

Fairfax County Park Authority

LOB #340:

PARK PLANNING AND CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

Purpose

This LOB systematically plans, develops and implements the comprehensive Park Capital Improvement Program for the Countywide park system (426 parks and 23,346 acres) which includes park planning, capital planning, design and construction services for development of new and existing park facilities, infrastructure, and the preservation of natural and cultural resources to meet a broad range of community park and recreation needs, and addressed regulatory mandates and industry standards. Execution of this LOB includes extensive public outreach and positively impacts the health, safety and welfare of County residents and visitors.

Description

This LOB systematically plans for and develops the park system. Long range planning aligns the park system with Countywide park and recreation needs, which are developed through extensive public outreach. Development of the park system begins with a deliberate and rational planning process within in the context of the larger park system. The Capital Improvement Plan projects future needed new facilities, renovation and infrastructure projects and land acquisition.

Park specific master plan processes are utilized to guide future development at individual parks. Public engagement is a large part of the park master plan process. Park facilities and features must be shown on approved park master plans that have been subjected to public input and approved by the Park Authority Board in order to proceed to further design and construction after funding has been allocated. Development of capital projects serves to implement park master plans and system-wide capital improvement plans to ensure park and recreation infrastructure, facilities and features align with community needs.

In addition, the public facility review process is mandated by Code of Virginia §15.2-2232 and requires all public facilities, including parks to demonstrate park features are in conformance with the County Comprehensive Plan in terms of character, location and extent. Prior to construction, Section 2232 public facility review applications are prepared by the park planning staff for filing and review by the Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) and actionable by the Planning Commission who determine conformance and if a public hearing is required. Processing and agency review of these applications can take from three months to a year.

As part of this LOB, all private and public land use and development proposals are evaluated to determine and mitigate impacts to parks from private development, public infrastructure, transportation and utility proposals. An annual average of 250 proposals is reviewed with cross agency coordination and comment memos provided for each review. This includes all Comprehensive Plan amendments, zoning applications, selected site plans, transportation projects, projects requiring National Environmental Policy Act reviews, utility expansion and installations, public facility reviews, trail waivers and other miscellaneous projects.

As park capital funding is allocated, Planning and Development staff design and construction project scopes and cost estimates must be approved by the Park Authority Board prior to proceeding to design and construction. Capital design and development projects align with system-wide and park specific plans as well as the County capital improvement budget. Projects are generally funded by park bonds that are authorized on a four year cycle and voter approved. Other capital resources also provide funding and may include development proffers, donations, sponsorships, telecommunication revenues and grants. Capital development projects serve to provide park facilities and infrastructure to meet community needs identified in the Needs Assessment. Capital improvement projects are scheduled over a four year timeframe and added to the annual Division work plan to accommodate the approved annual bond allocation and cash flow.

Fairfax County Park Authority

Park Planning and Capital Development staff include professional planners, landscape architects, engineers, architects and project managers supported by administrative and paraprofessional staff. In addition to regular business hours, numerous evening meetings are held for public engagement which require staff participation/leadership. Multiple site visits are required for all projects. Staff is required to provide frequent oversight in the field at parks where projects are under construction.

Due to the cross agency perspectives needed for Park Planning and Capital Development projects, a cross agency staff project team format is used for each planning and development project. Each team member has specific roles and responsibilities for representing their division interests and communicating with their division about team decisions. In many cases, outside agencies are also included in project teams to include other County or community perspectives in the project. Coordination with other County agencies is a continual part of the Park Planning and Capital Development responsibilities. Team consensus and decisions are shared, directed and/or approved by senior management and the Park Authority Board.

As part of the park planning program, the 2015 Countywide Park and Recreation Needs study is being conducted. This study includes a statistically valid needs survey and data analysis that result in the creation of a Countywide capital improvement plan for the park system and updated service level standards. The capital improvement plan will inform priorities for the 2016, 2020 and 2024 Park Bonds and adjustments to system-wide park planning efforts.

The Capital Development program develops park projects in the Park Capital Improvement program through design and construction contracts that are administered in accordance with the State procurement process with oversight managed by professionally trained lifecycle project managers. Coordination with the operational divisions of the agency is essential to ensure scope, design and construction meet a variety of agency and user needs.

Park Planning and Capital Development LOB was established at the inception of the Park Authority, 65 years ago in 1959 when the first park bond referendum was approved to fund the Park Capital Improvement Program.

Benefits

The Park Planning and Capital Development LOB ensures that park land use, facilities and capital assets are well planned and built to industry and safety standards. A well planned, designed and constructed park system meets public park and recreation needs and contributes to the County's health, safety and welfare and protects natural and cultural resources. The park planning and capital development program has resulted in a diverse County park system consisting of 426 parks and 23,346 acres of land. These assets provide an award-winning park system. Over 93 percent of the County residents consider the park system an important contributor to their quality of life. Public engagement is a key element of this LOB that helps guide park plans and development and balances the park system with community needs. Planning and development investments in the park system provide great public value and return. A well planned and developed park system aligns with and supports the County vision elements.

Fairfax County Park Authority

Mandates

The Park Planning and Capital Development LOB is partially mandated. It is guided by a few mandates and must comply with multiple state and local regulations, industry standards, building codes and professional codes as follows:

Mandates include:

- State procurement and contracting laws
- Code of Virginia §15.2-2232 mandates conformance review for all public facilities
- American Disabilities Act

Compliance includes:

- County Comprehensive Plan
- Zoning Ordinance Regulations
- County and State Site Plan and Development Regulations
- County Stormwater Regulations
- Chesapeake Bay Act
- County Public Facilities Manual
- County Building Code
- Health Department Regulations
- Site Plan and Zoning Application Processes
- International Building Code

Trends and Challenges

The trends and challenges that this LOB faces include the following:

- The 2015 Needs survey preliminary results indicate two high priorities: 1) to improve health and fitness and 2) make Fairfax County a more desirable place to live. A greater societal focus on health and fitness has translated into an increased demand for parks and facilities that support a healthy lifestyle
- As the County becomes more urbanized, demand on the park system is increasing in use, intensity and facility diversification. An Urban Parks Framework was adopted in 2013 as County policy to support the integration of parks in urbanizing areas of the County
- Technology changes require the maintaining and improving of planning and development related skills such as GIS, data management, public engagement and presentations, project management, building and environmental protection techniques and professional skills
- Deferred capital facilities and aging infrastructure beyond lifecycle usefulness increases the urgency for renewing infrastructure and park facilities
- Demand for specialty park facilities such as waterparks, dog parks, rope courses, outdoor adventure and emerging sports is increasing
- Strong demand for pedestrian accessibility and connectivity increases demand for park trails and requires coordinated infrastructure improvements beyond parks
- ADA Audit demonstrated many deficiencies throughout the park system and provided a plan for compliance

Fairfax County Park Authority

- Fairfax County Green building policy requires environmental features be incorporated into capital projects
- Increased partnerships to leverage park capital improvements
- Growing need for conversion and development of new synthetic turf fields resulting from growing user demand
- As public engagement occurs regarding parks, there are increased concerns from neighbors about changes in parks that often defer or end projects

Resources

Category	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Adopted
LOB #340: Park Planning and Capital Development			
FUNDING			
Expenditures:			
Compensation	\$2,749,088	\$2,544,893	\$2,905,919
Benefits	169,675	162,626	273,042
Operating Expenses	203,488	209,591	182,739
Work Performed for Others	(2,047,678)	(2,020,603)	(2,341,711)
Total Expenditures	\$1,074,573	\$896,507	\$1,019,989
General Fund Expenditures	\$1,047,034	\$850,317	\$888,088
Transfers Out:			
Transfer Out to General Fund	\$27,125	\$27,125	\$28,700
Total Transfers Out	\$27,125	\$27,125	\$28,700
Total Revenue	\$15,098	\$0	\$0
POSITIONS			
Authorized Positions/Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)			
Positions:			
Regular	34 / 34	34 / 34	34 / 34
Total Positions	34 / 34	34 / 34	34 / 34

Fairfax County Park Authority

Metrics

Metric Indicator	FY 2013 Actual	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Estimate	FY 2017 Estimate
Total Park Planning and Capital Dev. Projects Completed	376	377	352	365	370
Percent of Projects Completed on Schedule	72.44%	70.56%	68.42%	70.00%	72.00%

An Annual Work Plan is approved by the Park Authority Board to assign Planning and Development projects to implement the County approved Capital Improvement Plan for Park Improvements. The Annual Work Plan contains five project types (Planning, Conformance with State Code, Scope, Design and Construction). In addition, development review comments are prepared for all County development proposals, land use studies, Comprehensive Plan Amendments and federally required Environmental Assessments to determine park impacts (natural, cultural, physical, connectivity and service levels) and are included in the LOB as distinct projects. Each project has a predicted duration and schedule for initiation and completion.

Trends for Park Planning and Capital Development projects include:

- The LOB metrics have been and remain fairly consistent over time although projects vary in complexity and where they are in the bond cycle
- Development and safety standards and permitting requirements have increased over time and add to development project durations
- Addressing community concerns and issues require additional time and staff resources in some cases
- Completion of projects may be deferred due to decisions beyond staff control
- Construction costs have increased significantly due to higher demand and less competition from contractors and substantially impact project scope, schedule and budget
- Development proposal reviews are increasingly related to urban infill and mixed use development where integration of parks adds economic value but requires more sophisticated evaluation
- Development review cases are often resubmitted multiple times and require reevaluation
- Greater participation is required in County planning studies and initiatives as parks are increasingly desirable community amenities and need to be included in Plan recommendations
- Aging park infrastructure and deferred renovations create unplanned added projects
- Park access requirements by FCDOT and VDOT are increasingly complex
- Staff capacity, training limits and retirements constrain staffing levels and competency
- Seeking to address County stormwater issues as part of each park capital project adds complexity and Countywide benefits
- A more limited pool of contractors bidding on development contracts increases need for staff oversight