



CITY *of* NORFOLK
RECREATION
MASTER PLAN

REFRESH RECONNECT REFOCUS

June 2012

AECOM

PLANNING PROCESS

The Recreation Master Plan was created between June, 2009 and September 2010. The process included the following tasks and steps:

- Review of existing data
- Kick-off meeting
- Creation of a basemap
- Population/demographic analysis
- Site visits to 40 parks
- Qualitative needs assessment techniques including two (2) public, one (1) focus group workshop, and three (3) days of stakeholder interviews.
- Quantitative needs assessment techniques – including a Level of Service (LOS) analysis and a mail/telephone survey of residents
- City-wide boat ramp assessment
- Needs assessment presentation
- Visioning workshop
- Creation of a conceptual parks system vision map
- Order of magnitude estimate of probable construction cost
- Presentation to Planning Commission and Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee
- Implementation workshop –
- Implementation strategy – Based on results from the Implementation workshop, AECOM drafted an implementation strategy

A SUSTAINABLE CITY – THROUGH THE PARKS WINDOW

The City of Norfolk has a wealth of assets including a rich history, incredible natural resources, an interconnected roadway network, great parks and strong neighborhoods. Like many older cities across the United States however, Norfolk is also facing a variety of urban challenges such as declining budgets for both capital improvements and maintenance; traffic congestion; an older housing stock; aging infrastructure; changing demographics and more stringent state and federal regulations. The City's public realm – its parks, streets, natural areas, civic spaces, water access and trails – can at least partly address some of these issues to make the city more livable and sustainable. Thus, the purpose of the City of Norfolk Recreation System Master Plan is two-fold:

- 1) To identify improvements needed to meet residents' top priority recreation, parks and open space needs; and,
- 2) To help solve some of the city's most pressing urban problems and improve quality of life.

A community's public realm can comprise as much as 40 percent of its land mass, including parks, conservation areas, civic spaces, streets, trails and greenways. Norfolk's public realm amounts to closer to 50% of the city's area because of its extensive waterways, parks, cemeteries, beach, and transportation network. Typically the public realm also includes a variety of recreation, education and social programs. When managed as a system and not as individual elements, the public realm provides an unparalleled platform from which to affect improvements in a community's economic, social and environmental sustainability.

Despite the challenging economic times, the City of Norfolk Recreation System Master Plan has the potential to make both an immediate and long-term impact on improving residents' quality of life. The key is to integrate the planning and design of the public realm with other city systems such as streets, utilities, stormwater, schools and libraries. Through strategic, incremental improvements that leverage available resources and generate multiple benefits, the Recreation Master Plan provides a framework for capitalizing on the City's public realm for the quality of life of both today's residents and future generations.



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THE CITY OF NORFOLK IN 2010

To understand the role of recreation, parks, and open space in Norfolk, five aspects of the community were studied:

- Demographics
- Transportation Infrastructure
- Economic Resources
- Environmental Resources
- Historic and Cultural Resources

DEMOGRAPHICS

To help understand residents' recreation needs, a number of population characteristics of Norfolk were examined and compared to neighboring cities in the Hampton Roads region. Norfolk's population appears to have been fairly stable between 2000 and 2009 and is making modest gains—the 2009 population is estimated at 235,638, and 2014 projections show a population of 237,031.

- Overall the city is projected to grow modestly over the next five years. During this period of low growth pressure, the City has an opportunity to address parks and recreation needs that may be long-standing, and start laying the groundwork for the future of the city.
- A comparatively large number of young adults live in Norfolk, most likely due to the presence of the Naval Base. City leaders need to work with the military to ensure that this population's needs are being served, and to identify gaps in services that are not—or cannot be—provided on base.
- The parks and recreation system is an opportunity to engage the community into more diverse educational programming, and to provide additional services that not only help keep children and teenagers in school, but also support adult continuing education.
- Norfolk has a comparatively large population that lives in non-family households, and has a lower percentage of households with children. This may indicate a need for more adult-centered programming and facilities.

- The percentage of families under the poverty level is significant at 14.67 percent. The parks, open space, and recreation system is an opportunity to help address the needs of these families, particularly those who need after-school programming, affordable access to facilities and programs, and transportation alternatives such as bicycle paths.
- Norfolk's comparatively high percentage of renter-occupied housing indicates a mobile population, and additional outreach may be needed to attract the population to the parks and recreation system to create a sense of stewardship. Also, because the population changes frequently, park spaces should be designed to maximize flexibility.
- Commuting modes and travel times to work indicate that Norfolk is an urbanized community that already utilizes methods of transportation other than personal vehicles. As construction of the light rail goes forward, parks and open spaces should play a role in creating quality public spaces near stations. Sidewalks and bikeways would probably also be utilized if improved and expanded.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Norfolk is a transportation hub of the Hampton Roads region. Because the city largely developed prior to the mid-20th century—typically when most cities shifted to automobile reliance—the roadway network exhibits a high degree of connectivity, with many smaller roads that create a dense network. Despite the dense transportation network and traditional roadway pattern, there are few bicycle facilities in Norfolk, but it does have an extensive sidewalk network in place. A major transportation initiative in Norfolk is the TIDE light transit line, slated to be operational in 2011.

- The City of Norfolk's recent investment in the light rail line is also an opportunity for parks, especially in creating public spaces at transit-oriented developments.
- The dense street network in Norfolk is conducive to developing a strong, interconnected system of bike lanes and routes. Because distances are not great between major nodes of activity, it is feasible that over time residents and visitors could travel safely around the city by bicycle.
- The Elizabeth River Trail project is an important start to the bicycle and trails system and its success can spur support for additional trails.
- Although Norfolk's system of sidewalks is already extensive, there is an opportunity with every infrastructure improvement to ensure "safe routes to parks," sidewalks that are complete and neighborhood parks that are accessible to all residents.



ECONOMIC RESOURCES

The Brookings Institute ranked Norfolk as one of top 20 “Strongest Performing Metropolitan Areas in the U.S. in its 2009 Metro Monitor Report. Three of the city’s most important economic resources are the port, the Naval Base, and a downtown that serves as the commercial center of the Hampton Roads region.

- Parks and open spaces are critical to continuing to attract businesses that further diversify the city’s economic base and make it a desirable place for relocation. It is especially important to continue to support downtown with quality public spaces for passive recreation and hosting special events.
- Although the military provides recreation facilities at the Naval Station, City leaders will need to work with the Navy to ensure that military personnel have access to similar recreation opportunities that others in the city enjoy off-base.
- Engaging parks and recreation spaces and programming can draw tourists—and their dollars—further into downtown. With the large number of cruise ship passengers, this could be a significant economic boost to the city.
- The international element of Norfolk as a port city connected to cities worldwide can be celebrated throughout the city’s parks through public art and programming.

HISTORIC + CULTURAL RESOURCES

With more than 400 years of history, Norfolk has a wealth of historic resources. Many of these historic structures have been preserved, and the City has 12 designated historic neighborhoods and 32 individual sties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Norfolk also benefits from vibrant cultural life of public art, museums, and cultural festivals. In 2006, the City of Norfolk established a Department of Cultural Affairs.

- The large stock of historic structures and neighborhoods in Norfolk is remarkable; there is an opportunity for walking tours and programs to be created that get people outside exploring their city while also exercising.
- There is a major opportunity in the future to incorporate Fort Norfolk as part of the city’s park system.
- Additional partnerships can be made with existing museums and cultural centers to coordinate programming and provide unique venues in the city’s public spaces, or incorporate additional arts and culture programming through the city’s recreation centers.
- In Norfolk, some parks are already primary cultural arts venues, such as Town Point Park, Ocean View Park, and the Norfolk Botanical Garden. As the public art program expands, additional parks and recreation facilities will also serve as places to enjoy the city’s history and culture.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Like its economy, Norfolk’s environment is deeply connected to the water and its location on the Chesapeake Bay. According to the General Plan, about one-fourth (15 square miles) of the city’s area is water or wetlands, and is heavily influenced by tidal tributaries like the Lafayette and Elizabeth rivers.

- It is critical to conserve remaining environmental resources and ensure their long-term sustainability and ecological health. The future development of the parks and recreation system can aid in this by incorporating additional natural lands in the system, restoring wetlands, and providing opportunities for environmental education.
- The city’s environmental resources are not just of ecological value, but also hold a social value. For example, the experiences of crossing the rivers, walking along boardwalks in wetlands, and enjoying the shade of live oaks not only make Norfolk a beautiful place, but contribute to quality of life. Recreation experiences can be further enhanced by the city’s waterways, by providing opportunities for paddling, fishing or picnics.



COMMUNITY NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

Comparing the results of multiple analyses to one another provides a reliable understanding of the highest-priority needs of the community. To determine the priority parks, recreation and open space needs in Norfolk, the planning team used the following techniques:

- Physical Analysis
- Interviews with Elected Officials
- Stakeholder Interviews
- Public Workshops
- Mail/Telephone Survey
- Level of Service Analysis
- Recreation Trends

PHYSICAL ANALYSIS

An ideal parks system is one characterized by equitable access, community sociability, stewardship of place, protection of the natural environment, and responsible planning and administration.

The City of Norfolk's parks system is the strongest in the following:

- Meaningful open space easily accessible to every resident;
- An equitably distributed system of special use facilities;
- Central gathering spaces and easily-identified civic buildings for public events;
- A broad range of social, cultural, recreation and wellness programs;
- Presence of a signature park;
- +/- 50% of parks space preserved in natural or maintained open space; and,
- Co-location and joint use of schools, libraries and parks;

The greatest opportunities for improvement are in the following:

- An interconnected network of boulevards, parkways, and streets that link to greenways and trails throughout the city;
- Celebration and access to heritage resources;
- Use of local building styles, materials and native plants;
- Parks that "tell the story" of the community;
- Safe, convenient access to rivers, lakes and streams;
- Natural areas protected as conservation lands with appropriate/equitable public access;
- Parks designed to reduce energy and water consumption; and,
- Up-to-date facilities.

Forty park sites were also evaluated individually for proximity, access, and linkages; comfort and image; and uses and sociability. Norfolk's parks score highest in the category of use and sociability, but need improvement in terms comfort and image. Proximity, access and linkages are more variable depending on the specific park site.

Generally the parks have an adequate amount of multi-purpose open space and take advantage of other public investments nearby. However, many parks that are along Norfolk's rivers do not actually provide access to the water; in fact, wetlands and water consistently act as barriers to accessing parks at both the neighborhood and community level. Some of the newer parks exhibit strong pedestrian connections to their neighborhoods, but older facilities need to be upgraded significantly in this area.

Perhaps the most prevalent site-level observation is that despite good maintenance, most of the City's parks are outdated and have a plain aesthetic. While this is not applicable to all facilities—some are standouts, such as Captains Quarters and Norview Community Center—most parks are functional in appearance. This is particularly true for the park sites that are joint active recreation sites with schools. Over time, there is an opportunity to upgrade the City's parks with not only new equipment and facilities, but also with thoughtful design elements that incorporate the city's natural and cultural resources. As park sites become more comfortable and interesting their usage levels and sociability will likely improve.



INTERVIEWS WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

Norfolk's elected officials generally agreed that health and fitness should be elevated in importance in the city. Specifically they indicated that there is a need for more biking/hiking/walking trails and kayak facilities and for more soccer fields and swimming pools. There is a strong notion that the City should improve and expand upon its existing resources, and that school recreation facilities should be better integrated into the system.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

AECOM interviewed 15 stakeholders arranged by the City. Stakeholders included City staff, members of the Recreation, Parks and Open Space Commission, representatives from the Norfolk School Board, and parks and recreation directors from neighboring municipalities. According to these stakeholders, the major parks and recreation needs in Norfolk are:

- Water access points
- Biking/walking/jogging trails
- Indoor swimming pools
- After-school programs



PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

The planning team facilitated two public workshops to gather public input.

The first workshop was held in the evening of September 22nd at Tarralton Community Center, and 85 community members attended. A second workshop was held on the evening of September 24, 2009 at Booker T. Washington High School with a total 35 community members attended. Attendees were shown a brief presentation and then asked to discuss the core values of Norfolk and what makes the city a unique place. According to workshop attendees, Norfolk has the greatest need for the following facilities and programs:

- Soccer fields
- Therapeutic recreation facilities
- Soccer leagues
- Therapeutic recreation programs
- Fitness/exercise programs and facilities

Other parks and recreation needs that appear to be a lower priority are:

- After-school programs
- Beaches
- Baseball fields
- Swimming pools
- Walking/biking trails
- Open green space
- Neighborhood parks
- Nature/environmental centers
- Community parks
- Picnic areas
- Community centers
- Special events
- Nature programs



MAIL /TELEPHONE SURVEY

Leisure Vision, a national expert in parks and recreation survey research, conducted a community interest survey in the fall of 2009. The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households throughout the city and was administered by a combination of mail and phone. The results of the random sample of 573 households have a 95 percent level of confidence with a precision of at least +/- 4.1%.

Following is a summary of key findings from the survey responses:

- Sixty-nine percent (69 %) of households have visited City of Norfolk parks and recreation centers during the past year.
- There are five parks and recreation facilities that over 50 percent of households have a need for: neighborhood parks (65 percent), walking and biking trails (61 percent), fitness and exercise facilities (56 percent), picnic areas and shelters (55 percent), and beaches (54 percent).
- Based on the sum of their top four choices, the parks and recreation facilities that households rated as the most important are: walking and biking trails (32 percent), fitness and exercise facilities (25 percent), beaches (24 percent), neighborhood parks (20 percent), and indoor pools/aquatics facilities (19 percent).
- The recreation programs that the highest percentage of households have a need for are: fitness/wellness (51 percent), special events/festivals (49 percent), swimming lessons (37 percent), adult continuing education/enrichment (35 percent), and nature/environmental (35 percent).
- Based on the sum of their top four choices, the recreation programs that households rated as the most important are: fitness/wellness (30 percent), special events/festivals (22 percent), swimming lessons (18 percent), and adult continuing education/enrichment (17 percent).

IMPORTANCE-UNMET NEEDS MATRIX

The Importance-Unmet Needs Matrix is a tool for assessing the priority that should be placed on parks and recreation facilities and recreation programs in the City of Norfolk. Each of the facilities and programs that were assessed in the survey were placed in one of the following four quadrants:

- Top Priorities (higher unmet need and higher importance)
- Opportunities for Improvement (higher unmet need and lower importance)
- Special Needs (lower unmet need and higher importance)
- Less Important (lower unmet need and lower importance)

The matrices at right show the level of importance and need for recreation facilities and programs in Norfolk. Facilities and programs appearing in the top right box are Top Priorities (high unmet need, high importance) whereas those in the bottom left box are Less Important (lower unmet need, lower importance.)

According to the survey results, Norfolk residents show a high attendance rate at the community and recreation centers, and those who do utilize the facilities are satisfied with their quality. A much smaller percentage of residents participate in the City's recreation programs, but almost all who do indicated there were satisfied or very satisfied with their experiences. This may indicate a need to better market what is available so that more people can take advantage program offerings.

Residents also indicated that the following facilities are their priority parks and recreation needs:

- Walking/biking trails
- Neighborhood parks
- Fitness/exercise facilities
- Picnic areas/shelters
- Beaches

In terms of programming, residents communicated a strong need for the following:

- Fitness/exercise programs
- Special events

Residents were also generally supportive of actions that the City could take to improve the parks system, and were most supportive of upgrading existing facilities.

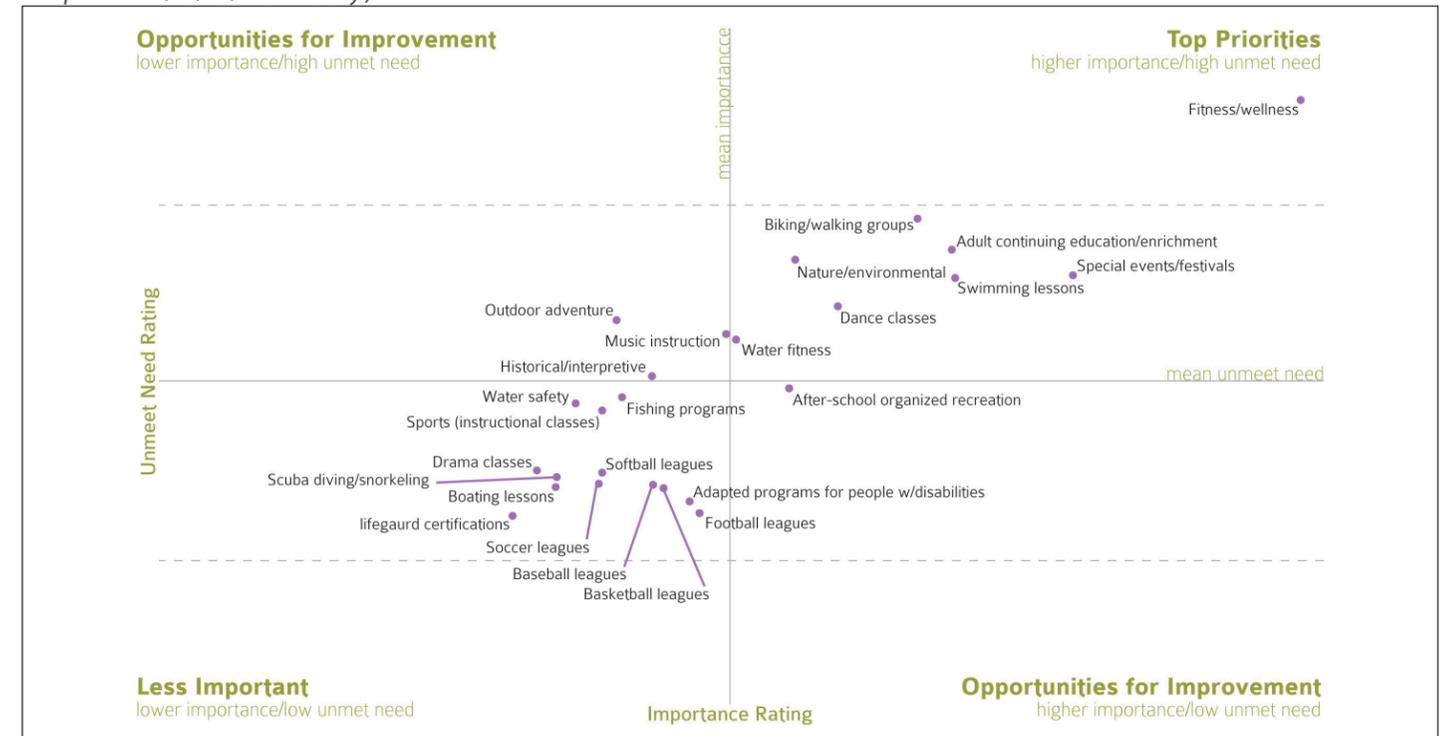
Importance-Unmet Needs Assessment Matrix for City of Norfolk Parks and Recreation Facilities

(points on the graph show deviations from the mean importance and unmet need ratings given by respondents to the survey)



Importance-Unmet Needs Assessment Matrix for City of Norfolk Parks and Recreation Programs

(points on the graph show deviations from the mean importance and unmet need ratings given by respondents to the survey)



COMMUNITY NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

LEVEL OF SERVICE ANALYSIS

The purpose of a Level of Service (LOS) analysis is to determine how well the existing parks system is meeting the recreation needs of residents. It is also a way to measure equal opportunity in accessing parks and recreation facilities. For the City of Norfolk, equal opportunity was measured based on three basic principles:

- Acreage (Amount of Park Land) - Every resident, neighborhood and community should have an equal or similar allocation of park land.
- Access (Distance or Travel Time) - Every resident should be able to access recreation facilities within similar walking, bicycling, and/or driving distance.
- Capacity Analysis (Capacity of Facilities) - Every resident should have access to sports facilities that are able to accommodate demand for use.

ACREAGE

Acreage of park land per 1,000 residents remains the most common technique of expressing equal opportunity, even though conditions and needs vary greatly between areas. There is no universally accepted methodology that defines the minimally acceptable number of acres per 1,000 residents—it is up to each community to determine what is appropriate for its own needs and circumstances. When analyzing only neighborhood and community park spaces, the city

2000-2030 Level of Service Analysis Acreage All Parks and Open Space Acreage

2000 Level of Service Analysis (LOS) Acreage		
Estimated 2000 Population	234,403	
All Parks and Open Space Acreage	2196 Acres	9.4 Actual Acres/1000
2010 Level of Service Analysis (LOS) Acreage		
Estimated 2010 Population	236,338	
All Parks and Open Space Acreage	2196 Acres	9.3 Actual Acres/1000
2020 Level of Service Analysis (LOS) Acreage		
Estimated 2020 Population	237,448	
All Parks and Open Space Acreage	2196 Acres	9.2 Actual Acres/1000
2030 Level of Service Analysis (LOS) Acreage		
Estimated 2030 Population	238,927	
All Parks and Open Space Acreage	2196 Acres	9.2 Actual Acres/1000

currently has an LOS of 5 acres per 1,000 residents. If all parks department acreage is counted—including special-use facilities such as the cemeteries, the Botanical Gardens, and the golf course—the LOS is 9 acres per 1,000 residents. Compared to other communities throughout the U.S., an LOS of 5 acres per 1,000 residents may be adequate, but some of the most livable cities in the country, such as Portland, Oregon, have an LOS of 15 acres or more per 1,000 residents.

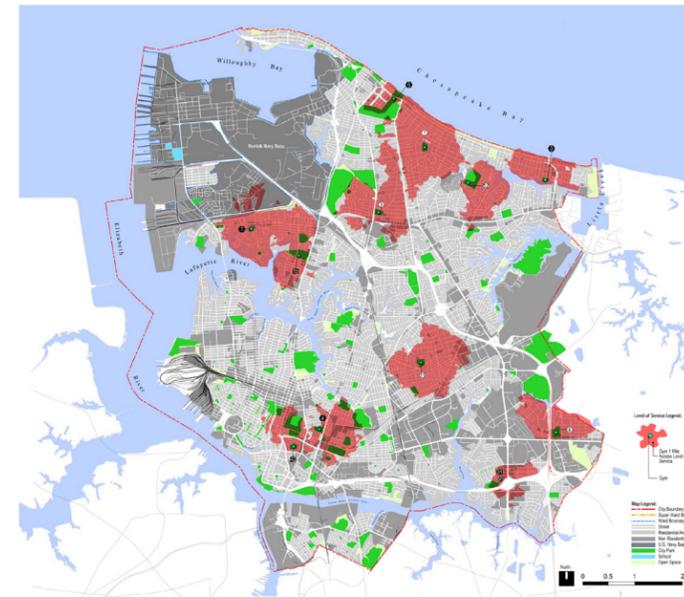
ACCESS LOS

Access LOS is the measure of a service area—either a distance or travel time—that a park facility serves. The distance or travel time standards should be based on the development patterns, street networks, bicycle/pedestrian networks, demographics, climate, and other variables in the community. For the City of Norfolk Access LOS, nine different facility types were mapped analyzed:

- Neighborhood Parks - 1/2 mile
- Gymsnasiums - 1 mile
- Bicycle Paths - 2 miles
- Water Access - 2 miles
- Recreation Centers - 2 miles
- Baseball Fields - 2 miles
- Soccer/Football Fields - 2 miles
- Indoor Swimming Pools - 4 miles

Overall, the City of Norfolk's parks and recreation

facilities are well-distributed throughout the community. For example, most residents have reasonable access to soccer/football fields and baseball fields. With a few exceptions, most residents also have equal access to indoor swimming pools and recreation centers. The facilities with the lowest levels of access are bicycle paths; neighborhood parks; and gymnasiums. Neighborhoods that are most in need of access to recreation facilities are Elizabeth Park/Woodbine; Poplar Halls; East Ocean View; Fairmount Park; and western Willoughby.



Access LOS - Gymnasiums
The graphic above is an example of an Access LOS analysis map. Each green dot represents the location of a gymnasium. From these locations, a one-mile "service area" --shown in red--was plotted using the existing roadway network. The red areas represent the residents who currently live within a one-mile trip of a gymnasium.

CAPACITY ANALYSIS

With the help of athletic facility staff, the planning team analyzed the capacity of the City's current soccer, football, baseball, softball fields, and sport courts. The chart below illustrates the estimated demand for the facilities based on actual permit requests from 2009-2010.

Sport	Demand	Demand Details	Capacity	In Need of Upgrade	Additional Facilities
Soccer/Football	35	Game fields: 15 Practice fields: 20 (lighted)	27	14	8
Baseball	50	Game fields: 30 Practice fields: 20 (lighted)	48	26	2
Softball	20	Game fields: 10 Practice fields: 10 (lighted)	17	14	3
Gym/Sport Court	23	Game courts: 7 Practice courts: 16	10	0	13

The primary need for sports fields in Norfolk is to upgrade and fix the existing sports fields. Additionally, there appears to be a need for about 13 more sport courts, 8 more soccer/football fields, 2 baseball fields, and 3 additional softball fields.

According to the three LOS techniques, the City of Norfolk has a need for the following:

- Bicycle/walking paths/trails
- Neighborhood parks
- Gymsnasiums/Sport Courts
- Water access
- Community/recreation centers
- Softball fields
- Boat ramps/kayak and canoe launches
- Football/soccer fields
- Upgrade/fix existing facilities

NEEDS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

The City of Norfolk's park system currently follows a traditional model of providing numerous small facilities distributed throughout the community. This distribution gives residents fairly equal access to facilities, choices of gathering spaces, and a broad range of programs. Most parks also exhibit a large proportion of passive open space, another indicator of a traditional system.

Through the use of several needs assessment techniques, it appears that biking/walking/jogging facilities are a priority need in Norfolk. Such facilities will provide more recreation opportunities while also providing linkages within the city for alternative modes of transportation, and encourage tourism by linking downtown to major cultural and historic features. Water access was another need that showed up repeatedly across techniques. Many people acknowledged Norfolk's great water resources, but said the resources aren't capitalized upon, either in terms of physical access—such as kayak launches and fishing piers—or visual access.

Other facilities repeatedly mentioned as needs include swimming pools, soccer fields, community/recreation centers, therapeutic recreation facilities, fitness/exercise facilities, neighborhood parks and to an extent, nature/environmental centers. The need for these facilities is reflected in the finding from the LOS Analysis that revealed a need for additional parks acreage—if Norfolk wants to become a more livable city, additional parks acreage will be needed to “catch up” to other cities that have a higher quality of life.

In addition to facilities, the needs assessment shows a need for additional programming. In Norfolk, the two high priority program needs are fitness/exercise programs and special events. Other priority needs include adult/continuing education classes, after-school programs, nature/environmental programs, outdoor/adventure programs, and therapeutic recreation programs.

Though not a specific facility or program type, the needs assessment also revealed the sentiment that the City needs to fix and upgrade existing facilities, and make sure facilities are maintained and up to date. A final area for improvement includes facilities that are co-located with schools: there is a need to make this relationship more beneficial to the city, both in terms of building relationships with additional schools and ensuring that the maintenance of school-city facilities is on par with other parks facilities.

✓ High Priority Need
 ✓ Priority Need

	ELECTED OFFICIALS	STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS	PUBLIC WORKSHOPS	MAIL/ TELEPHONE SURVEY	LOS ANALYSIS	TRENDS
BASEBALL/SOFTBALL FIELDS		✓	✓			
BASKETBALL COURTS						
BEACHES			✓	✓		
BIKING/WALKING/JOGGING FACILITIES	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
BOAT RAMPS/KAYAK + CANOE LAUNCHES	✓	✓			✓	
COMMUNITY GARDENS			✓			✓
COMMUNITY/RECREATION CENTER			✓	✓	✓	
COMPUTER LABS		✓				✓
DOG PARKS		✓				
FISHING PIERS		✓				
FITNESS/EXERCISE FACILITIES	✓		✓	✓		
FOOTBALL/SOCCER FIELDS	✓	✓	✓			
GOLF COURSES						
GYMNASIUMS					✓	
LARGE COMMUNITY PARK			✓	✓		
NATURE/ENVIRONMENTAL CENTERS			✓	✓		✓
NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS			✓	✓	✓	
OPEN GREEN SPACE			✓	✓		
PICNIC AREAS			✓	✓		
PLAYGROUNDS/TOT LOTS				✓		
SWIMMING POOLS/AQUATIC CENTERS	✓	✓	✓	✓		
TENNIS COURTS		✓				
THERAPEUTIC RECREATION FACILITIES		✓	✓			
ADULT/CONTINUING EDUCATION				✓		✓
AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS		✓		✓		
ARTS PROGRAMS				✓		
BOATING/FISHING PROGRAMS						
BIKING/WALKING PROGRAMS				✓		✓
FITNESS/EXERCISE PROGRAMS	✓		✓	✓		
HISTORIC/INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS				✓		
MUSIC INSTRUCTION				✓		
NATURAL/ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS			✓	✓		✓
OUTDOOR ADVENTURE PROGRAMS			✓	✓		✓
SOCCER LEAGUES			✓			
SPECIAL EVENTS			✓	✓		✓
SWIMMING LESSONS		✓		✓		
THERAPEUTIC RECREATION PROGRAMS		✓	✓			
WATER FITNESS PROGRAMS				✓		



VISION

Norfolk's recreation, parks and open space system has great potential to help reinvigorate the city in these difficult economic times. Great park systems have been shown throughout the country to improve property values, attract tourists, attract new businesses, improve public health, and contribute positively to environmental and social sustainability. The system already has a strong foundation—but what are the key ways to make it better?

Using feedback from the needs assessment, the planning team determined that there are nine focus areas, or “sub-systems” for improvement: parks, athletic fields, community character, bikeways and trails, water access, community recreation centers, therapeutic recreation, recreation programs, and operations and maintenance. From January 12-14, the planning team, City staff, and others met to determine how seven of these nine areas should be addressed through the Recreation Master Plan. From this exercise, three themes emerged:

REFRESH

The “bones” of a great parks system are already in place in Norfolk, but much of the system needs to be refreshed and updated with new facilities and additional activities. This section details the vision to refresh Norfolk's parks and recreation facilities through the following:

- Parks
- Athletic Fields
- Community Character

RE-CONNECT

Despite a dense roadway network, Norfolk currently has limited connectivity by bike, foot, or paddle. This section describes the vision to re-connect Norfolk's community assets through:

- Bikeways and Trails
- Water Access

RE-FOCUS

Over the years, the City—particularly the Department of Recreation, Parks and Open Space (RPOS)—has taken on a wide span of responsibilities. To achieve the City's vision of an excellent parks and recreation key system, Norfolk must re-focus its energies and resources in the following key areas:

- Community and Recreation Centers
- Programs
- Operations and Maintenance.



The map at right illustrates the vision for Norfolk's recreation, parks, and open space system. This graphic was developed by combining the recommendations from each sub-system and creating a composite image of these improvements. These improvements include:

- Upgrades to every existing parks facility in the City of Norfolk
- The development of 13 new neighborhood parks, totalling approximately 18 acres
- Upgrades to 14 soccer fields, 23 baseball fields, and 12 softball fields
- Creation of 6 cultural hubs at existing parks
- Development of 12 self-guided historic walking trails and 1 historic paddling trail
- Improved access and enjoyment of Fort Norfolk
- Completion of the Elizabeth River Trail
- Development of the Ocean View Avenue Promenade
- Creation of 19.5 miles of multi-purpose "Super Trails"
- Creation of 73.5 miles of onstreet bicycle lanes
- Development of 4 water trails with hubs, access sites, and lookouts
- Improvements to 2 large community centers and 5 medium community centers
- Improvements to 6 special use centers, including the Therapeutic Recreation Center and the Boxing Center at Barraud Park

The following section is an overview of these recommendations; locations for each recommendation are shown on a individual figurative maps of Norfolk.



MAP LEGEND

- Street
- Residential Area
- Non- Residential Area
- U.S. Navy Base

Trails

- Super Trail
- Arterial Trail
- Neighborhood Trail

Parks and Open Spaces

- City Park
- School Site (no public park component)
- School Site w/ Public Park Component
- Open Space

Community Parks

- 1** Barraud Park
- 2** Lafayette Park
- 3** Lakewood Park
- 4** Northside Park
- 5** Poplar Hall
- 6** Tarrallton Park

North



0 0.5 1 Miles

REFRESH PARKS

Parks are the building blocks of Norfolk’s open space system, and are primary venues for recreation and community sociability. But because the city is already built out, there are few opportunities to acquire new large tracts of park space. It is essential then that the existing parks spaces are upgraded to deliver maximum community benefit. The guiding principles below outline criteria for the maximization of Norfolk’s parks spaces.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 1) At least 50 percent of every park should be multi-purpose green space (with an exception for special-use facilities)
- 2) All parks that abut water or wetlands should provide at least one point of physical access to the resource
- 3) All parks should be designed to maximize flexibility and be easily adapted to demographic changes
- 4) All parks should be designed or retrofitted to meet the latest standards of green design and environmental sustainability
- 5) All facilities should have prominent signage and wayfinding

RECOMMENDATIONS

UPGRADES TO EXISTING PARKS

Upgrades to existing facilities can have a tremendous impact on the quality of the parks system, and continued investment in existing resources is key to long-term sustainability. Based on observations on access, comfort, and sociability, the following parks are recommended as priority sites for upgrades and enhancements:

- A. Monkey Bottom Park
- B. Monticello Village Park
- C. Oakmont North Playgrounds
- D. Airport Gateway Park
- E. Tanners Creek Park
- F. Barraud Park
- G. Jeff Robertson Park

UPGRADES TO SHARED FACILITIES

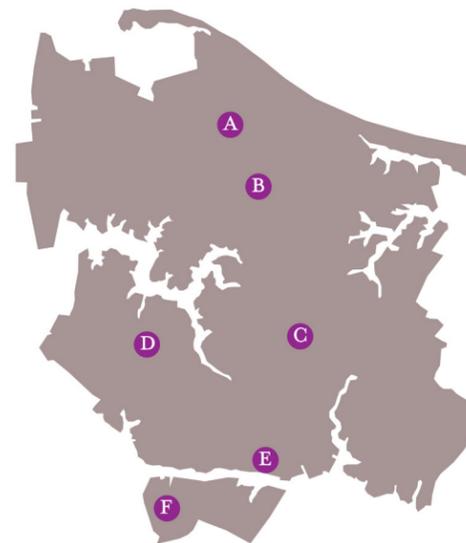
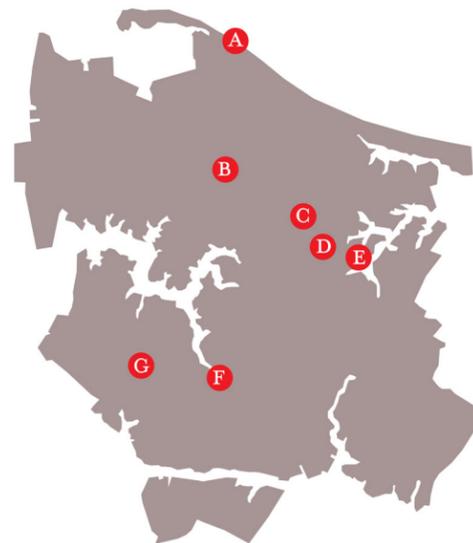
One of the major findings from the physical system analysis was the difference in quality between the City-owned recreation facilities and those shared with the schools. The City and the Norfolk School Board need to strengthen their relationship and raise the quality standards of the shared facilities to those of the rest of the City parks. The following shared facilities should be prioritized for upgrades and enhancements:

- A. Northside Middle School/Mary Calcott Elementary School
- B. Crossroads Elementary School
- C. Sherwood Forest Elementary School
- D. James Monroe Elementary School
- E. Chesterfield Elementary School and Pool
- F. St. Helena Elementary School

NEW FACILITIES

To provide equal access to neighborhood parks for all residents, the planning team recommends a new neighborhood park (with suggested acreage) for each neighborhood listed below. At a minimum, each should have multi-purpose open space, a playground, and a picnic area. Wherever possible, new neighborhood parks should not only provide recreation opportunities but also help to improve neighborhood connectivity and access to natural, historic, and cultural resources.

- A. Willoughby (western) – 0.5 acres
- B. South Bayview – 0.5 acres
- C. Bayview (Bay Oaks) – 5 to 11 acres
- D. East Ocean View (eastern) – 0.5 acres
- E. Camelia Shores – 1 acre
- F. Bromley/Azalea Acres – 1 acre
- G. Greenwood/Elmhurst – 1 acre
- H. Fairmount Park – 3 acres
- I. Larchmont (northern) – 0.5 acres
- J. Freemason – 0.5 acres
- K. Ingleside – 1 acre
- L. Poplar Hall (northern) – 0.5 acres
- M. River Forest Shores/Pleasant Point – 0.5 acres



OAKMONT NORTH PLAYGROUNDS



Before

Oakmont North Playground is high priority park to upgrade. Currently the site consists of scattered playgrounds and sports courts interspersed throughout the Oakmont development. Although well-distributed, the majority of the equipment is outdated and/or in need of repair. The site lacks signage, places to sit, and overall feels abandoned.

As a high priority park to upgrade, Oakmont North could be elevated to a central gathering place for the neighborhood. The “after” image at right shows the replacement of outdated play equipment with new swingsets and more modern play structures. A new system of interior pathways gives the site more cohesion, and provides opportunities for walking and bicycling. Abandoned sport courts have been removed and are replaced by new courts with functional equipment, and the yards of adjacent houses are now screened by a low shrubbery buffer.

These site improvements will help attract more activity to the park, and improve the quality of life of the neighborhood by increasing connectivity and sociability.



After

REFRESH ATHLETIC FIELDS

Athletic fields are a core recreation service provided by the City. They host and sustain City-run sports leagues, as well as many private leagues. When fields are high-quality, they can generate revenue by increasing league participation and enabling Norfolk to host sports tournaments. Additionally, quality athletic fields can help activate neighborhood and community parks, and are a valuable tool in creating positive experiences for youth.

Norfolk currently has a number of athletic facilities, but many need to be refreshed with new turf, field lights, and amenities that make it possible to hold tournaments. Because of the lack of available land in Norfolk, the City cannot provide a facility that is comparable to a large, multi-field sports complex. Therefore, the recommended strategies below aim to provide a similar quality playing experience by utilizing smaller, individual fields throughout the city.

To achieve their potential, the following guiding principles should be applied to Norfolk's athletic facilities:

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 1) Provide equitably distributed fields throughout the city
- 2) Locate fields in places that do not negatively impact surrounding neighborhoods
- 3) Every field should be maintained to a quality that provides either a quality practice field experience or can be used for tournament-level competition

RECOMMENDATIONS

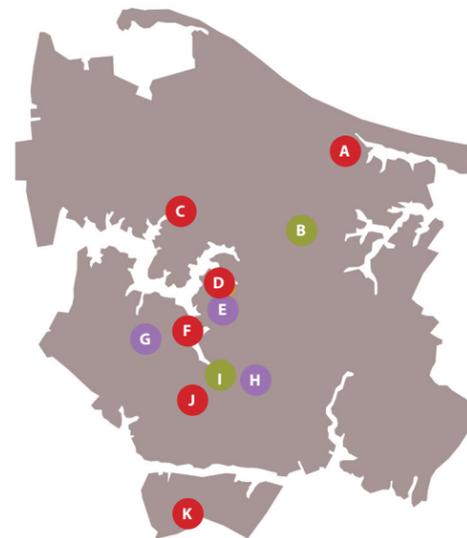
UPGRADE EXISTING FACILITIES

The most efficient and cost-effective way for the City of Norfolk to meet demand for athletic facilities is to upgrade existing facilities to a standard that will maximize their use. From the preliminary capacity analysis completed in the needs assessment (Section 3), City staff identified the following fields that need to be upgraded:

SOCCER/FOOTBALL FIELDS

The 14 fields listed below are mostly unlit, multi-purpose recreation fields that do not meet the needs of soccer players. For these fields to be fully functional, AECOM recommends an upgrade of each to a quality, multi-purpose practice field that provides a recreational experience similar to that of the game or tournament-grade fields. To achieve this, the upgraded multi-purpose practice fields must be well-drained, have a level playing surface, and be lighted when possible (provided that they are not a nuisance to surrounding land uses). In addition, because of the heavy use these fields will have to sustain, they must have a maintenance schedule similar to the game and tournament fields.

- **Higher Priority**
 - A. Tarrallton Park (2)
 - C. Norfolk Fitness & Wellness Center
 - D. Lakewood Park (2)
 - F. Lafayette Park (2)
 - J. Huntersville
 - K. Berkley Park
- **Medium Priority**
 - B. Rosemont Middle School
 - I. Barraud Park
- **Lower Priority**
 - E. Lafayette Middle School
 - G. James Monroe Elementary School
 - H. Ballentine



BASEBALL FIELDS

The 23 fields listed below are mostly unlit practice fields or multi-purpose fields that do not meet residents' needs for baseball. For these fields to meet residents' needs, AECOM recommends upgrading each to a quality baseball practice field that includes an adequate backstop, team seating areas and a fully vegetated, level playing surface. The field surface should be well maintained and well drained. In addition, because of the heavy use these fields will have to sustain, they must have a maintenance schedule similar to the game and tournament fields. Lights should also be provided where they are not already present and will not be a nuisance to surrounding land uses.

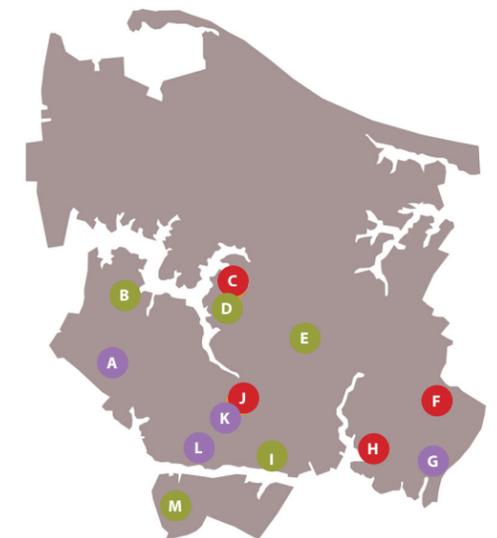
- **Higher Priority**
 - B. Ocean View (3)
 - C. Oceanair (2)
 - F. Larrymore
 - L. Lafayette Park
 - N. Booker T Washington High School
 - P. Ingleside
- **Medium Priority**
 - E. East Ocean View (already lighted)
 - I. Crossroads
 - J. Norfolk Fitness & Wellness Center
 - K. Northside Middle School (3)
 - M. Larchmont Park
 - Q. Fairlawn (already lighted)
 - R. Berkley Park
- **Lower Priority**
 - A. Camp Allen (2)
 - D. Bayview
 - G. Rosemont
 - H. Norview Middle School
 - O. Ballentine



SOFTBALL FIELDS

Similar to the baseball fields, the 12 softball fields listed below are mostly unlit practice fields or multi-purpose fields intended to meet residents' needs for softball facilities, but are not meeting community expectations. AECOM recommends that each facility be upgraded to a quality practice softball that includes an adequate backstop, team seating areas and a fully vegetated and level playing surface. The field surface should be well maintained and well drained. In addition, because of the heavy use these fields will have to sustain, they must have a maintenance schedule similar to the game/tournament fields.

- **Higher Priority**
 - C. Lakewood Park
 - F. Fairlawn
 - H. Poplar Halls (2)
 - J. Booker T. Washington High School
- **Medium Priority**
 - B. Larchmont
 - D. Willard Model School
 - E. Sherwood Forest
 - I. Grandy Village
 - M. St. Helena
- **Lower Priority**
 - A. Jeff Robinson
 - G. Easton Elementary School
 - K. Jacox
 - L. Ruffner



LAFAYETTE PARK



Before

Lafayette Park is a large community park with a number of different recreation facilities. Its two soccer/football fields have been identified by Department staff as high priorities for upgrades.

The “after” image shown at right illustrates what these upgrades would look like. Primarily, the playing surface would be greatly improved through the planting of new grass, leveling, and better drainage. The level of maintenance would also be increased to ensure the field’s quality stays high. Simple amenities such as bleachers would also be added to give spectators a place to watch games and families a place to wait during team practices.



After

REFRESH COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Community character is the collection of qualities that give a city its sense of place. Although Norfolk has many unique qualities, four in particular have a major impact on the city's character:



Water



Port and Transportation History



Military History



Cultural Diversity

The City of Norfolk's parks and open spaces are ideal places to celebrate community character. Not only can they help "tell the story" of Norfolk's history and culture, but parks and open spaces can be refreshed through integrating design elements that embrace these qualities. Community character can be expressed in parks through a number of ways including interpretive signage; environmental restoration; incorporation of new design details; heritage programming; the installation of public art; and hosting special events. The City's parks and recreation department can work with other departments to help preserve actual heritage resources as part of the public realm. Additionally, the exploration of Norfolk's water heritage in parks should be closely linked with developing the city's system for water access (see Water Access, below).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 1) Every park, recreation, and open space improvement should reflect Norfolk's heritage and character.
- 2) Every library, school and recreation center is an opportunity to integrate heritage and arts into the community.
- 3) The parks and open space system should tell the story of Norfolk through the four themes of water, the port and transportation, the military, and cultural diversity.

UPGRADE EXISTING RESOURCES/FACILITIES

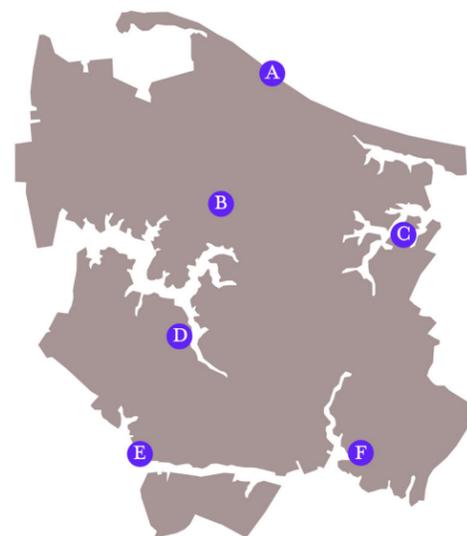
The celebration of community character is best achieved through the upgrading of existing resources and facilities.

HERITAGE AND CULTURE HUBS

Through the vision process, six parks were identified as heritage and cultural hubs:

- A. Ocean View Park
- B. Northside Park
- C. Norfolk Botanical Gardens
- D. Lafayette Park/Virginia Zoo
- E. Town Point Park
- F. Poplar Hall Park

These sites were identified as hubs because of the opportunities they present to explore Norfolk's four major community character themes, as well as the significant historic or cultural resources already present in some cases. As these park sites are upgraded through the process outlined under Parks (above), special attention should be paid to the development of community character.



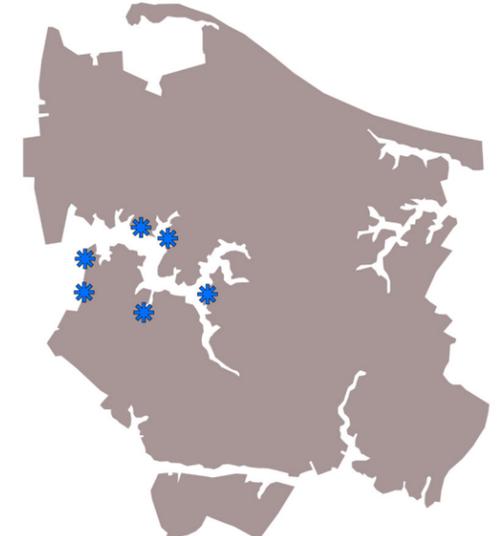
HERITAGE TRAILS

- *Enhancement of Elizabeth River Trail.* As design and construction of the Elizabeth River Trail is completed, there are opportunities to celebrate all four themes along the trail route. RPOS staff should coordinate with the City Historian and the public art program to ensure that these opportunities for interpretation are not missed.
- *Ocean View Avenue Promenade.* Ocean View Avenue has the potential to be a showcase of community character. Despite running parallel to the Chesapeake Bay beach for over six miles, there are few indicators of the water's presence. As part of the vision to refresh Norfolk's public realm, AECOM recommends investing in upgrading Ocean View Avenue into a premiere corridor for experiencing the city's unique character through well-signed beach access points, improved visual access to the Chesapeake Bay, streetscape improvements, walking paths, public art, and small public spaces.
- *Self-guided trails.* Norfolk's richest heritage resources are its historic neighborhoods. The City's recognized historic districts are all walkable in their scale and development pattern. To help meet the need for more walking facilities in Norfolk, RPOS should work with City Historic Preservation staff to create self-guided walking tours of the historic districts. Brochures describing the walking trails should be available both online and at local businesses and public facilities.



Historic Lafayette Paddling Trail

Many people are unaware of certain impressive historic resources in Norfolk. One major example is a collection of 18th-century farmhouses that spread along the city's tidal rivers—particularly along the Lafayette River and its tributaries. These homes include the Pomfret House, Boush-Tazewell House, Cohoon House, Talbot Hall, Talbot Cocke House, and Pearce House. In collaboration with City Historic Preservation staff, RPOS should create a laminated paddling trail guide available at all Lafayette River kayak/canoe launches describing the resources.



LIBRARIES AND SCHOOLS

Although outside the purview of the RPOS, the city's public libraries and schools offer many opportunities to build upon the community character themes established in the parks system. Staff from RPOS should coordinate with the School District and library staff to ensure that exhibits and installations are not duplicative, and cross-reference one another. Ideally, local history lessons can be developed into school curriculums and include visits to the city's parks and other resources.



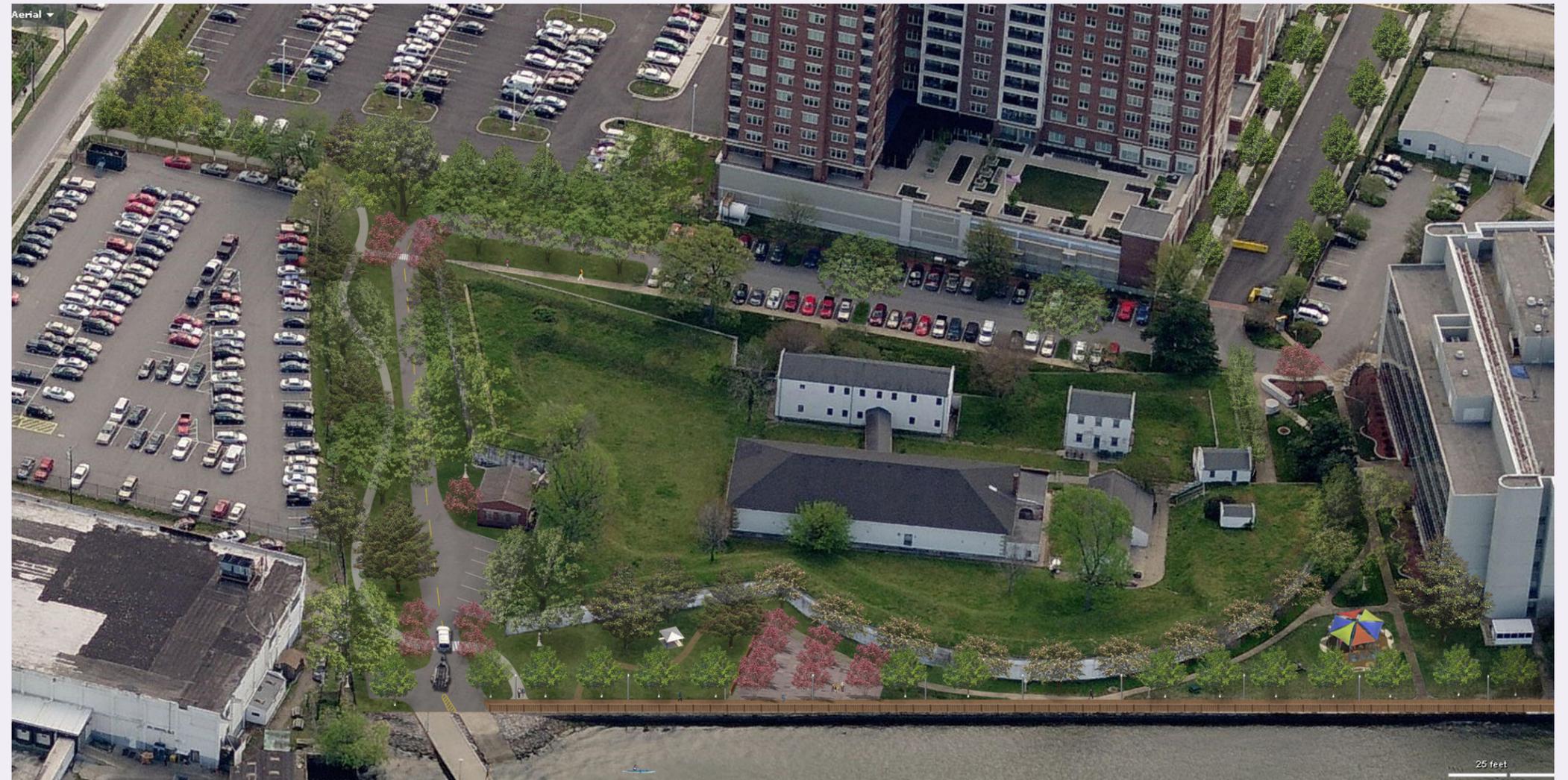
FORT NORFOLK

Fort Norfolk is one of the most significant historic resources within the city. Not only is the structure significant in terms of its age and historic roles, Fort Norfolk has a beautiful location along the Elizabeth River, and is adjacent to the Elizabeth River Trail. Currently, the site is owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), but the Norfolk Historical Society has been involved with restorations to the site since 1991. Should the opportunity arise in the future, the City should consider working with ACOE to acquire the site for public parks space.

In the meantime, access to the site should be improved. Presently, it is very difficult for a casual visitor to experience the fort, and the surrounding land uses prevent a welcoming atmosphere. The "after" image shown below illustrates what improved access and context could look like: a boardwalk along the water, two separate access points to the fort, a boat ramp, and an waterside plaza and playground space.



Before



After

RECONNECT BIKEWAYS AND TRAILS

Bikeways and trails are the highest priority recreation need in Norfolk. Because Norfolk is highly urbanized and “built out,” opportunities for large, off-street trails are few. However, the existing roadway network is dense and has a great deal of redundancy, providing multiple opportunities for the development of on-road bicycle facilities. With adjustments to the existing roadway network and the development of trails and neighborhood loops, Norfolk has the necessary ingredients to reconnect and evolve into a bike-friendly city.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 1) Provide safe bikeways and trails for commuters, residents, children and the elderly
- 2) Create regional linkages to surrounding cities, transit, light rail and key areas of Norfolk
- 3) Ensure that every parks and recreation facility is safely accessible by bike and foot and has secure parking.
- 4) Ensure all neighborhood streets are bike- and pedestrian-friendly, either through sidewalks or low-speed “share the road” accommodations
- 5) Provide education and promotion for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians; integrate with schools and health and wellness activities such as the Safe Routes to Schools program and Bikewalk America.

UPGRADE EXISTING FACILITIES

It is essential that the Elizabeth River Trail is completed and marketed as a recreation resource to residents and visitors alike. With a successful trail, it is easier to gain community support for additional bikeway and trail facilities.

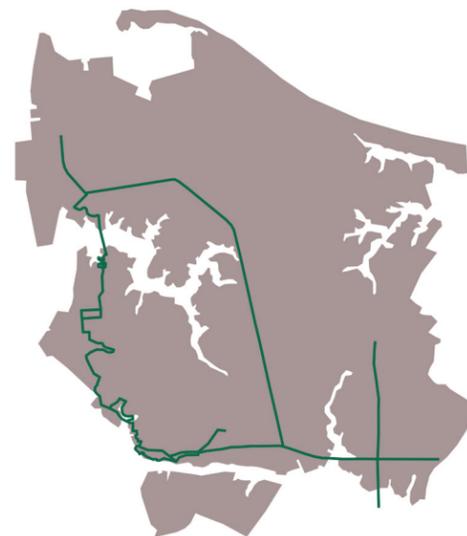
DEVELOP NEW FACILITIES

There are three types of bicycle and trail facilities recommended for the City of Norfolk: super trails, arterial routes and neighborhood loops.

SUPER TRAILS

Super trails are off-road trails, ideally with between 10 and 12 feet of pavement and 2 feet of clearance on each side. These trails would be part of a regional system of circulation and would accommodate both bicycle and pedestrian uses. The primary use would be for recreation; the Elizabeth River Trail is a good example. Super trails are recommended for the following locations:

- Light Rail: The Interstate 264/Light Rail Corridor
- Military Highway: South Military Highway from the Elizabeth River to East Princess Anne Road
- Railway: Along the north-south railway corridor between Interstate 264 and the Naval Base, then west to Hampton Boulevard
- Hampton Boulevard: Hampton Boulevard from Larchmont Branch Library to D Avenue (Naval Base)



SUPER TRAILS

The coming of light rail to Norfolk represents a major investment in the future mobility of the city. Multiple benefits can be realized by developing a 12-foot wide super trail along the railway.

This “before and after” shows the light rail as it currently exists at Curlew Drive, and what it would look like as a multi-modal corridor. Improvements are not limited to the construction of the trail itself: landscaping, pedestrian connections, signage and public art all combine to make a super trail a quality recreation experience.



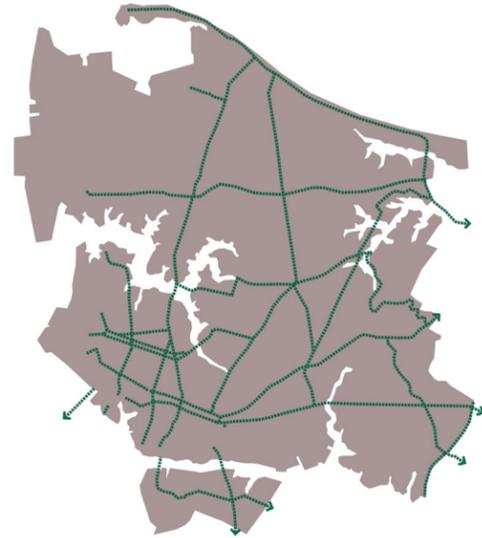
Before



After

ARTERIAL ROUTES

Arterial routes are on-street bicycle facilities, preferably five feet in width. These routes are intended to connect the major commercial centers of Norfolk like Downtown, Norfolk State University (NSU), Wards Corner, Old Dominion University (ODU), Military Circle, Five Points, Ocean View, Little Creek/Shore Drive and the Norfolk Naval Base. Where possible, the most direct route is preferred. Arterials with lower volumes, such as Azalea Garden Road, Granby Street north of the bridge and Chesapeake Boulevard, are opportunities to restripe. Roadways with higher volumes of traffic or limited rights-of-way will likely require easements where practical. Of the projects listed below, an east-west trail and a north-south arterial trail should be selected as pilot projects.



EAST-WEST ROUTES

- Berkley Avenue
- Virginia Beach Boulevard
- 26th/27th/Lafayette
- 34th Street
- Willow Wood Drive/Norview Avenue:
- Little Creek Drive
- Ocean View Avenue
- Bay Avenue: From Naval Base to Granby Street

NORTH-SOUTH ROUTES

- Campostella Road: From I-264 to southern boundary of the city
- Newtown Road: From Elizabeth River to East Virginia Beach Boulevard
- Kempsville Road: From Newtown Road to Princess Anne Road
- Azalea Garden Road: From East Virginia Beach Boulevard to Little Creek Road
- Shore Drive: From East Ocean View to eastern boundary of the city
- Sewells Point Road: From Azalea Garden Road to Chesapeake Boulevard
- Chesapeake Boulevard: From Princess Anne Road to East Ocean View
- Church Street: From Elizabeth River Trail to Granby Street
- Granby Street: From Elizabeth River Trail to Ocean View Avenue
- Colley Avenue: From Elizabeth River Trail to Hampton Boulevard
- Bowdens Ferry Road: From East 27th Street to the Elizabeth River Trail

LOCAL NEIGHBORHOOD LOOPS

Local neighborhood loops are designated routes that preferably are shared streets, but bicycling may be permitted on the sidewalks where appropriate. The routes would be based on street circulation and the neighborhood context, and would reconnect schools, parks and recreation centers. Maps of neighborhood routes should be available, and signage and wayfinding—including simple mechanisms like pavement stamps or lines—can be used to designate the routes. Routes shown on the map are conceptual and not inclusive of all potential loops.

ARTERIAL ROUTES

Norfolk's extensive roadway system is one of its greatest assets. There are multiple opportunities to make the city more bicycle-friendly, and also improve the streetscape.

This example shows Ocean View Avenue as it exists today, and what it could look like with improvements. The "after" image shows a five-foot bicycle lane, street trees, signage, and plantings in the parking strip the evoke more of a "seaside" image. Note also that the "after" image shows what the corridor would look like if utilities were shifted underground.



Before



After

RECONNECT WATER ACCESS

Water is one of the defining elements of the City of Norfolk and access to the city's waterways should be improved. Currently, the city has about eight miles of public beach that face the Chesapeake Bay, and about 15 square miles of rivers, lakes and wetlands. Access to the water can be characterized as one of five types: motorized watercraft, non-motorized watercraft, swimming, fishing and wildlife appreciation. Some access points can serve multiple functions based on the constraints of the site and desire from the community to have new facilities. As a result of the visioning process, the Water Access Committee has formed to further evaluate access points throughout the City and refine recommendations.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 1) All bodies of water in Norfolk should be accessible to the public
- 2) Access to the water should be through methods that are safe, sustainable and environmentally responsible
- 3) Multi-dimensional experiences with water should be created to cultivate community appreciation of natural and cultural resources
- 4) Water access points should be used as an opportunity to educate citizens on Norfolk's environmental issues and initiatives.

LAYFAYETTE RIVER TRAIL

The Lafayette River is a beautiful natural resource that not only provides visual character to Norfolk, but is an excellent place to experience the water.

This set of "before and after" images shows the existing intersection of Colonial Avenue and New Hampshire Avenue. Access to the Lafayette River here is currently unofficial, but could be improved through the construction of a simple kayak launch. The site could further be improved with new street trees plantings, and a sidewalk.



Before



After

Detailed recommendations for upgrades and development of new facilities will be the responsibility of the Water Access Committee. For system planning purposes, there are three types of water access points:

- + Hub – These are the major locations of water access in Norfolk and contain multiple types of access. This may include boat ramps for motorized vehicles, launches for kayaks and canoes, boardwalk systems, fishing docks, and scenic lookout points. Hubs are also places where most water programs would be based, and are also opportunities for vendors to rent boats and other equipment. These locations would also have the most amenities such as restrooms, parking, and other park elements.
- Site – This is a general term for water access points that lack the scale of hubs, but provide some form of physical access such as a boat ramp, canoe launch or fishing dock. Amenities at many sites will be limited, as will parking, but each site should have signage and information pertaining to the trail and environmental education installations where appropriate.
- Lookout – A lookout is a place with a substantial vista of the water. Typically, lookouts do not offer physical access to the water, but have places to sit, facilities to lock a bicycle, and sometimes on-street parking. Where appropriate, there may also be interpretive signage and public art.

WATER TRAILS

The 2001 City of Norfolk Waterway Trails System document identified four primary water trails for development:

- Lafayette River Trail
- Elizabeth River Trail
- Ocean View Trail
- Reservoir Trail

As part of the Vision process, each of the previously identified water trails were updated, including a new name for the Elizabeth River Trail (to avoid confusion with the multi-purpose Elizabeth River Trail on land).

LAFAYETTE RIVER TRAIL

The Lafayette River is home to many great residential areas and cultural sites (see Community Character, above). Furthermore, there are a number of partnership opportunities, including Old Dominion University, the Hermitage Foundation, the Norfolk School Board, and the Norfolk Historical Society.



URBAN RIVER TRAIL (ELIZABETH RIVER TRAIL)

The Elizabeth River is the heart of Norfolk, and one of the major form-givers to downtown. In terms of surrounding land uses, it is the most highly developed and urbanized of the four trails, and provides a unique experience by being part of a “working” river. The trail connects the Lafayette River, follows the coast line around Sewell’s Point, travels into and past some of Norfolk’s most historic neighborhoods, goes by downtown and tapers into two spurs, one at Broad Creek and one that travels east to Virginia Beach.



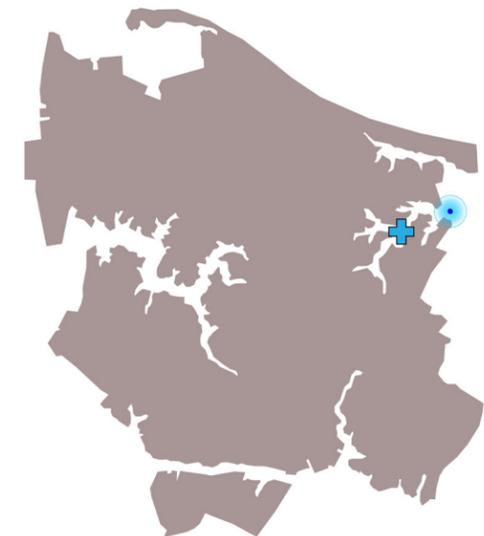
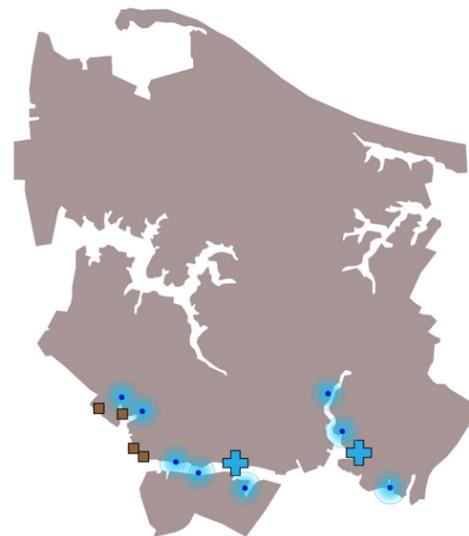
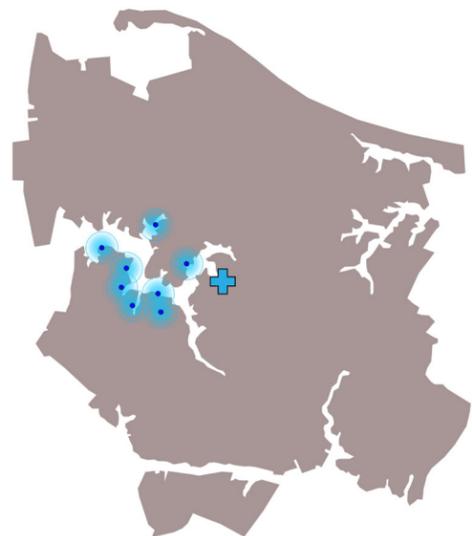
OCEAN VIEW TRAIL

Ocean View Trail starts from the waters of Willoughby Bay, stretches along the Chesapeake Bay beaches of Ocean View, and extends east to Little Creek. Of the four water trails, Ocean View Trail is the most developed and has the greatest number of access points. There are two existing hubs on the western end of the trail: one at Captains Quarters and one at Ocean View Beach Park. Currently, there are two direct access points to Willoughby Bay, and one at a third hub at the East Ocean View Community Center. The trail includes about 30 open water access points to the beach, which have not been evaluated as part of this effort.



RESERVOIR TRAIL

The Reservoir Trail is the least developed of the four proposed trails. It is focused on the water resources of Lake Whitehurst, which currently lacks access points. The experience of paddling in a lake environment is also different than the tidal rivers and the ocean, as is the story that can be told about Norfolk’s water supply and health. The Norfolk Botanical Garden is the recommended hub, but access to the lake should be outside the gate to the park so that visitors do not need to pay the entrance fee.



REFOCUS COMMUNITY AND RECREATION CENTERS

Residents of Norfolk have a diverse range of parks and recreation needs and desires. Over the years RPOS has responded to a broad variety of these desired facilities and services, but is now faced with balancing these demands with limited resources. The vision for Norfolk's parks and open space system is to refocus the investments of RPOS to provide key services. This is particularly important in determining the future of the City's community and recreation centers, programming, and the responsibilities of RPOS operations and maintenance staff.

The City of Norfolk's "subsystem" of community centers has evolved over the years into a collection of:

- Community centers
- Recreation centers
- Aquatics centers
- Therapeutic recreation center
- Fitness/ wellness center
- Senior centers
- Arts/ technology center
- Dance/ music center

The number and quality of amenities, activities, programs and services varies from center to center, and is not consistent across the city. Some programs are offered in centralized facilities, while others are available in multiple centers.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 1) Focus on large, multi-purpose centers with diverse programs and facilities
- 2) Every resident should have access to a community center within two miles of home
- 3) Provide safe pedestrian and bicycle routes to centers
- 4) Ensure transit access to every center
- 5) Work with schools, non-profits and libraries to provide a 'finer grain' system of local, neighborhood facilities

RECOMMENDATIONS

UPGRADE EXISTING FACILITIES

The City of Norfolk has already made a substantial investment in its community centers, and almost all residents have access to an existing center. Therefore, AECOM does not recommend the development of additional centers at this time. In order to better serve residents and to provide a consistent level of recreation facilities, programs and services, it is proposed that the Community Center system will ultimately be comprised of six (6) types of facilities:

Managed by RPOS

- Large Community Centers
- Medium Community Centers
- Special Centers

Managed by Others

- School Gymnasiums/After-School Centers
- Neighborhood Centers
- Libraries

Following are details about each facility type, and the Norfolk facilities in need of upgrades to meet the definitions.

LARGE COMMUNITY CENTERS

There are three recommended facilities to serve as Large Community Centers: Tarrallton Community Center, Norfolk Fitness and Wellness Center (both shown in red), and the proposed new Kroc Center (shown in pink). Ideally, these facilities should be about 90,000 to 100,000 square feet. Tarrallton and the Fitness and Wellness Center should be upgraded to include the following:

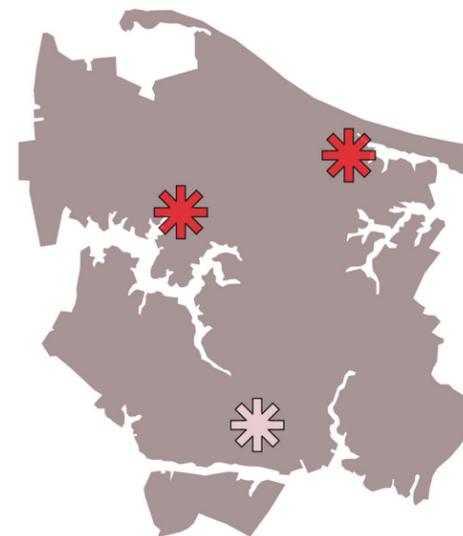
- Indoor and outdoor swimming pools (Olympic size)
- Dual gymnasium
- Fitness room
- Dance studio
- Art room
- Game room
- Computer lab
- Music lab
- Auditorium
- Classrooms/Multi-purpose rooms
- Music lab
- Community history exhibits/public art
- Racquetball courts
- Multi-use fields
- Indoor track
- Locker rooms
- Playground
- Storage
- Large parking lot

MEDIUM COMMUNITY CENTERS

A Medium Community Center is generally about 20,000 to 40,000 feet, and provides traditional community center facilities. In Norfolk, the medium community centers are the Bayview Community Center; Berkley Community Center; Fairlawn Community Center; Norview Community Center; Larchmont Community Center; and Lamberts Point. These facilities should be upgraded as needed to accommodate the following:

- Fitness room
- Game room
- Computer lab
- Class room
- Art room
- Gym
- Multipurpose room
- Community history exhibits/public art
- Parking
- Storage
- Locker rooms
- Playground

- A. Bayview Community Center
- B. Norview Community Center
- C. Lamberts Point Community
- D. Berkley Community Center
- E. Fairlawn Community Center



SPECIAL USE CENTERS

Special Use Centers typically focus on specific facility types. In Norfolk, these facilities include the new Aquatics Center; the Therapeutic Recreation Center; the Gymnastics and Dance Center at Lakewood Park; the Boxing Center at Barraud Park; the Titustown Visual Arts Center; and the Outdoor Adventure Center at East Ocean View Community Center. Because of their specialized use, there are no general recommendations that apply to each facility. Many of these facilities are also in good condition, such as the Titustown Visual Arts Center. The two Special Use Centers in most need of an upgrade are the Boxing Center at Barraud Park and the Therapeutic Recreation Center. Additionally, the senior population of the city (defined as 55 years or older) is integral part of the community, and it is important to improve their access to recreation opportunities, especially those within special-use centers. Additional programming for seniors at special use centers is recommended, as is improved transportation options to and from the existing centers.

- A. Therapeutic Recreation Center
- B. East Ocean View Outdoor Adventure Center
- C. Titustown Arts Center
- D. Lakewood Dance Studio
- E. Barraud Boxing Center
- F. New Aquatics Center

Boxing Center at Barraud Park – The current facility is outdated and lacks the space needed for a quality boxing program. Recommendations for improvement include increasing the square footage to accommodate additional rings and workout areas, and upgrading locker rooms.



THERAPEUTIC RECREATION CENTER

THE THERAPEUTIC RECREATION CENTER PROVIDES A COMPREHENSIVE LEISURE SERVICE PROGRAM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES OR SPECIAL NEEDS. CENTER STAFF ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT THEIR MISSION AND HAVE INDICATED A STRONG NEED TO UPGRADE AND EXPAND THE EXISTING CENTER. A MAJOR PRIORITY IS EXPANDING THE PROGRAM CAPACITY OF THE CENTER, AS EXISTING CLASSES CONSISTENTLY FILL UP AND HAVE WAITING LISTS. TO FULFILL THE VISION OF THE TRC'S STAFF, THE FOLLOWING FACILITIES ARE NEEDED:

- GYM
- KITCHEN
- LARGE MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM
- MASSAGE THERAPY ROOM
- COMPUTER LAB
- ART ROOMS (2)
- WOODWORKING CLASSROOM
- EXERCISE/DANCE ROOM
- WEIGHT ROOM/FITNESS AREA
- GAME ROOM
- CLASSROOMS/MEETING ROOMS (4)
- STAFF OFFICES (6)
- STORAGE AREAS

SCHOOL GYMNASIUMS AND AFTER-SCHOOL CENTERS. THE CITY MUST CONTINUE TO WORK WITH THE NORFOLK SCHOOL BOARD TO OPEN SCHOOL GYMNASIUMS FOR THE COMMUNITY OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL HOURS. WITH THE HELP OF PARTNERSHIPS, EVERY SCHOOL SHOULD ALSO SERVE AS AN AFTER-SCHOOL CENTER FOR NEIGHBORHOOD CHILDREN.

NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS. TO RE-FOCUS SCARCE RESOURCES, AECOM RECOMMENDS THAT EXISTING NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS BE GRADUALLY TURNED OVER TO NON-PROFIT AGENCIES. THOSE THAT DO NOT REMAIN VIABLE CAN BE CONVERTED INTO NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS OR TURNED OVER TO THE SCHOOLS TO WHICH THEY ARE ATTACHED. FURTHER STUDY ON THE FUTURE OF EACH NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER IS RECOMMENDED.

LIBRARIES. LIBRARIES ALREADY SERVE AS DE FACTO COMMUNITY CENTERS, AND PROVIDE A GREAT DEAL OF PROGRAMMING AND GATHERING SPACES FOR THE COMMUNITY. THE CITY SHOULD CONTINUE TO LOOK FOR PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES WITH LOCAL LIBRARY BRANCHES, SUCH AS THE CANOE AND LAUNCH AT LARCHMONT LIBRARY.



REFOCUS PROGRAMS

One of the greatest strengths of the Department is its level of programming that it offers. As part of the “Refocus” initiative, the vision for the City’s recreation programs is to continue to offer core programs, but be flexible enough to respond to changing resident needs and interests.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 1) Provide diverse, accessible recreation programs to all citizens
- 2) Consistently track program participation and costs to ensure the best allocation of resources
- 3) New programs should be developed where there is a demonstrated interest in a particular community or city-wide
- 4) Focus on developing new programs in fitness/wellness; biking and walking; adult/continuing education; special events; nature/environmental education; swimming lessons; water fitness and dance.
- 5) Cultivate partnerships with other City departments, neighboring municipalities, and non-profit organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

UPGRADE EXISTING PROGRAMS

The City is currently evaluating current programs to determine demand based on participation rates. Once the analysis is complete, the Department’s program staff will need to make a decision on what is the minimum participation rate for a program to continue. In addition to participation, the City should consider the cost of providing the program and the potential for cost recovery.

DEVELOP NEW PROGRAMS

According to the Mail/Telephone Survey results, the following programs have the greatest unmet need and the highest priority amongst residents:

- Fitness + Wellness
- Biking + Walking
- Adult + Continuing Education
- Special events
- Nature + Environmental
- Swimming lessons + Water Fitness
- Dance

40 DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS: SETTING UP NORFOLK’S CHILDREN FOR SUCCESS

The Search Institute has identified the following building blocks of healthy development—known as Developmental Assets—that help young children grow up healthy, caring, and responsible. Building blocks in *italic* indicate those in which Norfolk’s parks and recreation system can have a major positive impact.

- Family Support
- Positive Family Communication
- *Other Adult Relationships*
- *Caring Neighborhood*
- *Caring Climate in Child Care and Educational Settings*
- Parent Involvement in Child Care and Education
- *Community Cherishes and Values Young Children*
- *Children Seen as Resources*
- *Service to Others*
- *Safety*
- Family Boundaries
- *Boundaries in Child Care and Educational Settings*
- *Neighborhood Boundaries*
- *Adult Role Models*
- *Positive Peer Relationships*
- Positive Expectations
- *Play and Creative Activities*
- *Out-of-Home and Community Programs*
- Religious Community
- Time at Home
- *Motivation to Mastery*
- *Engagement in Learning Experiences*
- Home-program Connection
- *Bonding to Programs*
- *Early Literacy*
- Caring
- Equality and Social Justice
- Integrity
- Honesty
- Responsibility
- Self-regulation
- Planning and Decision Making
- *Interpersonal Skills*
- *Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity*
- Resistance Skills
- Peaceful Conflict Resolution
- *Personal Power*
- *Self-Esteem*
- Sense of Purpose
- Positive View of Personal Future



REFOCUS OPERATIONS + MAINTENANCE

A major focus of Refocus is to streamline operations and maintenance for the most efficient use of City resources. Currently RPOS maintenance staff have a number of responsibilities throughout the City, not all of which are essential to providing an excellent parks and recreation system. The following is a preliminary examination of the responsibilities of maintenance staff, and suggestions on how to re-focus resources on the tasks that have the greatest benefits to the parks system as a whole. After extensive discussion among Parks and Urban Forestry (P&UF) staff, the following areas are deemed core services:

- 1) Mowing which consists of litter collection, mowing, edging, cleanup, fertilization and pesticide applications.
- 2) Landscape maintenance which consists of plant trimming, fertilization, mulching, weeding, installation (infills only) and pesticide applications.
- 3) Beach maintenance which consists of sanitation/sifting of sand, debris removal (large items such as dead marine animals, boats, lumber, etc.) and litter and trash collection.
- 4) Forestry operations which consists of trimming, removal and replacements.
- 5) Athletics/field maintenance which consists of athletic turf and dirt on diamonds.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 1) Concentrate on delivering the five core services of mowing, landscape maintenance, beach maintenance, forestry, and athletics/field maintenance.
-
-

RECOMMENDATIONS

UPGRADE EXISTING OPERATIONS + MAINTENANCE PRACTICES

Improve Core Services - Each of the core services have a wide range of operational levels which are a function of funding and other resource availability. It is important to note that even within these core services there is a hierarchy with the most basic level is compliance with the applicable codes and regulations such as grass height, the presence of trash and rodent control. A higher standard of operations that pays attention to aesthetics and visitor experience requires additional time, money and Department resources

1. Mowing

Mowing operations require a large amount of staff time. Major issues are described below, along with suggestions or improvement .

- Begin Meadows Pilot Project.
- Monitor Forest Canopy Program Results.
- Staffing Levels Which Provide Working On a Ten-Day Mowing Cycle.

2. Landscape Maintenance

Landscaping activities are broken into four basic categories: new installations; replacement plantings; routine maintenance such as pesticide applications, trimming and removal of weeds; and winter work such as remulching and replacement of dead or poorly performing plants in existing beds. Recommendations to improve landscape maintenance are as follows:

- Acquire Mulching Machine.
- Create a Bed Maintenance Hierarchy.

3. Beach Maintenance

Currently beach operations and maintenance procedures are running smoothly. Equipment is in acceptable condition and on the replacement schedule and staff are well-trained, but there is sometimes a problem with litter collection. The following recommendations can assist with this issue:

- Use the Weekenders Program.
- Establish Pack In, Pack Out areas

4. Forestry

Forestry operations are currently backlogged, with a six to twelve month backlog considered to be “normal”. Because of this, forestry work is primarily reactive rather than proactive. The following actions are recommended to facilitate more efficient use staff time:

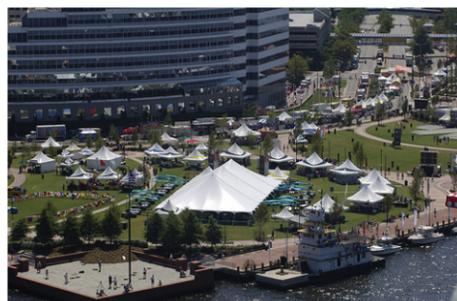
- Establish additional ROW Crews.

5. Athletic Fields

The maintenance of safe recreational environments is an essential service, as athletics are one of the most commonly used facilities in Norfolk. Therefore, it is essential that expertise and equipment be available to mitigate the impacts of use and maintain the integrity of the resources. Recommendations include:

- Creating a professional turfgrass management plan
- Purchase speciality equipment

Improvements to other essential services. - There are two functional areas that are not considered core services but are essential to the operation of the city that have methods other than accomplishment by P&UF: collection of trash in park areas and support of festivals. A brief discussion of each follows.



IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the recommendations and improvements outlined in Section __ is estimated to cost approximately \$138 Million. To determine a phasing and funding strategy for these improvements, AECOM met with City staff for an Implementation Workshop on July 7, 2010. The purpose of the Workshop was to review costs; identify existing and potential funding sources; and develop an Implementation Plan for the proposed Parks and Recreation System.

FUNDING ESTIMATES

Workshop participants first reviewed and discussed potential, realistic funding sources for implementation. Available and projected annual funding sources include:

General Fund	\$0 year
Bonds	\$5,000,000/ yr
Grants	\$250,000 – 500,000/ yr
Development Cash Proffers	\$250,000 – 500,000/ yr
Philanthropy/ Foundation	\$250,000 – 500,000/ yr
Partnerships	\$250,000 – 500,000/ yr
Easements/ Donations	TBD
Concessions	TBD
<i>Total Estimated Annual Funding</i>	<i>\$6 – 7,000,000/yr</i>

This is consistent with the City’s historic spending on public realm improvements over the past ten years, including parks, trails, sidewalks and bike lanes:

Fiscal Year	Total CIP Funding	Notes
2000	\$0	No Park & Recreation CIP Funding (only Zoo & Botanical)*
2001	\$1.9 million	
2002	\$3.17 million	
2003	\$1.97 million	
2004	\$2.36 million	
2005	\$670,000	
2006	\$6.96 million	Includes renovations to NFWC and citywide boat ramps
2007	\$18.51 million	Does Not Include \$750,000 Neighborhood CIP for Shoop Park; Includes \$6.0M to renovate Town Point Park
2008	\$11.65 million	Includes Town Point Park and Broad Creek Linear Park
2009	\$8.50 million	Does Not Include \$1.0M purchase of Bluestone Ave. property; Includes \$3.95M to renovate Town Point Park
2010	\$5.75 million	Includes \$250,000 to replace fountain at Waterside

* None of the above figures include the Virginia Zoological Park, Golf Courses, or Botanical Gardens

While the current economic downturn will prevent the City from sustaining this level of spending in FY 2011, it is hoped that spending levels will resume in FY 2012. Assuming that the City sustains this level of annual spending, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan can be implemented over a period of approximately twenty (20) years.

2010 – 2012 PRIORITIES

The City’s current Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) includes funding for the

following improvements:

FY 2009 - 2011 (THROUGH – JUNE 2011):

Construct Indoor Aquatic Facility in Southside	\$4,548,800
Plan & Construct Ingleside Gymnasium	\$1,815,000
Improve Neighborhood Parks	\$1,000,000
Therapeutic Recreation Center Expansion	\$500,000
Improve Existing Community Centers	\$600,000
Fitness and Wellness Center Improvements	\$135,000
Soccer Field Improvements	\$1,250,000
<i>Total Three (3) Year CIP</i>	<i>\$9,833,800</i>

It is recommended that the City update the Needs and Priorities Assessment in 2012 to verify spending priorities for the following two years (FY 2013, 2014). As mentioned above, the Master Plan can be implemented by the year 2032 if the City sustains an annual investment of approximately \$6 – 7 million in capital improvements.

It is important to note that Operations and Maintenance costs will increase along with capital spending. According to industry “rule-of-thumb” standards, O & M costs will increase annually by approximately 5 – 10% of capital costs. This equates to an annual increase in the parks and recreation O & M budget of approximately \$300 – 700,000 based on the recommended \$6 -7 million annual investment in capital improvements.

