2 Encourage the use of conservation easements or restrictive covenants, as appropriate, by private landowners, in order to protect and preserve historic sites and sensitive environmental areas.

Action Strategy PR1.2.3 Encourage the use of public-private partnerships for the purposes of acquiring, construction of and/or operating park and park facilities.

Objective PR1.3

Optimize the use of existing parks and related facilities and ensure that park sites are located and designed in a manner that optimizes their accessibility, safety, and usefulness to the populations intended to be served.

Action Strategy PR1.3.1 Locate, where possible, parks in a way as to minimize the potential traffic impacts on residential neighborhoods

Action Strategy PR1.3.2 Utilize the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) practices for points of access to trails and greenways.

Action Strategy PR1.3.3 Ensure that there are adequate park facilities in the proximity of senior citizen centers to serve the specialized needs of senior citizens.

Action Strategy PR1.3.4 Encourage the shared use of parks and schools to include after school hours for community recreation purposes, maximize utilization of limited space and funds, and to optimize citizen investment.

Action Strategy PR1.3.5 Utilize where possible, monetary contributions to provide needed facilities to existing park sites.

Action Strategy PR1.3.6 Renovate and expand existing park acreage and facilities to address identified demands

Action Strategy PR1.3.7 Ensure that all parks and facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities.

Action Strategy PR1.3.8 Provide and manage facilities and public park grounds which enable citizen to participate in individual and/or group activities of their choice.

Objective PR1.4

Optimize programming opportunities

Action Strategy PR1.4.1 Charge appropriate fees for residents and non-residents to recover some to the City's operating costs.

Action Strategy PR1.4.2 Continue to provide special events and whenever possible, sponsor these events in partnership with community organizations and groups and private corporate sponsorships.

Action Strategy PR1.4.3 Expand, renovate, or reconstruct the Costello Park Recreation Center to meet future demands.

Action Strategy PR1.4.4 Ensure that citizens of Manassas Park are able to freely participate in all programs regardless of race, culture, language proficiency or mobility.

Action Strategy PR1.4.5 Provide assistance to local organizations for the promotion of their own recreation programs through usage of facilities.

Action Strategy PR1.4.6 Present a variety of recreational leisure activities to citizens that enhance self-awareness, personal achievement, intellectual growth, and civic responsibility.

Action Strategy PR1.4.7 Analyze and study the feasibility of adding programs to fill the needs of teens, at risk youths and senior citizens.