

PICTURE OUR PARKS

Your Voices. Our Future.



PROS Plan Update
Arlington Parks & Recreation



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2015 PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN

CITY OF ARLINGTON, TEXAS



OUR VISION

Great parks are places where people want to be. Well-designed parks, with a strong sense of place, can be integral and enduring parts of the city where diverse groups of people congregate and interact. They are a nucleus of social activity where citizens feel ownership and take great pride in their parks. They add significantly to the overall well-being of the community, improving real estate values and nurturing community identity.

Arlington's parks and recreation system developed into a vibrant network of diverse parks and facilities as a direct result of decades of work, leadership, and investment by community members and leaders. The City's parks and recreation system is a major community asset that repays those investments every day. The system enhances Arlington by increasing property value, improving neighborhoods, families and community members; and enhancing lives and job performance as individuals exercise, play and relieve stress.

Arlington currently faces many challenges. At this point in its history, more than ever before, the citizens of Arlington must make important choices about how to re-invigorate their community. From attracting business investment to championing great neighborhoods, the Arlington Parks and Recreation Department (APRD) has a pivotal role in this effort. Parks enhance neighborhoods. They offer learning opportunities and support child development. They attract regional and national tournaments that improve our local economy, preserve our natural and cultural heritage, enhance personal health and well-being, provide social gathering venues for large community events as well as for small family birthday parties...and they do so much more.

The **Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan (Master Plan)** is intended to help today's leaders and community members make sound and fruitful decisions that will help the community maintain and enhance our system of urban recreational assets and opportunities for years to come. The Master Plan details the breadth and depth of how Arlington's parks and related facilities enrich the lives of the people who call our city home. Our parks reflect our values. We meet the needs of people—from all walks of life and backgrounds—who live here, whether it's for a place to watch a concert or fireworks show, play soccer, go on a nature hike, do water aerobics or simply socialize at a dog park. And we want to keep meeting those needs for decades to come.

This 10-year Master Plan has been developed for the purpose of providing APRD with a roadmap to ensure that we make the best decisions for the future. As we allocate our limited resources, we must promote the City's health and well-being to the greatest extent possible, and strengthen the partnership between APRD and the people of Arlington. By investing wisely in our parks system, our ultimate goal is to make life better - physically, socially and economically.

As with any comprehensive planning process, the community was highly involved in the development of the Master Plan through public meetings, open houses and stakeholder meetings. A citizen household survey was conducted that helped to prioritize and identify the issues that needed to be addressed in the Master Plan and to support the key recommendations to act on over the next 10 years.

Based on input from the community and City staff, six key themes emerged to guide development of this Master Plan. Each theme addresses the specific issues and needs brought forward by the community in the Master Plan process and addresses other needs which include the development a more balanced parks and recreation system. The Master Plan emphasizes the importance of ensuring that the highest community park and recreation priorities—as defined by the six themes of the master plan—are met.

- Quality Facilities
- Connectivity and Equity
- Healthy Lifestyles
- Environment and Nature
- Community and Character
- Partnerships and Engagement

THE MASTER PLAN PROCESS

A project team comprised of key City parks and recreation management staff guided this project. This team provided input throughout the planning process and participated in project team meetings throughout the course of the project. This collaborative effort has created a plan that incorporates local knowledge and institutional knowledge that only community members and city employees can provide.

Besides providing an inventory of the facilities, properties and programs and an analysis of use and demand, the Master Plan documents the extensive public and stakeholder input obtained throughout the master planning process. This community input provides a framework for confirming core values and goals. The synthesis of information, public feedback, and measurable and definable goals and objectives can help the community act and invest in the parks and recreation system in a rational, system-wide approach that aligns with community priorities. The following methodologies were used to develop the plan.

Demographic Analysis

This process included a full analysis of the current demographics for the City of Arlington, with data mined and analyzed from the 2010 U.S. Census, projections provided by Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI – a national professional demographics and population projection agency), and from the City's Community Development and Planning Department. The demographic analysis provides an understanding of the population characteristics of the potential APRD participatory base. This analysis demonstrates the overall size of the total population by specific age segment, race and ethnicity, and economic status and spending power of the residents through household income statistics.

Community Engagement

A critical and ongoing part of the Master Plan is the community engagement process, which is necessary to effectively deliver a community-oriented park and recreation system. In order to meet the needs of residents and users of the system, the Master Plan was developed through a robust and varied customer input process. This process ensures that recommendations for the Master Plan have an external customer focus. It also helps APRD in being able to better deliver on resident needs, and having a clear understanding of their interests.

Citizen Advisory Committee - The City Council appointed a 20-member Citizen Advisory Committee to provide direct citizen involvement in the process. This group, comprised of Park Board members, planning sector members, interested citizens and park planning staff met 33 times over a period of approximately 15 months to provide input to the new Master Plan.

Public Open Houses – In the spring of 2013, APRD hosted five public meetings at various locations throughout the city in conjunction with City Council Town Hall Meetings to review progress from the 2004 Great Parks Master Plan, and gather feedback on citizen's wants and needs. The primary goals of these events were to:

- Provide the public with a greater understanding of the challenges facing APRD.
- Provide a forum for the public to share their priorities for preserving our parks legacy.
- Engage in a city-wide dialog about APRD's future.

Following the Citizen Advisory Committee's work, a series of three open houses were held in November 2013 to present the Master Plan's proposed strategies and project recommendations. All eight public meetings followed a similar format. After introductions, an APRD presentation highlighted the progress since the adoption of the 2004 Great Parks Plan, issues and challenges facing APRD, and opportunities to advance the parks and recreation system for decades to come. The meetings were structured to encourage community discussions, and staff recorded participants' ideas, priorities, and concerns.

Community Survey Findings

APRD conducted a citizen household survey during the spring of 2013 as part of the master plan update process. This work allowed the survey to be tailored to issues of strategic importance to effectively plan the future system. The purpose of the survey was to help establish priorities for the future development of parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services within Arlington. The survey was administered in public meetings and via the internet. The goal was to obtain a total of at least 800 completed surveys. This goal was far exceeded, with 1,247 surveys completed over a six-week period.

This survey is important to developing proposals for the Master Plan, as it provides some insight into what is important to current residents about parks and recreation. APRD designed the survey to gather representative feedback from a mix of customers, stakeholders and Arlington residents about their use of APRD programs and facilities. Questions were designed to reveal priorities for parks, recreation, open space activities, improvements, and funding.

The following are the 10 major survey findings:

- Usage of parks is high with good satisfaction
- Playgrounds, natural areas, picnic areas and walking/biking trails are the most important facilities
- Exercise and fitness, community events/festivals, nature programs and youth sports leagues are the most important programs and activities
- More than 80% feel that overall park quality, maintenance and safety is “good” or “excellent”
- Citizens continue to show strong support for parks and recreation, with 54% saying they are “very likely” and 38% “likely” to vote in favor of future bond referendums
- 57% feel that parks and recreation facilities and programs have improved over the past five years, compared to only 7% that feel they have declined
- 65% consider the money they pay versus the parks and recreation services provided to be a “good” or “great” value
- The most important actions that respondents would support with tax dollars include renovating existing facilities, improving connectivity via the hike and bike network, developing new facilities in areas with unmet needs, preserving natural areas and greenways, and acquiring land for future neighborhood park development
- Unmet citizen needs exist for a wide range of parks, trails, outdoor and indoor facilities and programs
- Opportunities exist to grow programs at parks and recreation facilities

Existing Inventory/Opportunities

A major step in the master plan process was to examine the inventory of existing public parks and specific recreation facilities such as playgrounds, tennis courts and ballfields. This inventory is continuously updated to reflect changes in city parks. Results of the inventory analysis appear in this Master Plan as charts, maps and tables. In addition, existing park, recreation and open space opportunities were identified throughout the city. This information – a critical source in establishing citywide and subarea recommendations - is also documented in narrative and graphic form throughout the Master Plan.

Park and Facility Standards

Standards are crucial to the development of needs and recommendations. Park and recreation facility standards were developed using information collected from a variety of sources, including:

- The National Recreation and Park Association;
- The Trust for Public Land;
- Staff input on service demands and facility usage;
- Other related City plans, guidelines and regulations; and
- An inventory of amenities provided by The University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) and school districts (to explore partnering opportunities in areas where there is insufficient park land).

This aspect of the needs assessment was a largely mathematical process of applying the City's established standards to existing and projected populations. A standards-based needs assessment was developed for the city as a whole and for each of the 12 park planning subareas. Standards were used to highlight any present shortfalls in parks and recreation facilities. These same standards were then projected for future populations in 2030, when Arlington is projected to reach build-out.

Needs Assessment and Prioritization

The final assessment and prioritization of needs was not simply a matter of mathematics, however. Accurately assessing needs is one of the fundamental parts of a planning process. Informed by data about the situation and environment, timely and appropriate decisions need to be made about how to meet the community's demand with a supply of the right mix of services. Demand is derived from multiple sources: community engagement, research on trends, findings from benchmark communities and related research. Supply is informed by policy guidance, organizational structure, available resources and other factors. As such, conducting a needs assessment requires a synthesis of a wide array of inputs that ultimately yield valuable information about how to establish Level of Service (LOS) standards.

As noted above, multiple inputs were combined to develop an overall inventory of the City's parks and recreation needs. This analysis explored local, state, and national trends with regard to City parks and recreation service delivery. Existing City and regional plans were reviewed to determine commonalities and to provide guidance. Because available resources must also be taken into consideration, it was necessary to prioritize overall needs into a listing of projects that can realistically be accomplished over the next 10 years. Prioritization began with the gathering of public input as specified above. This input was then refined based on the knowledge and experience of APRD staff into a list that identified the most pressing needs for each City subarea. The subarea project priorities were then combined to yield a total picture of Arlington's parks and recreation needs.

The process identified gaps in services as it applied to neighborhood parks, as well as where gaps exist in recreation centers and aquatic facilities across the City for APRD to work toward needed improvements and additions in these areas. The process used a series of layers of maps based on the demographics of the community and identified elements that are missing in land and recreation facilities based on the values the community stated that is important to meet. The maps demonstrate gaps and highlight areas where amenities and parks should be located along with land acquisition opportunities to support those needs.

The Needs Assessment should be validated by APRD staff on an annual basis. This validation should include reviewing local participation data, national park and recreation trends, data from future community surveys and program evaluation reports.

Project Recommendations and Action Plans

Based upon this general philosophy, the Action Plan identifies specific projects that, taken together, will produce these sought-after results by strategically investing the APRD's limited resources. The final section of the Plan, entitled "Project Recommendations," spells out in detail APRD's priority projects and initiatives, both citywide and within specific subareas of the City.

The recommended projects shown in this Master Plan range in scope from those that are very site specific, with localized impact, to those that affect the entire city. Like previous plans, this Master Plan offers recommendations for neighborhood, linear, community and city parks. It also offers recommendations for some exciting new types of parks, as well as a discussion of existing and potential revenue sources for funding the Master Plan's implementation.

Funding

With a current maintenance backlog estimated at approximately \$53 million and projected growth to \$74 million by 2024, difficult trade-off decisions must be made by APRD about how to manage and operate

facilities and provide programs. APRD's Capital Improvement Program guidelines prioritize the maintenance of current assets over the development of new facilities. The community, through the planning process, indicated strong support for this concept of prioritization. Based on current economic conditions, revenue and expenditure projections, funding is not sufficient to maintain all existing system assets and build new park and recreation facilities unless comparable trade-offs occur.

Development of any new facilities will require additional funding if existing deficiencies are expected to be improved. The Master Plan, which identifies areas for further investigation, clarifies that development of new facilities should not occur without additional funding or comparable trade-offs.

At the same time, APRD must respond to the community's values related to recreation programs and activities by providing adequate facilities and programs accessible to the entire community to meet those needs. In order to focus programming on health and wellness and to ensure programs are accessible to all community members, APRD will need to shift service delivery and resource allocation as well as implement best practices in program life cycle management and evaluation.

I. CITY OF ARLINGOTN PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN PROCESS

Evolution of the master planning process.....2004 through 2014.

The 2004 Master Plan considered the service challenges facing the City and Parks and Recreation Department. The plan outlined a vision, strategic goals, and specific project priorities and initiatives aimed at addressing the service needs of our changing community.

In preparation for the proposed 2008 supplement, an ad-hoc committee of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board was formed, and two public input meetings were conducted to receive citizen input on the priorities for the parks and recreation system for the next 10 years. Goal and action plans to achieve the goals were developed to provide all levels of the department, organization and community the ability to articulate activate and implement tasks to accomplish the master plan. These action steps are provided within this document.

Currently, the 2014 Picture Our Parks (PROS) Master Plan process is being conducted. The City of Arlington has been very proactive in its planning for the future, undertaking a full range of design and planning efforts from comprehensive plans to neighborhood specific plans. As implementation initiatives from these other efforts begin to transpire, it is critical to think about the park system, both as a local amenity and visitor asset, in a holistic manner. And, more importantly, to redefine what a park system is.....the system is more than playgrounds and ballfields; it is the open spaces, both formal and informal, the naturalized areas of the city, and the connective fabric that links the various amenities and resources together. The 2014 PROS Plan will allow the City to re-think its park system and develop a strategy for its short and long-term health, maintenance and enhancement.

Goals of the 2014 PROS Master Plan project include:

- Develop and conduct an all-inclusive public process
- Compile and analyze Arlington's current inventory
- Analyze park standards and levels of service
- Develop recommendations for reinvesting in the park system
- Develop recommendations for the acquisition and development parks and greenways
- Evaluate recreation facilities, programs and services
- Develop specific strategies for the overall system
- Develop recommendations to ensure sustainability and maintenance goals are met
- Develop a prioritized implementation plan
- Identify funding mechanisms

II. MASTER PLAN GOALS

Based on input from the community and City staff, eight goals were established to guide development of the 2004 Master Plan. The table below provides a summary of the identified goals, desired outcomes and progress to date.

GOAL		DESIRED OUTCOME	PROGRESS TO DATE
1	Ensure that existing parks and recreation facilities are maintained and updated to provide high quality recreational experiences.	Recommends a greater share of future park bond funding over the next 10 years be used to renovate and update existing parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorized \$6.6M in 2005 Park Bond Program • Proposed \$8.2M in 2008 park Bond Program
		Recommends that the City actively seek alternative funding sources for capital maintenance and renovation projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorized \$570K from lease bonus funding for natural gas drilling • Executed cell phone tower leases at two parks, generating \$40K annually
2	Focus acquisition and development efforts in areas of the community where parks and recreation facilities and acreage are below adopted standards.	Plan specifies that nearly 45% of anticipated funding will be allocated to address new growth needs south of Interstate-20.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorized \$8.4M in 2005 Park Bond Program (62%) • Proposed \$6.4M in 2008 park Bond Program (41%)
3	Preserve and enhance the City's valuable and sensitive natural resources.	Plan adopts a new "Natural Area" park category to signify properties that will be minimally developed, if at all, as places for the protection and enjoyment of the natural environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park classification adopted, with five facilities falling under this category
		Plan allocates a substantial proportion of funding for acquisition of natural areas and floodplains for linear parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorized \$3.3M in 2005 Park Bond Program. • Proposed \$1.1M in 2008 park Bond Program.
		Plan specifies that high environmental standards will be	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three proposed projects include emphasis on environmental

		employed in the development and operations of parks and recreation facilities.	design and materials
		Plan calls for an added emphasis on developing low-maintenance natural landscapes that improve the visual attractiveness of our parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New projects have incorporated landscape beds with heavy emphasis on low-maintenance, xeriscape philosophy
4	Develop collaborative relationships between the City and other public, non-profit, and private organizations to promote a more effective parks and recreation system.	Plan specifies that Community Partnering is a strategic goal of the Department. It outlines specific policies and examples of projects in which citizens, groups, and private organizations will be encouraged to participate with the Department in developing, improving and maintaining the City's parks and park facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An interlocal agreement with the YMCA of Arlington was created to support two phases of development at Webb Community Park 2005 Park Bond Program provided \$255K in matching grant funding for nine community-driven, park development projects.

GOAL		DESIRED OUTCOME	PROGRESS TO DATE
5	Improve accessibility to parks for all citizens.	Plan emphasizes acquisition and development of neighborhood and linear parks where deficiencies have been identified, to significantly improve park access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authorized \$3.1M in 2005 Park Bond Program Proposed \$4.2M in 2008 park Bond Program
		Plan specifies the development of a trail linkage between Johnson Creek and the UTA/downtown area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City is working towards completion of first two phases of Center Street pedestrian trail
		Plan describes continued support and development of the Veloweb and other regional trail linkages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numerous initiatives with linear parks and planned and in progress
6	Improve the physical form and appearance of the City as an indicator of quality of life and a stimulus for economic development.	Plan places a high priority on updating and enhancing the appearance and conditions of existing parks and recreation facilities. Specifically, an initiative to enhance park entrances with unique landscaping and new signage is recommended.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently working with the Douglas Group to create a master plan for system-wide park signage
		Plan recommends a strategic shift in funding towards renovating or reconstructing existing parks and park facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1997 Bond Program = 21% 2005 Bond Program = 49% 2008 Bond Program = 53%
		Plan recommends an emphasis on linear and neighborhood park acquisition and development, both of which are considered important to improving Arlington's quality of life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authorized \$3.1M in 2005 Park Bond Program Proposed \$4.2M in 2008 park Bond Program
		Plan emphasizes opportunities for community partnerships to maintain and beautify city parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided \$255K in matching grant funding for nine community-driven, park development projects. Arlington Conservation Council has adopted Blackland Prairie and SW Nature Preserves LEAF program has planted over 1,000 trees citywide
7	Preserve and enhance City historical, archaeological, and cultural resources.	Plan places a high priority on preserving properties such as Bird's Fort and the Village Creek Historical Area. Plan also recognizes additional opportunities to reconstruct or enhance features such as the historic train depot and Marrow Bone Springs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department is working towards adding 10 new historical signs at key park facilities Founders Park was re-named as Marrow Bone Springs Park to highlight the historical significance of the area to Arlington
8	Improve park safety and security.	Plan recommends how the City can re-invest in the park and recreation system and promote community partnerships to improve satisfaction with safety-related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Security cameras have been installed at numerous facilities Automated entry gates have been installed at five parks Pedestrian lighting has been

		design and maintenance.	added/proposed in five parks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private park security patrol has been implemented to increase presence in our parks
		Encourage the public to volunteer in parks, and neighborhoods will be encouraged to take greater responsibility for care and maintenance of parks and reducing vandalism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Park Partners Volunteer Program saw a 72% increase in projects completed from FY06 to FY07.

III. NEEDS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

In preparation for the 2004 Master Plan, a survey of 503 randomly selected Arlington citizens was conducted by Raymond Turco and Associates. The survey provided citizens the opportunity to rate the quality of the recreational facilities and services in Arlington and to voice their opinions on the recreational needs in the city.

The needs assessment was divided into four categories – types of parks, project funding, indoor facilities, and outdoor facilities. The information below is based on the percentage of citizens who said that the City possibly or definitely needs each item.

A. Types of Parks

- Linear Parks – 68%
- Neighborhood Parks – 62%
- Community / City Parks – 49%
- Natural Areas (new park classification)

B. Project Funding Priorities

Funding Category	2002 Citizen Survey	2004 Master Plan	2005 Bond Program (\$13.6M)	2008 Bond Program (\$15.5M)
Renovating and improving existing facilities	51%	33%	49%	53%
Building new parks and facilities	25%	55%	27%	28%
Acquiring land for future parks	21%	12%	24%	19%

C. Indoor Facility Priorities

1. Programmable Spaces
2. Indoor Aquatics
3. Fitness Areas
4. Senior Activity Spaces
5. Youth/Teen Activity Spaces

D. Outdoor Facility Priorities

1. Picnic Pavilions and Tables
2. Playground Areas
3. Trails (Jogging, Nature, Hike and Bike)
4. Environmental Education/Natural Areas
5. Aquatic Center/Spraygrounds
6. Ponds for fishing and wildlife
7. Large, Open Grassy Areas
8. Sand Volleyball
9. Athletic Fields
10. Basketball and Tennis Courts

IV. STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Based upon an analysis of the major issues and opportunities facing the City and Department, the following strategies were identified and defined as critically important issues to help guide efforts to improve the park system and provide quality recreational programs and services over the next decade. The following is a progress report through April 2008.

A. Community Partnering

Partnership Policy	The Department is continually seeking opportunities to partner with the community to improve and renovate our parks and park facilities. Several examples of these efforts are the Park Partners Program, Park Partnership Grants, LEAF Program, Arlington Tomorrow Foundation, YMCA partnerships, River Legacy Foundation and other initiatives with other non-profit organizations such as the Rotary and Junior League.
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Park Advertising and Lease Policy	Enterprise Programs Division is working on a Sponsorship / Advertising plan that is part of the 2008 Department Work Plan.
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B. Environmental Leadership

Non-Mow Policy	Continuing no mow policy in areas designated as natural areas, linear parks and undeveloped land. City departments are working together to establish mowing standards and protocols.
Maintenance Policies	Implemented SkyLogix technology at all sports centers. The units allow staff to remotely program athletic field lights to operate during windows of time. Each user group is issued a pin number to enter on location when lights are needed. Electrical usage has decreased by 20% since the implementation of this technology.
Sustainable Design Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installation of drought tolerant and native plants in all new park development. • Continue to research new and innovative construction practices and technology. • Any new buildings constructed for Parks and Recreation shall be designed with LEED certified guidelines. • City has appointed a Citizen's Environmental Advisory Committee, and staff Environmental Council. Initial work will include assessing the City's carbon footprint.
Natural Area Park Classification Policy	Master Plan initiated a new "Natural Areas" classification. Examples include the SW Nature Preserve, Blackland Prairie, Crystal Canyon, Village Creek Historical Area, OW Fannin, and portions of several other parks.
Pedestrian and Non-Vehicular Transportation	Continue to acquire floodplain for future linear park trail construction. Park Fee program revised to emphasize linear parks.

C. Taking Care of What We Have

Capital Maintenance Funding	Department continues to seek additional funding through the budget process, gas lease revenue, and cell tower agreements to address the backlog of maintenance projects.
Performance Fund Policy	The Department continues to work towards the Performance Fund goal of recovering direct program costs and building a fund balance for re-investment. Current economic and market conditions have jeopardized the viability of the current Performance Fund model.
City Sales Tax for Parks and Recreation	Not a likely scenario given the current focus on providing additional resources for public safety.
Facility Surcharge Fees	The Department has not taken any action on this alternative due to the fiscal uncertainty of the Performance Fund. A proposed "set-a-side" surcharge for capital improvements is not likely in the foreseeable future.