

### 1.1 LOS OVERVIEW

Level of Service (LOS) standards are guidelines that define service areas based on population that support investment decisions related to parks, facilities, and amenities. LOS standards can and will change over time as industry trends change and demographics of a community change.

The consulting team evaluated park facility standards using a combination of resources. These resources included market trends, demographic data, recreation activity participation rates, community and stakeholder input, NRPA data, the statistically-valid community survey, and general observations. This information allowed standards to be *customized* to Arlington County instead of taking a “one size fits all approach.”

It is important to note that these LOS standards should be viewed as a guide. The standards are to be coupled with conventional wisdom and judgment related to the particular situation and needs of the community. By applying these standards to the population of Arlington County, gaps or surpluses in park and facility types are revealed.

### 1.2 LOS DEVELOPMENT

Standards have been discussed at length since the 1970s. In 1983, Roger Lancaster published recommended service standards for facilities and park acreage. Commonly referenced LOS standards today include:

- Baseball fields: 1 per 5,000 population
- Softball fields: 1 per 5,000 population
- Soccer fields: 1 per 10,000 population
- Total land acreage: 10 acres per 1,000 population

Additionally, the National Recreation and Park Association’s (NRPA) 2017 NRPA Agency Performance Review report indicated the following metrics were the *median* number of residents per facility:

- Baseball fields: 1 per 6,453 population
- Softball fields: 1 per 8,500 population
- Soccer fields: 1 per 6,200 population
- Rectangular Multi-use: 1 per 12,468 population
- Total land acreage: 9.6 acres per 1,000 population

Understanding that no one standard should be directly applied to every community, no formal adopted standards exist for LOS analyses. Instead, guidelines are provided that help each community determine its own LOS standard based on current supply/demand and future supply/demand projections.

### 1.3 CALCULATING ARLINGTON’S LOS

The project team took a multi-faceted approach to calculate LOS. The Trust for Public Land (TPL) provided peer community benchmark data which allowed the planning team to evaluate Arlington’s existing LOS with that of similar communities. This data was used in tandem with the additional data sources outlined in Section 1.1 above to develop the final recommended LOS standards.

Additionally, the “typical” LOS calculation was derived from the project team’s experience working with park and recreation agencies over the last 23 years and what represents a “best practice” figure. It should be noted, however, that some park agencies have single-focus facilities (e.g., soccer,

football, rugby, etc.) along with multi-use fields. Depending on how an agency counts its inventory is reflected in the NRPA median numbers because all data is self-reported.

An agency's current LOS inventory number is also taken into consideration when developing LOS recommendations. If an agency has an already high (relative to best practice numbers) LOS, it is important to look at a community's demand for that amenity/facility to see if maintaining or reducing the current LOS is warranted. The same thought process is used for lower LOS figures (again, relative to best practice numbers) and whether a standard needs to be maintained or increased.

#### 1.4 LOS SUPPORT

The project team has completed over 1,000 planning projects for park and recreation agencies across the country including:

- Carmel, IN
- Gainesville, FL
- Indianapolis, IN
- Kansas City, MO
- Lodi, CA
- Olathe, KS
- Mecklenburg County, NC
- Milwaukee County, WI
- Missoula, MT
- Prince George's County, MD
- Provo, UT
- Roanoke, VA
- Scottsdale, AZ
- Toledo, OH

The project team's experience with "best practice" agencies also provides support for the "typical" LOS recommendations given in the POPS plan.