EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It has been twenty years since Fauquier County officially recognized the need for local government's involvement in public recreation. During that time the county has experienced unprecedented growth. From 1980 to 1990 Fauquier's population has grown 36 percent, making it the 17th largest of Virginia's 95 counties, and the Commonwealth's ninth fastest growing county. The past twenty years, which brought townhouses and condominiums have also brought voters and taxpayers who make demands on Park and Recreation's resources just as they demand high quality education for their children.

This study, at the most basic level, can be understood to take inventory of presently available recreational resources, and measure what Fauquier has, against an established standard per population unit. From here, strengths and weaknesses can be quantified, and a program of improvement established. It is one thing, however, to inventory the number of ballfields and picnic areas and plan for more, and quite another to inventory historic and scenic resources and plan for their preservation and recreational enjoyment by future generations.

This then, is the integrated, multi-level approach which this study hopes to facilitate. The Fauquier Department of Parks and Recreation hopes to help build a partnership with numerous public and private bodies in safeguarding our open space, scenic and historic resources. Enjoyment of these "unmeasurables" is one of our greatest sources of recreation, using the purest sense of the word. Recommendations then, in addition to correcting deficiencies in Park and Recreation facilities, will address activities and steps to be taken by the Department to augment historic, scenic and open space resources and facilitate the quality of life so many have worked to protect. Bringing this multiplicity of factors together will certainly be more effective in helping Fauquier craft a system of Parks and Recreation which serves all its citizens.

The Recreation Resources inventory, which accounts for a major portion of this study, counts private and public resources. The private sector presents an enormous range of leisure options to Fauquier citizens. There is no need for a public agency to duplicate offerings which a business entity has developed into a viable market and made available to the public. It can be seen in this study that where many deficiencies occur there is not a real business opportunity. Examples of these are picnic areas, playgrounds, and ballfields, facilities in which the County is most deficient. This is the niche which Parks and Recreation must fill, providing for facilities and programs that are not addressed by the private sector, yet are essential in meeting the need for recreational activity.

The comparison of inventory to standards then, determines a surplus or deficiency. The standards set forth in this study are a distillation of national and state recreation agencies' planning standards, with an eye on neighboring municipalities, taking into account local recreation deficiencies and preferences. These Fauquier standards, assembled with the input of many recreation and planning professionals, and county citizen advisors, were submitted to and accepted by the Parks and Recreation Board for use as one of the foundations for this study.

For example, comparing the inventory to an agreed upon standard we can see that in Fauquier County there is currently a sufficient supply of tennis courts, and a deficiency of multi-purpose fields. This process measures everything from basketball courts to jousting grounds.

Since its beginnings, Fauquier's Department of Parks and Recreation has sought every means possible to provide recreational opportunities without new land acquisition for county parks. The Department has taken advantage of local resources to improve economies of scale, such as agreements with the school system, Vint Hill Farms Station, Meadow Outdoor Foundation, the Warrenton-Fauquier Optimist Club, and the Town of Warrenton. Recreational programs are offered in cooperation with local businesses. This is an efficient way to operate, and much has been done with few resources.

The existing resources identified in this report have been compared to the proposed facilities to ascertain compatibility. It can be seen that more intensive use of existing resources will correct a portion of Fauquier's facility deficit. However, to bring Fauquier up to the standards outlined in this study some additional park land will need to be acquired. New parks can meet the dual goal of facility location and open space preservation if these parks are located where population density occurs. In Fauquier, that would mean locating parks in our towns and service districts. Locating park and recreation facilities where people can conveniently make use of them is efficient and could have the effect of reinforcing a population's sense of community and neighborhood pride Therefore, location is vital. A surplus of picnic tables in Midland cannot efficiently serve a community twenty miles away.

Fauquier's deficiency of wholesome leisure time activities for youth has been discussed extensively in the local press. Furthermore, it is well documented that youth sports and recreational programs serve as one line of deterrence against delinquency, and drug and alcohol abuse. This document can help Fauquier's present and future leadership make decisions regarding park and recreation facilities which go beyond the status quo and actually improve the quality of life in the county.

The inventory of resources and analysis of needs is the basis of the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Comprehensive Plan. Used to good effect, it should help Fauquier County craft a system of parks and recreation that is greater than the sum of its collective parts.

With all of this in mind, it is important to understand that the plan has been prepared to be strategic in nature offering maximum flexibility in response to changing population levels, needs, opportunities and any other factors which may influence recreation.

The content of this study leads to Recommendations which can be summarized as follows:

Environmental Enhancement and Protection

- The Parks and Recreation Department should take a leadership role in promoting and assisting other agencies and groups in environmental enhancement and protection through open space and scenic resource protection, historic preservation and the wise use of other natural resources.

- Fauquier Parks and Recreation Department is found to be in a unique position as the County's liaison to environmental groups. Parks and Recreation should help these groups achieve their shared goals.

- Fauquier County has an opportunity to receive proffers as a part of the rezoning process and should attempt to receive proffers pertaining to flood plains and stream valleys, to provide open space, linking communities to one another and to parks. These linear elements could serve as part of a greenway system, increasing the amount of Fauquier's recreational resources.

- Fauquier Parks and Recreation may seek trail easements it cannot acquire in fee simple to create a network of trails throughout the county.

Recreation Facilities

- When comparing facilities in place to Fauquier's agreed upon standard, there is an obvious need to "catch up" across the board in providing recreation facilities. Once caught up, annual and five-year reviews need to be adhered to as a process to keep the county abreast of recreational needs.

- Greater intensity of use should be sought within existing county resources. This in itself would go far, but not completely satisfy Fauquier's facility needs.

- There is an urgent need for pocket parks and neighborhood parks to be provided within close proximity of dense population centers, at frequencies outlined in the standards.

- Natural areas are plentiful under the control of the State and Federal Governments. It is not now necessary for Fauquier to acquire expansive natural areas for its park system. It may, however, successfully program these State and Federal lands through cooperative agreement, much as Parks and Recreation has cooperated with the School Board for the use of ballfields.

- For flexibility in determining future facility demands three levels of population were used. A 5% growth rate was recognized as a maximum yearly increase in population regardless of the time frame of that growth. At these three levels of population the county will need the following facilities:

	52,000	65,500	84,000
Pocket Park	18	22	25
Neighborhood Parks	11	15	17
Community Parks	11	14	15
District Parks	3	4	4

- Because Fauquier continues to fall farther behind the state average in funding parks and recreation and especially in the area of capital improvements, county government must "bite the bullet" and face its obligation to properly fund the parks and recreation department. A properly planned, timed and promoted bond referendum is the most logical funding source to meet current deficiencies whereas a significant amount of future needs should be met through proffers, other development contributions, and the private sector.

- A balance between acquisition and facility development must be kept in focus, however, land purchases must be early and timely in the process before the land is financially out of reach.

- Creative, efficient programs must continue to be developed which make maximum use of existing facilities, facilities owned by others, private property and staff and volunteer availability.

- Operations and administration must maintain broad based community support through effective and efficient facilities and programs.