

Smart Planning Needed to Address Increasing Demand for Recreational Space

A Position Paper from the Arlington County Sports Community

Arlington's sports groups are community-based, volunteer organizations that serve Arlington County residents of all ages from every neighborhood and every school across the county.

The many sports leagues and supporting non-profit organizations represent more than 27,000 registrants (using FY17 and FY18 data provided by the Arlington Department of Parks and Recreation) through more than a dozen organizations including:

Arlington Babe Ruth (1,537)
Arlington Girls Softball Association (939)
Arlington Little League (1,941)
Arlington Soccer Association (17,197)
Arlington Travel Baseball (191)
Arlington Women's Soccer League (350)
Arlington Youth Lacrosse Club (651)
Youth Ultimate League of Arlington (588)

The consensus position among Arlington's sports groups is as follows: **Arlington needs more places for the public (kids and adults) to play all manner of sports.** Rapid and unabated growth and urban development in the County have created huge demand for an increasingly limited supply of the County's indoor and outdoor recreational spaces. Smart and forward-thinking strategies are needed to help maximize existing space to address the needs for sports and outdoor activities.

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Sports participation in Arlington continues to grow rapidly. New and long-time Arlington residents alike consider sports participation opportunities as high-value Country amenities. The County's POPS Report (currently in the final stages of development) cites as one of its priority actions, "secure or expand the public spaces envisioned by sector, corridor, and other plans adopted by the County Board and ensure they provide amenities that meet County needs."

New grass fields would be the ideal solution, but grass field capacity is limited and does not hold up to constant use, nor does it allow play in adverse weather. Realistically, in many places **we will need to utilize durable, all-weather surfaces such as synthetic turf** to meet existing and forecasted demand levels without substantially increasing maintenance costs.

In addition to the needs and desires of formal sports groups, Arlington should strive to provide equally useful play spaces for unscheduled drop-in play where possible. As we develop more durable fields and play spaces, both organized and drop in play can be supported by leveraging our community's resources across even more citizens.

For this to work, we are asking that Arlington County's Department of Parks and Recreation, along with other County government entities, work in conjunction with Arlington sports groups to seek positive and workable solutions, including:

- **Convert grass fields to synthetic turf** in locations where field lights are present
- **Pursue the conversion of grass fields to synthetic turf where appropriate,** even if the location does not support field lights
- **Develop or re-develop field spaces with multiple user groups in mind,** using field dimensions and/or markings that facilitate use by different sports
- **Pursue new lighting at existing fields** where evening use would add to overall capacity, while also taking into account neighborhood impacts
- **Consider developing smaller fields as appropriate,** as even small synthetic turf fields will get significant use in Arlington
- **Develop new field spaces where possible,** including those made possible via the acquisition of land by Arlington County
- **Leverage connections via sports groups and others to solicit outside/private funding** to supplement limited existing County funds in order to realize more complete field development projects and renovations

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Signatures from Arlington County, VA Sports Groups Organization Presidents/Directors:

Association:	Authorized Signee:	Signature:	Date:
Arlington Babe Ruth	JP Cooney		<u>10/27/18</u>
Arlington Girls Softball Association	Steve Severn		<u>10/24/18</u>
Arlington Little League	Adam Balutis		<u>10/24/18</u>
Arlington Soccer Association	Adam Brick		<u>10/24/18</u>
Arlington Travel Baseball	Richie Pacheco		<u>10/24/18</u>
Arlington Women's Soccer League	Annemarie Selvitelli & Kristine Kassekert		<u>10/24/18</u>
Arlington Youth Lacrosse Club	Scott Dalton		<u>10/24/18</u>
Youth Ultimate League of Arlington	Rebecca McSweeney		<u>10/24/18</u>