

Board Agenda Item
September 23, 2014

ACTION

Endorsement – Tysons Park System Concept Plan (Dranesville, Hunter Mill, and Providence Districts)

ISSUE:

Endorsement of the Tysons Park System Concept Plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Park Authority Director recommends that the Park Authority Board endorse the Tysons Park System Concept Plan. Staff is seeking endorsement rather than approval because the Concept Plan differs from the typical Park Master Plan and involves land not owned by the Park Authority. Subsequent to the Park Authority Board's endorsement of the Concept Plan, staff will use the information in the Plan to propose changes to the Comprehensive Plan that will be presented to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors for adoption.

TIMING:

Board action is requested on September 23, 2014.

BACKGROUND:

The Tysons Urban Center Plan was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in June 2010. Following the adoption, the Board of Supervisors made several follow-on motions including Follow-on Motion #16 that directed staff to further define needs and locations of "...existing and planned public facilities, including parks and athletic fields..." Park Planning staff determined that refinements to the Tysons park system plan were needed to add more detail and ensure the right park types are planned in the right locations. Refinements would help set expectations for the future Tysons park system, allow for more effective review of redevelopment proposals, and promote collaborative efforts between the public, private and non-profit sectors.

During the first half of 2012, an interagency staff team met to discuss the many needed elements of a park system plan for Tysons. Discussions were informed by rezoning applications under review and lessons learned from evaluating them. Staff also developed a refined Conceptual Park System Map that deletes some spaces unlikely to be accessible to the public and adds those spaces included in approved rezonings.

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From October 2012 to February 2013, an Advisory Group of citizens and park planning and design professionals met half a dozen times to provide feedback and guidance on the refined Conceptual Park System Map and the many issues involved in implementation of a park system plan. During the remainder of 2013, staff developed a Park System Concept Plan draft document based on the Advisory Group's input and additional internal staff review.

Stakeholder outreach began in November 2013 and continued through the first half of 2014. Outreach efforts included focused stakeholder discussions with members of the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission, the Tysons Partnership, Town of Vienna, McLean Citizens Association, Fairfax County Athletic Council, and individual Tysons landowners. The draft Plan document was posted to the project web page on April 16, 2014, and the general public was invited to provide written comments over a 60-day period. A press conference was held at Westgate Park in Tysons on April 23 that generated broad coverage by several media outlets including the Washington Post, The Fairfax Connection, The Tysons Corner blog, and Fairfax Cable Channel 16. The public input process culminated with the Annual Tysons Community Open House on May 19, a daytime Tysons Parks Open House meeting on May 29, and a Park Authority table at the Tysons Farmer's Market grand opening on June 1. Park Planning staff spoke in person with about 200 individuals at the outreach events about the Tysons park system plan.

During the extensive public outreach process, the Park Authority received many comments on the draft Tysons Park System Concept Plan. Attachment 2 provides a summary and representative sample of comments received, grouped according to the seven elements of the Plan. Staff reviewed the comments and made changes to the Plan document as appropriate.

Key concerns addressed in the public comments included the following:

- In general, the majority of comments were supportive of the plan. In particular, the Town of Vienna and the McLean Citizens Association supported the draft Concept Plan.
- Some commenters requested further clarifying language to ensure readers will understand the Plan is conceptual and not regulatory in nature.
- Several Tysons landowners and other commenters requested changes to the Tysons Park System Concept Plan that cannot be accommodated because the park system elements in question are included in the adopted Comprehensive Plan for Tysons.
- Several commenters suggested that staff clarify the language in the Plan, add explanatory text to the Appendix and correct errors/omissions on the conceptual park system maps.

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- One commenter asked that additional images be included in the Connectivity chapter to show how the “Tysons Community Circuit” recreational trail loop could be implemented without additional width in the street section.
- The Office of Community Revitalization requested that the concept for a Green Artery trail and park network under the Metro rail line that emerged out of a design charrette sponsored by Chairman Bulova last June be added to the Connectivity chapter.
- Several commenters asked that field locations be removed from the Athletic Fields map for locations that are not either 1) specifically mentioned in the Comprehensive Plan, or 2) already proffered by approved rezoning applications.

In response to the public input, the following changes were made to the Concept Plan:

1) Request to further clarify that Plan is conceptual and not regulatory:

Edits to the text were made to change the compulsory tone of the text in particular in the Executive Summary, the Key Challenges & Opportunities pages, and in the Appendix.

2) Suggestions to clarify language, add explanatory text, and correct errors:

- Made adjustments and corrections to many of the maps throughout the document and in the Appendix;
- Added statements about providing indoor facilities and using athletic field lighting that limits intrusive light to the Athletic Fields chapter;
- Added a statement about designing parks with flexibility to adapt to changing recreation and leisure trends to the Recreational Facilities chapter;
- Removed references to a specific developer in the Natural Resources stream restoration section, Key Challenges & Opportunities page, and Implementation Strategy page; and
- Added a statement about minimizing impervious surface area in new parks to the extent possible to the Natural Resources chapter.

3) Request for alternative images to show how the Circuit could be implemented:

The Implementation Strategy page at the end of the Connectivity chapter makes clear it is not necessary to add extra width to the street section or streetscape to implement a version of the “Tysons Community Circuit” recreational trail loop concept. The example given and images shown in the chapter, however, were of the Indianapolis Cultural Trail, which is a separate trail from the street and sidewalk that does require additional land along the route. To correct this inconsistency, staff added a variety of images of special wayfinding signage and

pavement markings to help illustrate how the Circuit could be implemented in Tysons (page 26).

4) Request to add the Metro Rail Green Artery concept to the Plan:

To address the aesthetics of the Metro Silver Line structure under the rail structure and at the four Tysons stations, Chairman Sharon Bulova and Fairfax County staff convened a design charrette on June 4, 2014. Thirty charrette participants – with backgrounds in architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, planning, and art, as well as other design related disciplines attended the day long charrette. Participants were tasked with envisioning improved aesthetics for the structure in an environment designed for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and drivers.

Working in teams, the designers developed a number of concepts that centered around two primary ideas. One was a “green artery” that would connect the four stations using a pedestrian and bicycle path weaving under and along the Silver Line. The other focused on the station areas themselves and how to make them distinct from the surrounding areas. Both ideas rely heavily on urban park spaces. The Green Artery could serve as an organizing feature for a variety of amenities including rain gardens, public art, entertainment spaces, parks, or pop-up retail. Several pages describing this concept, along with photos and concept sketches have been added to the Connectivity Chapter (pages 27-29 & 32).

5) Request to remove field locations from the Athletic Fields map:

One commenter stated strongly that the three conceptual field locations in the Tysons West area should be removed from the map, since the Concept Plan will be used to inform an update to the Comprehensive Plan. “We understood that the Tysons Plan Amendments would not be making site-specific recommendations for property from what is in the Comprehensive Plan - but inclusion of these fields certainly do make a site specific recommendation.” Although the dots on the map were labeled as “possible” locations, staff felt it would be best to leave them off the map and rely on the following statement in the legend of the map: “Additional field locations are needed throughout Tysons and should be further identified as Tysons redevelopment occurs” (page 44). In addition, the following statement was added to the Athletic Fields chapter text: “Additional field locations are likely to be proposed with redevelopment applications.” (page 36)

Changes to the Tysons Park System Concept Plan are highlighted to reflect the above staff recommendations for Board review (Attachment 3).

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Staff now seeks Park Authority Board endorsement of the revised Tysons Park System Concept Plan so we can work with Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) staff on the upcoming amendment to the Comprehensive Plan later this fall.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None

ENCLOSED DOCUMENTS:

Attachment 1: Tysons Vicinity Map

Attachment 2: Public Comment Summary on Draft Plan

Attachment 3: Tysons Park System Concept Plan

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