

Open Space Acquisition Review Trigger

Evaluating and recommending methods of pursuing new publicly accessible open space

Publicly accessible open space provides environmental, physical, mental health, and community benefits to users. These benefits are even more important in cities, where it may be difficult to get outdoors. As the population of the City of Alexandria continues to increase, it is important that the amount of publicly accessible open space increases at a rate that provides all residents and visitors quality open space that is equitably distributed throughout Alexandria. Because of the increase in demand for publicly accessible open space, this Plan outlines the primary ways for the City of Alexandria to pursue new publicly accessible open space and establishes metrics for evaluating publicly accessible open space.

Open Space Acquisition Criteria

The City of Alexandria evaluates proposed open space acquisitions with a criteria-based review that rates the environmental and physical characteristics of each property proposed for acquisition. The 2003 criteria for considering opportunities for open space acquisition through the Open Space Fund was reviewed by the Open Space Steering Committee. Updates were made to the criteria and nomination forms to include that the nominated property supports the new definition and objectives of publicly accessible open space; supports wildlife corridors and refuges; includes liabilities and constraints of identified properties; identifies redevelopment potential to support passive and active uses; and identifies how the property will help fulfill socioeconomic and recreational gaps within the City. The publicly accessible open space acquisition criteria and nomination forms can be found in the appendix.

Open Space Acquisition Criteria Trigger

City staff recognizes a need for identifying a trigger to determine when a property should be reviewed using the City's open space acquisition criteria. When a member of the public, a group or organization, City Manager, or City Council bring a property to staff's attention for review, staff reviews the property using the following steps:

Step 1: If the site is identified within an existing approved park master plan or a City plan (Small Area Plan, pedestrian/bike plans, etc.), the land can be reviewed for potential acquisition.

If the land is not in an existing approved plan, then proceed to Step 2.

Step 2: Land is not identified in a plan, but meets at least one of the criteria listed below:

The property is associated with existing parks:

- The site shares its perimeter with an existing public space and facilitates the expansion of that public space.
- The site is an infill property of an existing park, located on the corner of a park or would serve to normalize a park boundary or shape.

Open Space Acquisition Review Trigger

- The site will allow the creation of new trail connections to improve pedestrian and bicycle access to the existing park or other nearby City facilities - like schools.

The property would result in the creation of a new park:

- The site could be used to create a new park and offers future potential expansion opportunities that would result in a park of at least 0.25 acres.
- The site is a unique (generational) opportunity, which if not acquired at the time of availability, would likely redevelop, and the opportunity would be lost for a generation or more.
- The site is located in an area of the City with a walkability gap (there are no publicly accessible open spaces within a 10-minute walk) or serves as an inherent community gathering place.
- The site has an existing perpetual conservation easement on it, serving as the first step towards making the site permanently open space.