RECREATION, PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION

PLANNING FOR HENRICO'S FUTURE RECREATION, PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES NEEDS

In addition to being nationally recognized for excellence in recreational facilities and parks, Henrico County's open space and cultural resources make it an outstanding place to live, work, and play. In 2024, Henrico County's Division of Recreation and Parks (the Department) was re-accredited by the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA), after receiving their first award in 2019. This designation, renewable every five years, demonstrates Henrico's success in meeting national quality standards. Recreational facilities and programming support community vitality, well-being, public health, environmental and infrastructure services, and economic growth. Additionally, the recently opened Taylor Farm Park won the National Recreation and Parks Association's Innovation in Park Design Award in 2025.

This chapter highlights the goals related to these resources, as well as current and future assets. It also sets policies and strategies to ensure Henrico continues its high-quality service in the decades to come.

The 2024 Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Master Plan, located in the Appendix, includes additional details about the county's plan for parks and recreational facilities.

LINKAGE TO COMMUNITY VISION

Four planning topics guide the direction of the HenricoNEXT 2045 Comprehensive Plan:

- Our Environment
- Managed and Sustainable Growth

- Safe and Connected Spaces
- High-Quality, Livable Places

These provide the framework for the document and function as guiding principles for the Plan's goals, policies, and strategies. Recreation, parks, open space, and cultural resources protect Henrico's natural landscapes and advance the **Our Environment** vision by promoting conservation and supporting nature-based opportunities. These sites provide opportunities for open spaces to be designed in a manner compatible with surrounding neighborhoods and future development, supporting the Managed and Sustainable Growth vision. Recreational sites are also designated as priority locations within the expanded multimodal transportation network. Strengthening these connections through integrated trails and other options supports the **Safe and Connected Spaces** vision by enhancing access to community facilities and destinations. Together, these resources elevate overall quality of life and help to attract and retain residents, progressing the **High-Quality, Livable Places** vision.

COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS

Two surveys conducted in 2021 as part of the HenricoNEXT 2045 Comprehensive Plan Update (The Residents' and The Recreation & Parks Surveys located in the Appendix) provide important insights for guiding recreation and parks planning.

Henrico Community Survey Highlights

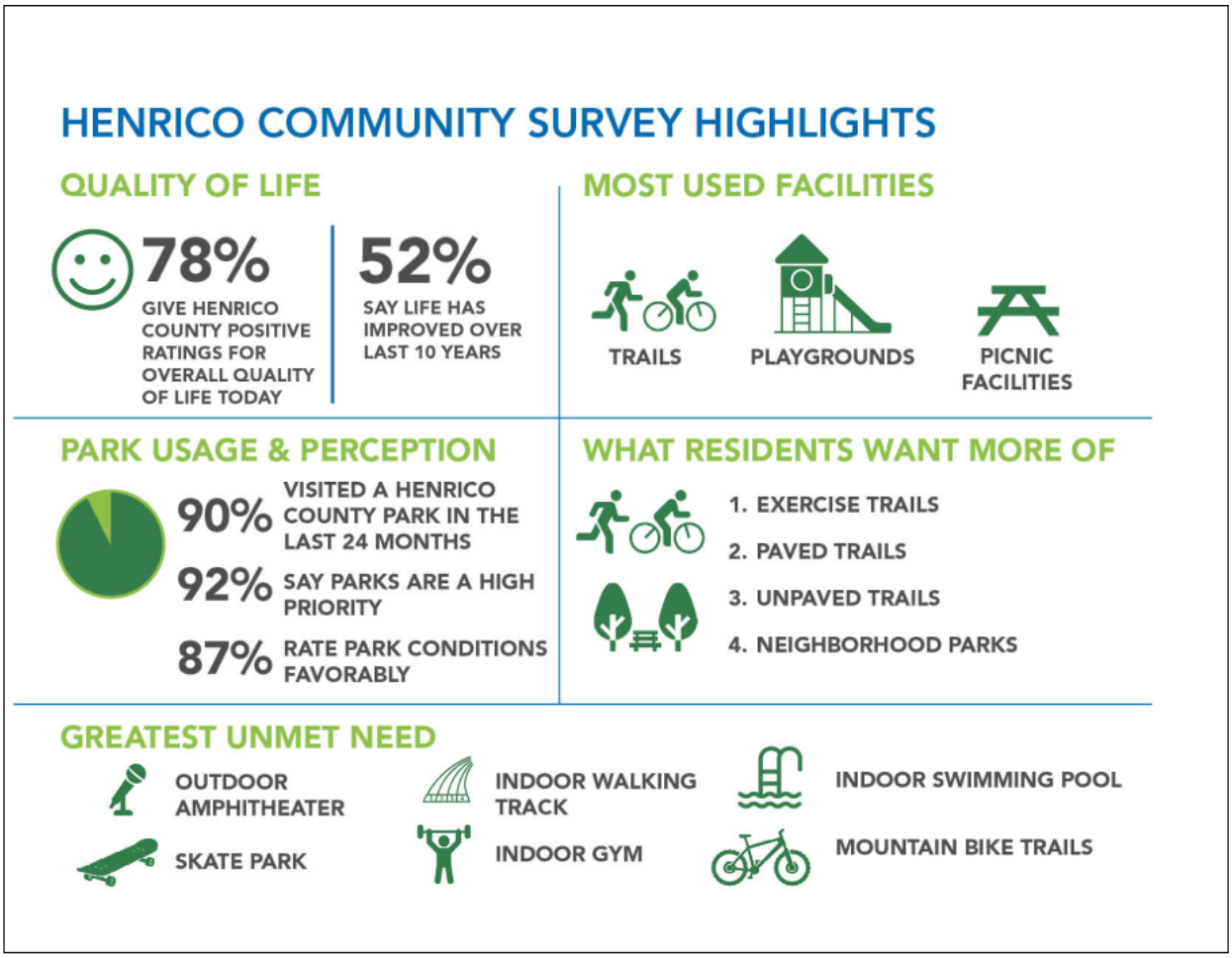
The following are highlights from the Residents' Survey that apply to recreation, parks, open space, and cultural resources:

- Residents gave positive ratings for current quality of life (78%), and 52% of residents said quality of life has improved over the last 10 years.
- Parks, recreational programs, and passive and active recreational facilities were identified as an area of strength in county services.
- Pedestrian safety was one of four areas needing improvement identified in the survey.
- Residents gave high marks to the county for its respect for and protection of the environment but also indicated that this area needs improvement and additional emphasis.
- Preserving permanent open space and sensitive environmental areas and providing bicycle and pedestrian amenities were two of the four planning-related services the public identified as needing improvement.

The following are highlights from the Recreation and Parks Survey:

- Henrico County parks are well used and highly valued. More than 90% of respondents had visited a county park within the previous 24 months, though visitation was uneven between districts. 92% of respondents said recreation and parks were equally or more important than other priority services in Henrico County.

- Trails, playgrounds, and picnic facilities were the most frequently used or visited facilities.
- Henrico County is recognized for its high standard of care. When asked about the physical condition of facilities, 87% gave a favorable response. Most people had no concerns about facilities (39%), but for those who did, the most frequent comments were about uneven distribution of facilities (31%), maintenance and cleanliness (28%), and outdated equipment/facilities (19%).
- Recreational programming is rated highly, more than 80% of respondents reviewed these services favorably.
- Fitness, concerts, and special events are the most popular recreational program types.



- Henrico's park system is universally accessible. For those with members of the household needing special accommodations, a majority (59%) gave favorable ratings for the accessibility of county parks and facilities.

- The facilities that are most important to Henrico residents are: trails (exercise, paved and unpaved) (43%), playgrounds (27%), dog parks (20%), and small neighborhood parks (19%).
- Henrico County residents highly value trails and want the trail network to expand. The highest priority is for trails that link neighborhoods with parks. The most preferred trail type is wide paved share-use paths, with strong secondary support for a system of mixed trail types to provide options and choices. The most common reasons that trails are used are for exercise, experiencing nature, and recreation.

In addition to the Recreation and Parks Survey questions, approximately 250 open-ended comments were received. The nature of the comments varied widely, but included the following key themes:

- Improve the safety of parks and trails (e.g., provide more police patrols, cameras, emergency lights, and regulatory signage).
- Make parks more easily accessible by means other than a car.
- Allot funds to maintain new and existing facilities.
- Consider equity when providing improvements both geographically and demographically.
- Support an expanded and interconnected shared-use path network and new sidewalk connections.
- Increase trails of all types – distances, surfaces, difficulty levels, and user types.



Tuckahoe Creek Park

RECREATION, PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

RECREATION, PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES GOALS

Henrico County will enhance the quality of life and foster a sense of well-being and community for residents and visitors through the responsible management of resources to provide opportunities to safely play, learn, recreate, and access recreation, parks, open space, and cultural resources.

Recreation and Parks Division Mission Statement: Enriching Lives, Connecting Communities

Our mission is to create and deliver exceptional recreation and park experiences that foster well-being and a sense of belonging.

Recreation and Parks Division Vision Statement: Innovating Tomorrow's Parks, Today

We aspire to be leaders in the recreation and park industry by setting the standard of excellence in operations, programs, and services.

Recreation and Parks Division Core Values:



Community: We serve the residents of Henrico County by providing parks and facilities where they can gather that are safe, clean, and well-maintained.



Inclusion: We are committed to providing all residents of Henrico County access to our facilities, programs, and services and strive to create an environment where everyone feels welcome and valued.



Stewardship: We are dedicated to the responsible management and preservation of our open spaces and historic resources for future generations to enjoy.

Wellness: We prioritize the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of our community through recreational programs, fitness opportunities, and outdoor activities.

RECREATION, PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES ASSETS

Henrico's public spaces provide unique and valuable benefits to the county, residents, and visitors. They offer places for recreation and protect the county's historical, cultural, and natural resources. The parks, shared-use paths, trails, and natural areas also serve as watershed protection, flood mitigation, water quality enhancements, green infrastructure, and open space preservation. Public spaces and planned recreational activities have economic benefits, attracting visitors and new residents, while supporting current residents and increasing property values. Open space, trails, and programming assist with the achievement of community health and wellness, providing opportunities to exercise, connect, and recharge with easy access to neighborhoods.

Recreation Assets

The Division of Recreation and Parks was first established to offer recreational programming which continues to be an essential focus of the Department's mission. The county offers more than 1,000 types of activities and events for all ages, abilities, and interests, including fitness, sports, summer camps, therapeutic recreation, community events, educational classes, performing arts, and historic interpretation. More information on the types of programming, participation levels, and new initiatives can be found in Recreation and Park's Program Plan, published quarterly. These services support health and wellness, education and personal growth, community fellowship, and social connection. The county's investment in these activities is a commitment to a high quality of life for residents.

Parks and Open Space Assets

Park properties and facilities are the backbone of the county's system. They support county-sponsored activities, user experiences, and access to recreational opportunities. The Department owns and maintains over 65 parks, specialty sites, community recreation, and athletic facilities. This mix of assets provides open space, recreational programming, and sports tourism opportunities across Henrico County. In addition to these facilities, public school fields are managed as recreational space. (Refer to the Recreation and Parks Facilities Inventory Map for the locations of constructed parks and facilities.)

The county also provides several waterfront access sites, including fishing locations at Dorey Park, Tuckahoe Creek Park, Echo Lake Park, and Three Lakes Park, and river access points at Deep Bottom Park and Osborne Park, which offer shoreline fishing and opportunities for paddling and boating. These locations, illustrated on the Waterfront Access Map below,

further strengthens Henrico's outdoor recreation network and enhance public access to its natural waterways.

The county also owns and manages over 600 acres of land banked properties that have not yet been designated for a specific use. While some areas may be developed in the future to meet county needs, other parcels are flood-prone and may be unsuitable for use. For a full inventory and description of the park and open spaces facilities, full sized and indexed copies of the facility maps, level of service standards for acreage and amenities, recommendations for parks and facilities, and a 10-year implementation plan, refer to the 2024 Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Master Plan (see Appendix).

HENRICO PARKS AND FACILITIES 2024 SNAPSHOT

3,353 acres of parks operated by Henrico Recreation and Parks

2,643 acres of the 3,353 acres is neighborhood, community, and county park land

546 acres of additional county-owned land for proposed future parks

125,417 sf of indoor recreation space (Rec and Parks community/recreation centers, YMCA Aquatic Center)

COUNTY RECREATION AND PARK SITES:

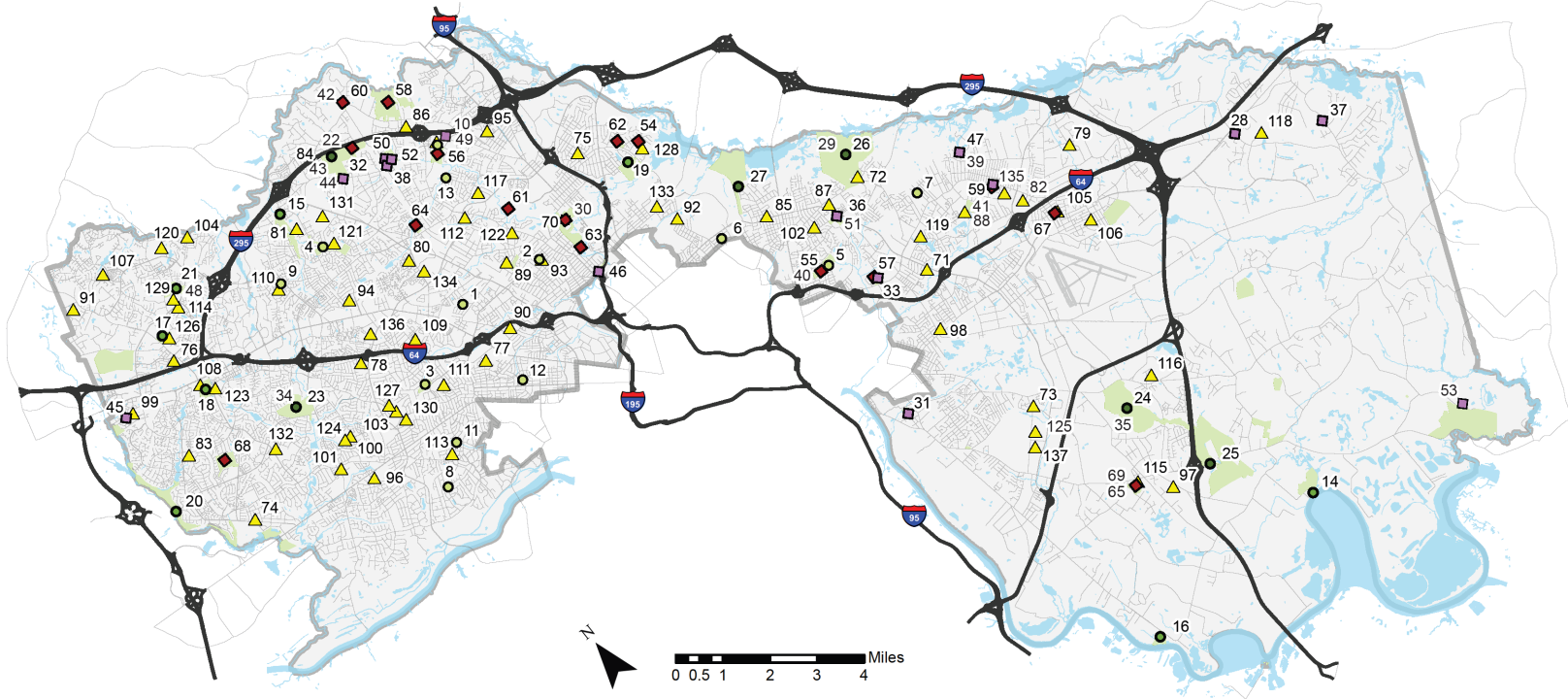
28 parks

15 athletic facilities

11 community/recreation centers

12 specialty facilities

1,302 acres of additional public parkland in the county (National Park Service, and other public entities)

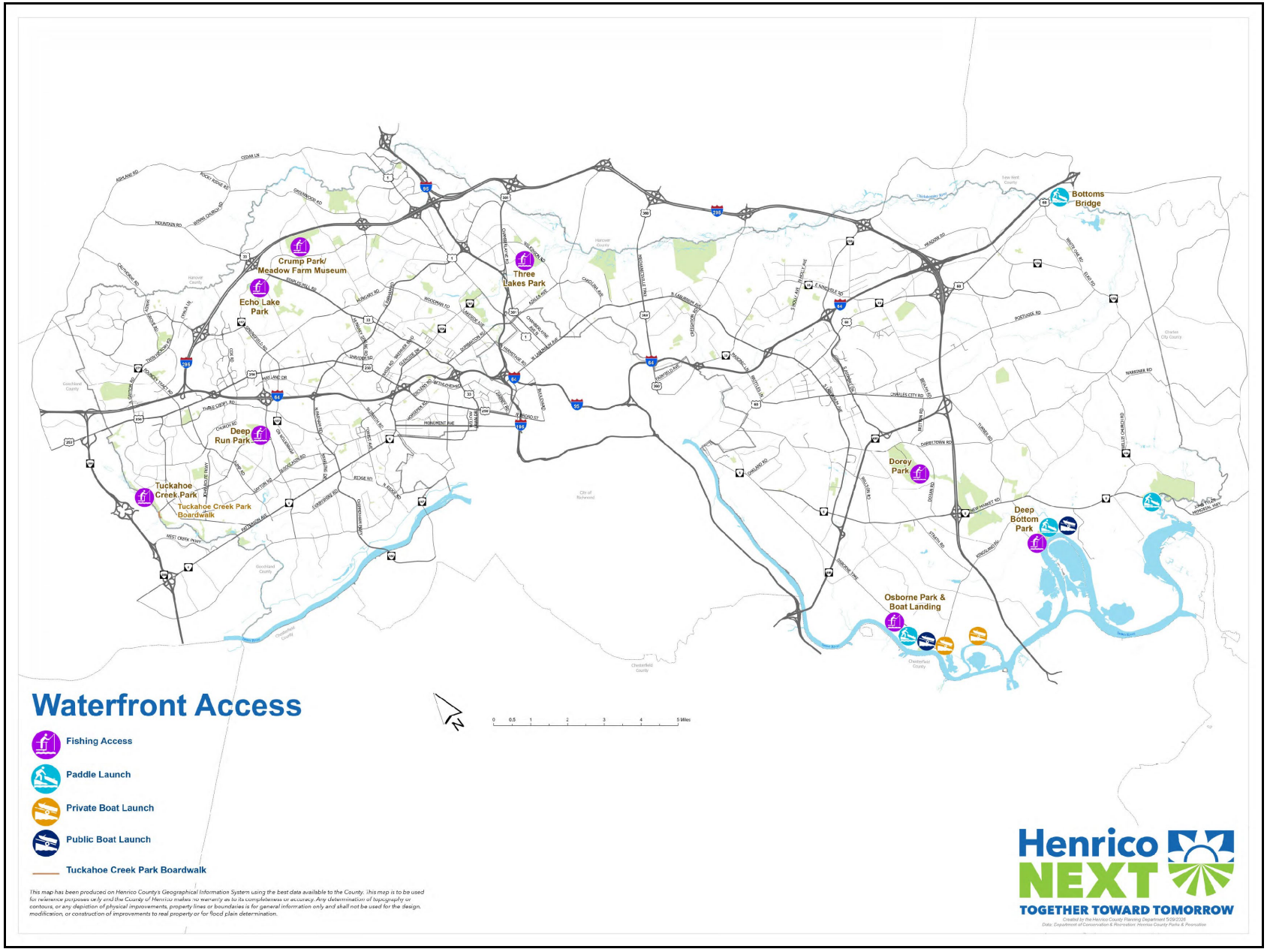


Recreation and Parks Facilities Inventory, 2021

- Neighborhood Park
- Community Park
- County Park
- Special Facility
- Athletic Facility
- School-based Facilities
- Waterbodies
- County Boundary
- Parks

This map has been produced on Henrico County's Geographical Information System using the best data available to the County. This map is to be used for reference purposes only and the County of Henrico makes no warranty as to its completeness or accuracy. Any determination of topography or contours, or any depiction of physical improvements, property lines or boundaries is for general information only and shall not be used for the design, modification, or construction of improvements to real property or for flood plain determination.

Henrico NEXT
TOGETHER TOWARD TOMORROW


Waterfront Access
Fishing Access
Paddle Launch
Private Boat Launch
Public Boat Launch
Tuckahoe Creek Park Boardwalk
Crump Park/ Meadow Farm Museum
Echo Lake Park
Three Lakes Park
Deep Run Park
Tuckahoe Creek Park
Tuckahoe Creek Park Boardwalk
Bottoms Bridge
Dorey Park
Deep Bottom Park
Osborne Park & Boat Landing
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Henrico NEXT
TOGETHER TOWARD TOMORROW

Cultural Resources Assets

Henrico County is one of the oldest political subdivisions in Virginia and has a long and storied history. It begins with the indigenous peoples of the Powhatan Confederacy, who lived here for thousands of years predating English colonization. The story continues with one of the first colonial settlements in Virginia in 1611, features Revolutionary War era events, includes Civil War battles, and proceeds through the present day. The buildings, historic sites, and landscapes formed by people through the centuries are a snapshot of America and contribute to the unique character of Henrico County.

The County's rich inventory includes 35 properties and districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is comprised of houses of important public figures, historic properties and farms, cemeteries, churches, theaters, and industrial and commercial buildings of notable style, design, or impact to American history. In addition to individual sites, Henrico County also contains three designated historic districts: Highland Springs, Laurel Industrial School, and Sandston Historic Districts.

Henrico was the location of several major Civil War battles including Seven Pines, Savage's Station, Glendale, Malvern Hill, New Market Heights, and Yellow Tavern. Portions of these areas are preserved within Richmond National Battlefield Park, managed by the National Park Service, which provides insight into the region's pivotal role in our nation's past. [15] Collectively, these resources underscore Henrico's importance in American history and offer opportunities for education, tourism, and preservation. (A listing of State and National Register sites and Civil War battlefields can be found in the Appendix.)

The county owns and manages several historic resource sites and provides educational programming and public archival resources. The Henrico Historic Preservation Advisory Committee educates the Board of Supervisors regarding the identifications, interpretation, rehabilitation, protection, and preservation of historical and cultural resources located within the county.

RECREATION, PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

Henrico County will pursue the following policies and strategies to enhance the quality of life and foster a sense of well-being and community for the residents of Henrico now and for decades to come. This will be accomplished through the conscientious management of resources and by facilitating leisure services and recreational opportunities in safe and well-maintained environments.

[15] *https://www.nps.gov/rich/index.htm*

Policy R/P/OS/CR 1: High-Quality Parks, Trails, and Recreation Facilities

Provide access to safe and high-quality parks, trails, and recreational facilities that meet the needs of county residents.

The county will strive for excellence in all aspects by maintaining a high standard for existing facilities and developing new sites and amenities to meet public demand. These should provide inclusive recreation and universal access, with opportunities for all ages, abilities, and interests. Increasing access to parks, recreational sites, and open space via walking, biking, and transit supports public health, wellness, and quality of life. County properties should be safe and feel welcoming, promoting social connections and community empowerment.

STRATEGY R/P/OS/CR 1-1: MAINTAIN A CONSISTENT AND HIGH-QUALITY STANDARD FOR FACILITY DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Henrico should develop a Park Standards Manual with design and management standards for park sites and amenities. This document should follow national best practices, address maintenance and operations, and detail a cohesive material and furnishing palette that is durable, cost-effective, and reflects Henrico's character. All sites should be assigned a park type and maintenance tier classification, which will guide routine upkeep, lifecycle replacement, and development. Designs should strive for excellence, which requires attention to harmonious site planning, quality and selection of materials, sensitivity to site context, and custom design plans.

STRATEGY R/P/OS/CR 1-2: DEVELOP NEW PARKS, TRAILS, AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES TO MEET CURRENT AND PROJECTED FUTURE LOCAL AND COUNTY-WIDE NEEDS

Expand the park and trails system and amenities to provide additional recreational opportunities, widen access, and meet new trends and public needs. Follow established levels of service standards for amenities and parkland quantity ratios. Shortfalls should be considered on a geographic level, ensuring equality in access. Henrico should address deficits on both a county-wide and more localized basis. Track the results of annual public surveys and other community outreach to determine if needs are met. Continue to monitor changing trends and identify neighborhood-level specific needs. As opportunities arise, the county should consider the desirability of acquiring new land for parks or open space based on level of service standards and the recommendations in the 2024 Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Master Plan (see Appendix). Based on existing development patterns and available public land, the county should consider how to maximize uses within parks, including infill, multi-purpose facilities, and replacing defunct equipment with emerging trend amenities. Partnership and use agreements, both between county departments and with outside agencies, are other methods to maximize recreational opportunities.

STRATEGY R/P/OS/CR 1-3: DEVELOP FACILITIES THAT PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES FOR ALL USERS

The county should continue creating equal access for all community members by reducing barriers and increasing opportunities. Universal access and inclusive recreation goes beyond compliance with ADA requirements. Public spaces should be welcoming to everyone, regardless of age or ability, and should fully allow for social participation and support health and wellness. Providing a wide variety of interest areas and activities, and

working to overlap user groups where possible, will provide recreational opportunities for everyone to lead high-quality lives and strengthen community bonds. Incorporating input of potential users into the planning and development of the parks and open space system will increase community buy-in and better serve their needs.

STRATEGY R/P/OS/CR 1-4: PROMOTE PEDESTRIAN, WHEELED DEVICES, AND TRANSIT CONNECTIONS TO AND BETWEEN RECREATION AND PARK FACILITIES

Pursue a comprehensive strategy for increasing connectivity and access to and between parks and other recreational sites for pedestrians, users of wheeled devices (wheelchairs, bikes, strollers, etc.), and transit riders. Prioritize connecting these facilities to neighborhoods, schools, recreation centers, and other parks. All new recreational sites should include connectivity planning as part of their design and construction, and improvements should be made to existing ones. Consider developing new shared-use paths to function as destinations, as well as transportation linkages, and incorporate recreational amenities like playgrounds, fitness equipment, picnic facilities, outdoor art, and interpretive signage into designs.

STRATEGY R/P/OS/CR 1-5: CONDUCT ANNUAL PUBLIC SURVEYS TO EVALUATE PUBLIC NEED AND TRENDS

The Department should conduct annual public surveys to evaluate recreational facility and programming needs and trends, to help track how investments and construction have addressed previously identified needs and to adjust strategies in response. Conducting these at the county, district, and neighborhood level, as appropriate, will provide information that identifies trends at each scale. Granular data will reveal where and how needs fluctuate between districts and even neighborhoods. To attain a representative respondent pool, consider the format, advertising and outreach methods, language, and other factors when preparing and conducting the inquiry. The surveys should be supplemented with other forms of public input, like program participant questionnaires, instructor feedback sessions, and QR code "comment boxes" at park kiosks. The responses should be cross-tabulated with national recreational trends and demographic forecasts to support delivery of innovative and high-performing recreational amenities and programming.

STRATEGY R/P/OS/CR 1-6: INCORPORATE THE CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES OF CPTED IN EXISTING AND PROPOSED PARK FACILITIES

Incorporate the concepts and strategies of CPTED (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design) in existing and proposed park facilities as is feasible and desirable. Employing CPTED principles creates physical environments that deter crime and promote community engagement, welcoming users and empowering community ownership.

Policy R/P/OS/CR 2: Recreational Programming for Healthy and Active Living

Provide diverse recreational programming opportunities for Henrico County residents and visitors.

The county recognizes the need for innovative, high-quality recreational programming throughout the park system to benefit residents of all ages and abilities. It should provide programs and resources that foster healthy and active lifestyles, learning and personal growth, inclusive engagement, and community connections. Keeping up-to-date on trends, demographic shifts, public needs, and participant feedback would allow the county to adjust programming to meet residents' needs and stay at the forefront of emerging trends.

STRATEGY R/P/OS/CR 2-1: PROVIDE RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING OPTIONS FOR A RANGE OF AGE GROUPS AND INTERESTS THAT MEETS CURRENT TRENDS AND PUBLIC NEED

The county should build upon their strong foundation of providing innovative, high-quality recreational programming options for residents of all ages, abilities, and interests. Program inventory should be regularly evaluated based on participation, feedback, and trends, and adjusted to ensure the most up-to-date offerings are provided to meet residents' needs. Programs and events should be accessible and welcoming to all user groups.

Policy R/P/OS/CR 3: High-Quality Open Spaces and Historic Resources

Conserve and manage open space and historic resources to protect and enhance the unique character of Henrico County.

Henrico's landscapes have been formed over hundreds of years of settlement and tells the story of the people and the place. Conscious preservation and active enhancement of these natural and historic assets through planning and management strategies is necessary to continue the unique character of Henrico County for future generations.

STRATEGY R/P/OS/CR 3-1: MAINTAIN A SENSE OF HISTORICAL CONTINUITY THROUGH THE PRESERVATION OF SITES, BUILDINGS, STRUCTURES, AND OBJECTS IMPORTANT TO OUR HERITAGE

Promote comprehensive historical and archaeological preservation planning in coordination with public facilities, land use, transportation, and private development efforts. Encourage and support property owners undertaking resource preservation, including through nomination of sites and structures to the Virginia and/or National Register of Historic Places, leveraging state and federal resources, and development of county incentives for preserving historic sites and structures in their original settings. Continue to assist developers during the planning process through appropriate recommendations for the protection and interpretation of significant historic resources and encourage them to provide access to significant sites and structures as part of development design. Support Federal and State legislation that promotes preservation and development while respecting private property rights.

STRATEGY R/P/OS/CR 3-2: ADOPT STANDARDS FOR THE PRESERVATION, REUSE, AND MANAGEMENT OF COUNTY-OWNED HISTORIC RESOURCES AND SITES

Develop and adopt county standards in a Historic Resources Management Plan for the preservation, reuse, and management of historic resources and sites, including criteria for determining which areas are worthy of protection. These standards should include an up-to-date inventory that includes site information, location, and management standards cross-referenced with clear goals and policy objectives. Consider partnership opportunities for the management of the facilities as well as public access and programming of the sites and facilities. Improve and expand the county's historic preservation information system, including archival collections, information sharing, and museum or educational displays.

STRATEGY R/P/OS/CR 3-3: ADOPT STANDARDS FOR THE MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION OF OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION AREAS

Develop a Natural Resources Management Plan for implementation at all park and county-managed open space sites. Such a Plan should include a Forestry Master Plan, education on natural resource preservation and enhancement and climate mitigation and resiliency strategies to support human health and wellness, temper infrastructure damage, and enhance ecological vibrancy.

Policy R/P/OS/CR 4: Responsible Operation and Management

Ensure county recreation, park, open space, and historic resource facilities are operated and maintained efficiently and in a sustainable manner.

To maintain, improve, and activate public spaces in an efficient and effective manner, the county must leverage resources through partnerships focused on the sustainability and resiliency of assets.

STRATEGY R/P/OS/CR 4-1: SEEK PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES WITH OTHER PUBLIC, SEMI-PUBLIC, COMMUNITY, AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

Build on existing partnerships between Henrico County, surrounding municipalities, community organizations, schools, neighborhoods, and other entities, while seeking opportunities for new partnerships and collaborations. Relationships should be created, expanded, and clarified to set mutual expectations and leverage resources creatively and effectively. The establishment of nonprofit groups or foundations dedicated to advocacy, fundraising, and the implementation of programming and public spaces can support the county's goals with more flexibility and scope than a government agency can. As well as county initiatives, Henrico should look for regional partnership opportunities as a way to expansively address the county's recreation and connectivity goals.

STRATEGY R/P/OS/CR 4-2: STRENGTHEN ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE RESILIENCY PRACTICES

Employ sustainability and resiliency practices to decrease the county's environmental footprint, reduce the overall cost of maintenance, and lessen the impact of shifting climate patterns, all of which would increase residents' safety and quality of life. Utilizing these practices will create public spaces that can withstand and recover from impacts like

flooding and heat, while also fostering community well-being and ecological health. Designing for resiliency will reduce damage to and closures of county sites, as well as provide a positive buffering factor for the surrounding community. These practices should apply to the management and maintenance of existing recreational facilities as well as the design and construction of new ones. The county should develop standards related to material use, operation and maintenance, integrated stormwater management and green infrastructure, and landscape design, among others. These should be reviewed and updated bi-annually to reflect new research and best practices as they become available. The Division could conduct pilot projects for innovative sustainability and resiliency measures which would allow the county to test their effectiveness for widespread public and private implementation, as well as manage the parks and open space lands to meet county-wide resiliency goals.