

# THE VILLAGE GREEN

An Outdoor Classroom at Ettrick Recreation Center

A place for children to get their hands in the green, ask questions, and discover how the natural world works.

**The Village Green is a planned outdoor classroom and pollinator garden at Ettrick Recreation Center.** It will give children and families more room to learn through observation, experimentation, art, storytelling, movement, and play. The first phase is planned for January through December 2027.

## Why an outdoor classroom?

Ettrick Recreation Center has limited indoor space for the learning and recreation programs its staff would like to offer. The Village Green will make outdoor space part of the learning environment. Children can notice a bee visiting a flower, compare leaves, investigate soil and water, draw what they see, and turn a question into an experiment.

The idea builds on work already taking root at Ettrick Park, including a StoryWalk, a Born Learning Trail, a community garden, and signs introducing families to The Basics. It also builds on local interest in hands-on learning: Backyard Science began with space for 10 children and expanded to 20 because of demand.

## What the first phase will create

|                                 |                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>A garden for pollinators</b> | Six raised beds with native plants suited to the Ettrick area and chosen to attract local and migrating pollinators.               |
| <b>Room to learn outdoors</b>   | Shade and seating to make the space more comfortable for instruction, observation, conversation, and community use.                |
| <b>Tools for discovery</b>      | Educational signs and hands-on materials, including stream tables and microscopes, to help children investigate what they find.    |
| <b>A welcoming public space</b> | A place where children, families, educators, recreation staff, and neighbors can share learning and care for a common green space. |

Project elements will be finalized through site planning, partner input, and available resources. The paved trail loop is not part of this initial project description.

# Learning that grows with the community

The Village Green is designed for learning across ages and abilities. Younger children can explore color, texture, sound, counting, and movement. Older students can observe species, study pollinators and habitats, and test scientific questions. Families and older adults can take part in gardening, art, citizen science, and lifelong learning.

Science can connect naturally with other subjects. Children might draw a plant after observing it, use movement to identify leaves, listen for birds, or examine how water moves through soil. Activities can support STEM learning and Virginia's Standards of Learning while giving children room to notice, question, make, and explain.

## Programs and community use

Backyard Science is an early example of the kind of hands-on learning the Village Green can support. Other program ideas include after-school and summer activities, Storytime in the Park, school and library visits, drawing and photography, garden activities, scout projects, and family events. These possibilities will develop with Recreation Center staff, residents, educators, and community partners.

Children are the primary audience, but the space is intended to welcome families, younger children, older adults, and neighbors of all ages. The project will invite community members to help shape activities and share what they want to see next.

## Building it together

Ettrick Recreation Center is the local home for the project and its programs. C-Fit Community helps connect residents, organizations, county resources, volunteers, and funders around ideas already taking root in the community.

C-Fit Community is exploring possible involvement with Virginia State University, the Concerned Citizens of Ettrick, Chesterfield libraries, and public schools. These conversations are exploratory; participation has not yet been confirmed.

## 2027 project timeline

|               |                                                                                               |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| WINTER        | Finalize planning, site details, purchasing, and preparation.                                 |
| SPRING        | Install the garden and outdoor classroom elements; plant native species.                      |
| SPRING-SUMMER | Begin programming and welcome early community use.                                            |
| SUMMER-FALL   | Continue camps, activities, visits, and community use; gather feedback and review next steps. |

### HELP THE VILLAGE GREEN GROW

We are seeking volunteer gardeners, event volunteers, residents willing to participate in surveys and listening-post activities, and corporate and individual sponsors and contributors. Grant applications are under consideration; no funds have been awarded. The current first-phase planning estimate is \$15,000.

To volunteer, share an idea, or discuss support, contact C-Fit Community through [cfitcommunity.org](https://cfitcommunity.org).

A shared place to learn, grow, and care for Ettrick Park.