



Parks & Recreation Department Overview

Town Council Work Session
January 13th, 2026

Department Overview

Spring 2025-Updated our mission, vision and values

Mission: The Town of Warrenton Parks and Recreation Department's mission to enhance the quality of life by connecting the community to accessible services, diverse programs and well-maintained parks and facilities.

Vision: We strive to be a leading provider of high-quality recreational programs, services and facilities in the Town of Warrenton.

Values:

Growth-embracing new ideas and innovation to enhance our services

Accessibility-Ensuring that all community members feel welcome, safe and valued

Teamwork-Collaborating effectively with other departments, organizations and community members to achieve shared goals

Health and Wellness-Promoting physical, mental and emotion well-being through recreational opportunities

Excellence-Striving for the highest standards in all aspects of service delivery

Respect-Treating every individual, community member and the environment with dignity, fairness and kindness

We invite you to GATHER at one of our facilities, parks or programs.

Projects Update

As infrastructure ages, the frequency and cost of repairs increase, along with the risk of unplanned service interruptions. The following report summarizes the status of key capital and lifecycle maintenance projects in various stages of planning, design, execution, or near-term scheduling.

These projects:

- Support safe operations
- Protect Town assets
- Meet regulatory standards
- Ensure facilities remain welcoming and functional for the community

Overall, the Department's goal is to move from reactive repair toward proactive lifecycle asset management.

Projects Update

Water Play Structure Replacement

- Approved in CARP for FY26
- Scope of work has been defined, and the IFB has been issued
- Anticipate selecting a vendor by the end of the month

Parks & Recreation Master Plan

- First phase of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan was approved as a CIP project in FY 25
 - Comprehensive facilities assessment
 - Benchmarking analysis
 - Community survey
 - Focus groups
 - Stakeholder interviews
- Completed by the consultant and compiled into a formal needs assessment report in November 2025
- Next step is to present and review the Needs Assessment with council (January 2025)
- Phase Two will proceed with development of a long-term strategic plan
 - May be completed internally by staff OR
 - Current consultant for an additional cost that has not been funded at this time

Projects Update

Park Restroom Upgrades

- Warrenton Sports Complex, Rady Park and Eva Walker Park are currently in progress
- Improvements include new lighting, painting, and fixture replacements
- Using existing park maintenance operating funds

Fun For All Playground Repairs

- Minor equipment repair, paint touch ups and swing installation
- Current fencing is being replaced and installed in collaboration with Public Works
- Additional fencing will be installed in FY 27 using park maintenance operating funds

WARF Elevator Modernization

- WARF elevator has required significant maintenance and repair over the past 18 months
- Thorough assessment was completed and a modernization scope identified
- Staff are working with HC to pursue VRSA grant funding to support this work

Projects Update

Rady Park Bridges Replacement

- Will be updated within the CARP submission for a full replacement of both bridges at Rady Park
- Expected to follow the stream restoration project timeline

Skatepark Replacement

- Currently scheduled within the FY27 CIP due to the aging equipment of the modular prefabricated design (16 years old) and emerging safety concerns, typical lifespan is 10-20 years
- Preliminary design recommendations from contractors advise replacing the facility with a poured-in-place concrete park which has an anticipated lifespan of 30-50 years, updated cost will be included within the CIP submission
- If funded, staff will engage the skateboarding community during the design process

Leisure Pool Replaster

- Leisure pool plaster surface, recoated in April 2022 was supposed to last 5-7 years
- Contractors have indicated that the premature deterioration is likely related to installation quality, with the warmer programmed water temperatures accelerating the breakdown as a secondary factor
- Recommend proceeding with a full leisure-pool replaster to prevent ongoing surface failure and potential structural damage. This project is expected to be included in the FY27 CARP for funding consideration

Projects Update

Large Slide Tower Refurbishment

- Safety concerns were identified during Spring 2025 with VRSA representative, including severe rusting and worn stair treads
- Third-party contractor also identified railings and metal stair components requiring repair
- This project will be included in the FY27 CARP for funding consideration

HVAC Systems Replacement Program

- Developing an ongoing HVAC lifecycle replacement plan in partnership with the new contractor
- Once priorities are confirmed, the repairs and replacements will be included in future capital planning

Boiler Replacement

- Currently in CARP for FY28
- Working with the new HVAC contractor to review system conditions and confirm estimated replacement costs

Flooring Replacement

- Replacing aging flooring in the lobby, upper corridor, and lower leisure pool corridor
- This project will be included in the FY27 CARP submission

Master Plan-Needs Assessment

The assessment includes:

- (1) Park evaluations
- (2) Level of Service analysis
- (3) Public engagement
- (4) Summary of key findings
- (5) Dedicated section evaluating the Warrenton Aquatic and Recreation Facility (WARF) to identify current performance and emerging challenges based on
 - User feedback
 - Benchmarking
 - Pricing review
 - Lifecycle considerations

Park Evaluations

Summary of key findings:

- Most Town parks are generally performing at or above user expectations
- Eva Walker Park and Academy Hill Park fall below this threshold due to amenity condition, user comfort and overall relevance to community needs
- Academy Hill Park also scores lowest for accessibility-limited safe pedestrian connections.
- Rady Park received the highest overall rating, reflecting strong conditions, recent upgrades, and its arboretum features
- Sustainability measures received the lowest scores, especially related to environmental education and awareness

Areas for improvement include:

- Enhancing accessibility and safe connections (including sidewalks, bike access, and parking linkages)
- Expanding amenities for all age groups
- Increasing available and comfortable seating, including shaded and group seating options
- Continuing to improve tree canopy, biodiversity, and sustainable planting practices

Level of Service and Benchmarking

Level of Service Measures

- Park acreage
- Available facilities
- Accessibility
- Funding/staffing levels

Benchmarking Peer Communities

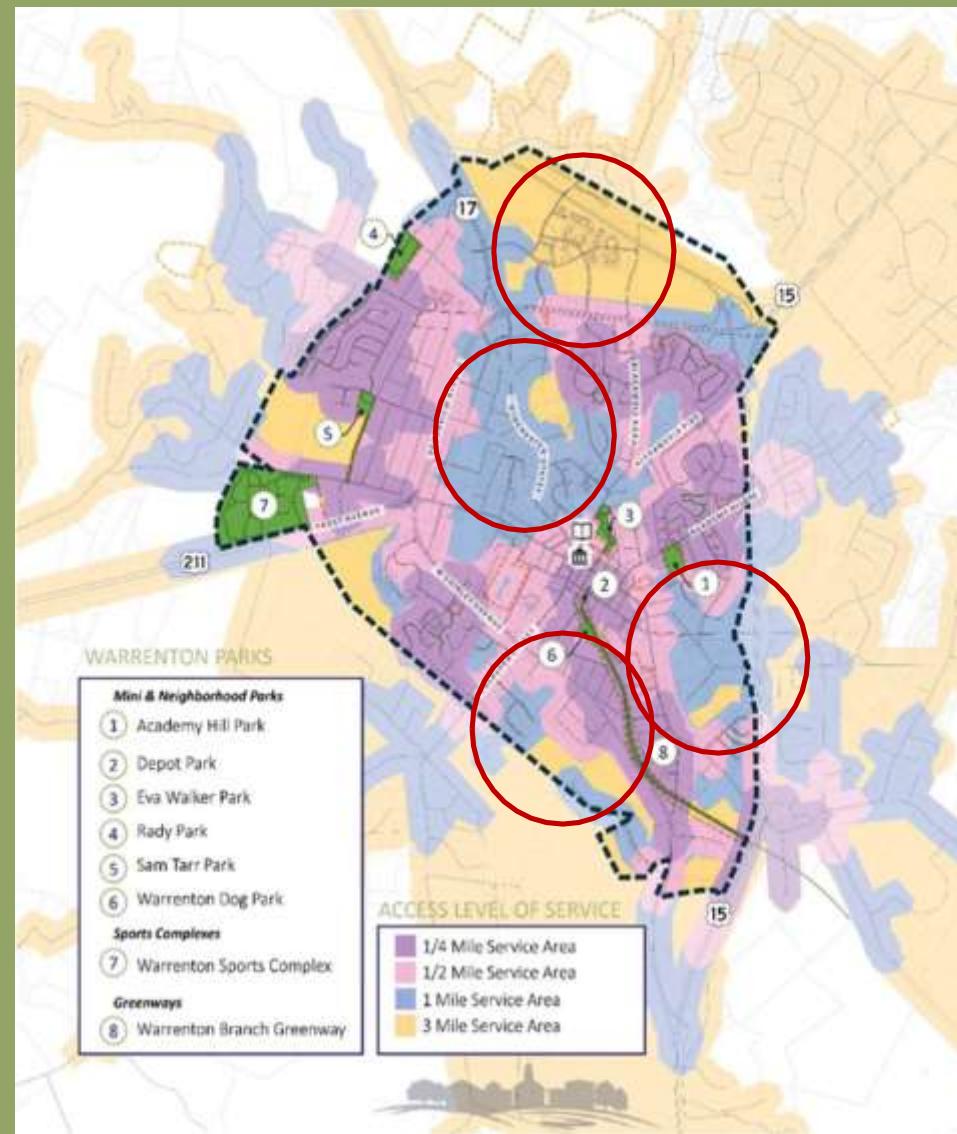
- Town of Vienna
- City of Manassas Park
- Town of Herndon
- Town of Purcellville
- Town of Culpeper

Level of Service and Benchmarking

- Acreage Recommendation: (Acreage – amount of parkland per 1,000 residents) Set realistic standards that help protect our park space while also making sure the parks are well-used and kept in good shape
- Facilities Recommendation: (number and type of recreation amenities per capita) additional bench and picnic tables, additional playground, approximately 2,600 additional SF (square feet) of indoor recreation center space, approximately 865 additional LF (linear feet) of paved trails/trails
- Access Recommendation: (proximity of residents to parks based on walking, biking and driving distance) From a 10-minute walkability perspective, the addition of 4 mini or neighborhood parks would increase access and bring the Town to almost full compliance

Level of Service and Benchmarking

Red Circles on the map indicate a 1/2 mile radius search area for potential mini or neighborhood park locations:



Level of Service and Benchmarking

Funding and Staffing Recommendation: (financial investment and staffing levels in relation to service delivery) As the Town continues to grow in population and may expand the parks, recreation and trail system, regular evaluation of funding and staffing should be completed to ensure the Town's ability to properly operate and maintain existing and new parkland and facilities.

Department Cost Recovery	National Average Cost Recovery	Peer Community Average Cost Recovery
40%	31.1%	32.1%

We are operating efficiently with a strong cost recovery and above-average revenue per capita. However, staffing and capital funding lag national benchmarks.

Public Engagement

Central to the Master Plan, ensuring the needs assessment reflected real community priorities and experiences. Use of focus groups, stakeholder interviews, and a statistically valid survey provided both detailed feedback and broad input.

Key Takeaways

- Town-only results are statistically reliable and reflect strong local engagement, frequent use, and generally high satisfaction
- Fauquier County responses are also statistically valid, confirming Warrenton's role as a regional recreation destination
- Future priorities should focus on trail connectivity, aquatics, comfort amenities (shade, restrooms), maintenance consistency, and program awareness
- The survey reinforces the need to balance quality of existing assets with targeted expansion of high-demand amenities to meet both Town and regional needs

Overall Summary

- Demonstrates that our park system is well-performing but approaching a critical transition point. Strategic reinvestment, policy clarity, and equitable expansion will be essential to meeting future needs while sustaining current service levels
- The system is well-used, valued, and efficiently operated
- Growth and redevelopment will increase pressure on acreage, facilities, and maintenance
- Priority actions should focus on targeted reinvestment, access improvements, and equity
- Clear LOS and redevelopment policies are needed to guide future decisions
- Findings provide a strong foundation for goals, priorities, and implementation strategies in the Master Plan

WARF Specific Citizen Survey

As part of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, a citizen survey was conducted from August 12 – October 26, 2025, receiving 574 total responses, including 236 from Town residents.

The survey included a range of WARF-specific questions

1. Frequency of visits to the WARF
2. Satisfaction with value/experience at the facility (last 12 months)
3. Barriers to visiting more frequently
4. Support for continued Town ownership and operation
5. Support for facility enhancements
6. Level of support for potential actions
7. Willingness to pay additional rates per person

Needs Assessment-WARF Evaluation

An additional section was included in the Needs Assessment specifically related to a WARF evaluation and provided the following information:

- Peer facilities comparison (Manassas Park Community Center, Herndon Community Center, Ida Lee Recreation Center and Freedom Aquatic and Fitness Center)
- Pricing structure evaluation
- Public engagement findings relevant to the WARF
- Facility systems and capital risk (3-5 year outlook)
- Recommendations for the WARF
- WARF pricing elasticity study
- WARF revenue scenario modeling

Key Findings

- The WARF is the Town's flagship indoor recreation hub, highly visited and well-rated by users
- Aging systems, scheduling constraints, and high demand highlight the need for operational optimization, targeted reinvestment, and modest revenue strategies rather than near-term expansion
- Short-term priorities include program schedule adjustments, pilot child-watch services, limited non-resident fee increases, and phased capital planning.
- Public input supports continued Town ownership, improved aquatics access, and therapeutic programming
- Peer comparisons underscore the value of incremental upgrades, maintenance, and resident/non-resident pricing differentiation

Question Examples

Do you support the Town of Warrenton continuing to own and operate the WARF with Town resources?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	67.76%	124
I'd like the Town to explore other options including partnerships and non-profits to help support the WARF	23.50%	43
Not sure	4.92%	9
No	2.73%	5
I'd like the Town to consider leasing the facility to a different (private or non-profit) operator	1.09%	2
	Answered	183
	Skipped	53

Indicate your level of support for the following options.

Increase all user fees for the WARF

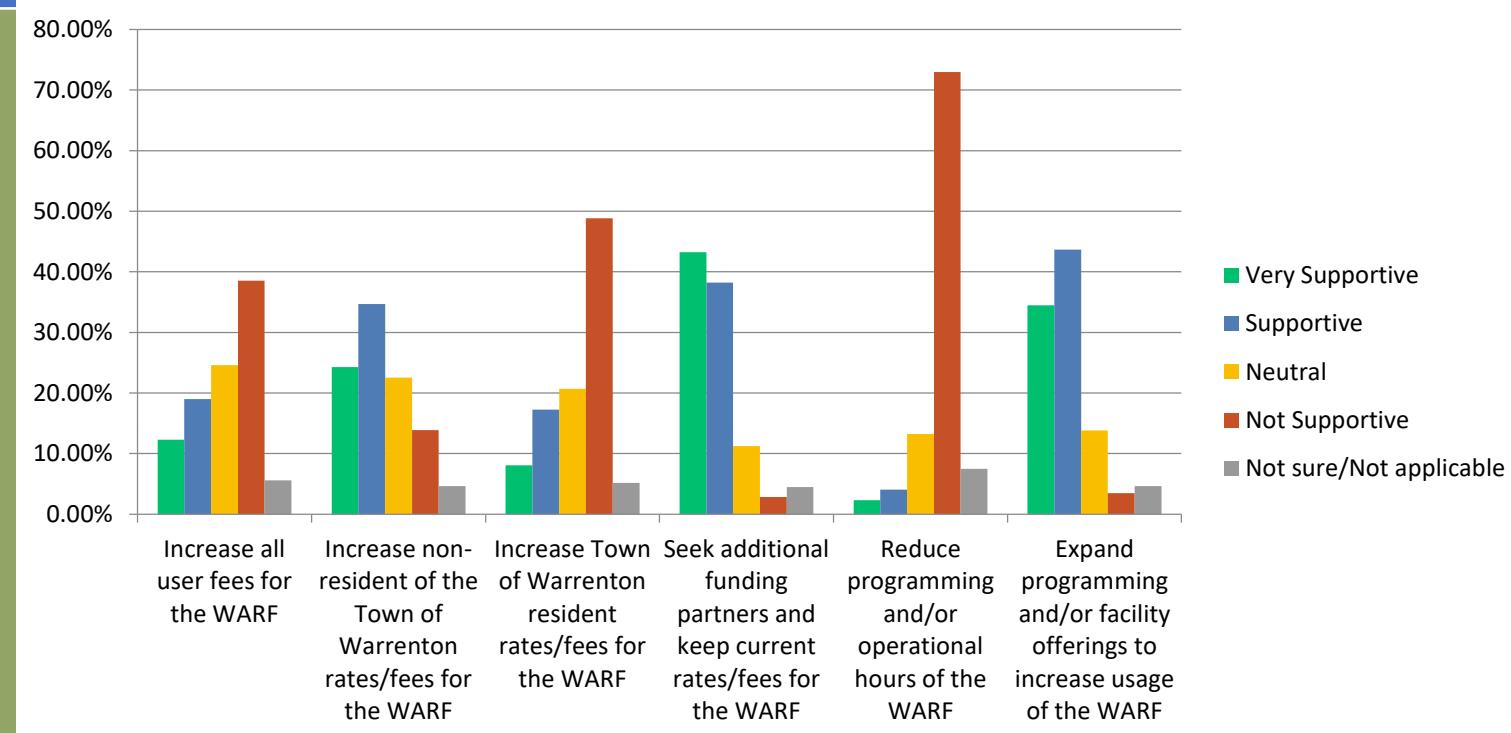
Increase non-resident of the Town of Warrenton rates/fees for the WARF

Increase Town of Warrenton resident rates/fees for the WARF

Seek additional funding partners and keep current rates/fees for the WARF

Reduce programming and/or operational hours of the WARF

Expand programming and/or facility offerings to increase usage of the WARF



The following are actions that the Town of Warrenton could take to improve parks, recreation, and trails. Select up to THREE actions you would support with your tax dollars.

Most Important:

- 1. Maintain existing indoor recreation facilities (WARF)**
- 2. Maintain existing parks**
- 3. Add more trails and connect existing trails/sidewalks**

2nd Most Important:

- 1. Maintain existing trails**
- 2. Maintain existing parks**
- 3. Add more trails and connect existing trails/sidewalks**

3rd Most Important:

- 1. Maintain existing parks**
- 2. Maintain existing trails/maintain existing indoor recreation facilities (WARF)**
- 3. Purchase more land for nature enjoyment and passive outdoor recreation**

From the following list, please check the additional amount you would be willing to pay to fund the actions you selected as most important.

Answer Choices	Responses	
\$26-\$50 per year	18.99%	34
\$11-\$25 per year	17.32%	31
\$51-\$100 per year	17.32%	31
\$1-\$10 per year	15.08%	27
Not willing to pay additional taxes for parks, recreation facilities, or trails.	13.97%	25
\$100-\$200 per year	11.73%	21
More than \$200 per year	3.35%	6
Not applicable	2.23%	4
	Answered	179
	Skipped	57

Athey Fields MOU-Background

- Athey Fields, located next to the WARF, at the Warrenton Sports Complex, were developed through a partnership between the Town of Warrenton and the Warrenton Fields Association (WFA)
- WFA was formed in 2006 to support the development and maintenance of high-quality athletic fields for local youth sports
- MOU between the Town and WFA became effective on January 31, 2007, with a term of 20 years
- In 2017, a revised draft MOU was prepared but was not formally executed
- Following several organizational changes within WFA, the Northern Piedmont Sports Club (NPSC) assumed operational and programming responsibilities for the fields

Athey Fields MOU

Per the original agreement WFA covered all costs associated with developing, managing and maintaining the fields.

Additionally, the following costs are currently associated with the field maintenance and upkeep:

1. Annual Landscaping-\$67,200

(Note: The contractor has indicated that this amount is expected to increase dramatically in February 2027.)

1. Field Refurbishment (Summer 2025)-\$9,900
2. Annual Field Painting-\$25,000
3. General Maintenance Supplies-\$2,000

NPSC has 1.5 FTEs associated with field maintenance and scheduling. They also rely on volunteers for pre-season setup, post-season clean up, and support during tournament operations.

Volleyball Courts MOU

In addition to the MOU for the fields, the Town and WYSC (now part of NPSC) entered into an agreement for the sand volleyball courts in July 2015.

Per this agreement, WYSC covered all costs associated with constructing the courts and maintenance of the courts. At some point, the sand volleyball court proposal transitioned to rubber surface material. Based on their financial records, costs currently associated with the courts include the following:

1. Initial volleyball court surface-\$90,629.91
2. Initial concrete for volleyball court-\$111,691
3. Annual Maintenance-\$2,000
4. Solar Lights installation (2020)-\$2,080
5. Handicap Ramp installation (2020)-\$1,900
6. Repairs to concrete footers (2025)-\$7,000
7. Repairs for patio (2025)-\$500

NPSC has .75 FTEs associated with volleyball court maintenance and scheduling.

Options to discuss way forward:

1. Renew current MOU with NPSC with minor changes and shorter term of agreement (ie 1-2 years)
2. Modify current MOU with NPSC to include structural revisions such as town managed scheduling and shorter term of agreement (i.e. 3-5 years)
3. Modify current MOU with NPSC with structural revisions, shorter term of agreement and fee associated with lease.
4. Transition full operation responsibility to the Town to include maintenance, operations and scheduling. This will have a budgetary impact to both parks and recreation revenue and expenditures. Further analysis and stakeholder engagement would be required to refine these estimates and evaluate service impacts.
5. Renew MOU with NPSC for an additional 20 years permitting further investments in the fields and courts to include artificial turf and new volleyball court surface.

Special Events

- Special Event definition: a pre-planned gathering of 15 or more people open to the public or on public land or roadways, and/or using town staff or resources to assist.
- Special Events permit process is based on Town Ordinance Article VI., Use of Public Grounds, Sections 14-101 through 14-103.



Special Events Process

To grant a Special Event permit, the following is required:

- Completed application
- \$100 permit fee
- Certificate of Insurance
- Meeting with the Town's Special Events committee
- Event map
- Amusement Device Permit, Building/Fire Permit, or other permits when applicable

Approval Date

Current Ordinance: “No [Special Event] permit shall be granted for any event beginning more than 6 months after the date of the application.”

Challenges: Vendors, sponsors, volunteers, and suppliers often need to know the date of large festivals more than 6 months in advance.

Recommendation: Update the ordinance to 9 months.

Unpaid Fees

Current ordinance: “The applicant is responsible for any and all damage to public facilities caused by the applicant or an agent or a partner of the applicant. If a person receives a permit for an event and does not hold the event, then he or she shall pay the town for the reasonable cost of assisting the applicant in a public safety plan for that event as well as any reasonable overtime or third party costs incurred by the town in relation to the event.”

Recommendation: Update the ordinance to address unpaid fees after the event (normal “special event fee schedule” fees unrelated to damages or a cancelled event). Staff recommends verbiage allowing the town to deny a future permit if fees are unpaid.

Main Street Events

Recurring events include “Old Town After Hours (OTAH)” and First Fridays.

“Other” events include the Memorial Day Parade, FHS Homecoming Parade, Fall Festival, Juneteenth, the Christmas Parade, the 4th of July Kids & Pets Parade, the Halloween Kids & Pets Parade, and Brewfest.

Recommendation: If it is the will of council to limit the number of events permitted on Main Street, provide guidance on how this should be done.

2025 Main Street events:

Total OTAH: 19

Total First Friday: 6

Total Other: 11

Total for 2025: 36

2024 Main Street events:

Total OTAH: 23

Total First Friday: 6

Total other: 12

Total for 2024: 41

2023 Main Street events:

Total OTAH: 48

Total First Friday: 6

Total Summer Concerts: 5

Total other: 11

Total for 2023: 70

Personal Events on Public Streets

No verbiage in the ordinance to prevent “personal” events such as weddings, birthday parties, bar mitzvahs, etc from taking place on a Town street or public area via a Special Event permit.

Not a recurring issue, but staff is open to recommendations. All events have been open to the public.

Itinerant Merchants Fees

Mobile food vendor requirements are described in the Zoning Ordinance 9-24.

Fee for an “Itinerant Merchants License” is renewed every year as part of the Business, Professional, and Occupational License Tax Rates.

Recommendation: Reduce this fee to align more with surrounding jurisdictions. Reduction from \$500 to \$100 recommended.



A grayscale aerial photograph of a town. In the foreground, a large, multi-story building with a prominent white steeple and a green roof is visible. A road runs through the town, with several vehicles on it. In the background, there are numerous houses and buildings of various sizes and colors, including a large white building with a red roof. The town is surrounded by trees and greenery.

Questions?