

Public Land Site Evaluation Guidelines

DRAFT Staff Proposal for Public Input

July 24, 2014

Introduction

The recent updating of the County's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) has identified a need to add broader policy guidance for evaluating County-held sites that are proposed for public facilities - including potential new schools on County-held land - and recreation and park space. In addition, on December 13, 2013, the County Board adopted a resolution identifying affordable housing as a potential strategic use of county land in response to a call for "*Public Land for Public Good*" by the Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement (VOICE), in which the County Board stated that: "***The County Board is the steward of the community's public land. In that capacity we have a responsibility to assure that land decisions consider how best to provide what the community needs – schools, parks, recreational opportunities, and facilities.***"

As requested by the County Board in December, the County Manager delivered a report on May 13, 2014 recommending eight County-held sites with the greatest potential for creating affordable housing opportunities in conjunction with other County planning processes. These sites could also likely meet other County needs identified in the CIP.

Considering the County's growth forecasts, public needs, limited real estate holdings, and the cost of acquiring land, it will be necessary to prioritize community goals and base any final land decision on a balanced approach. It is unlikely that any one site could satisfy all the strategic land needs identified by the Board.

Application of Site Evaluation Guidelines

The guidelines in this document should apply to the following sites:

1. Sites identified in the County Manager's *Public Land for Public Good* report;
2. Sites identified for additional study in the County's FY 2015-FY 2024 CIP; and
3. County-held land identified as a potential new school site in the Arlington Public Schools CIP.

The guidelines are intended to inform the process of evaluating a site's feasibility for a proposed use or uses and assumes this site has already been identified as the best location. They do not address the site selection process for an identified public facility need.

Primary Goals

1. Maintain a balance among a number of County priorities, recognizing that it may not be possible to meet all priorities on a given site;
2. Make the most efficient use of public land and economic resources; and
3. Provide a level of public services that is consistent with community expectations.

Site Evaluation Process and Criteria

1. The County Board or County Manager will identify a County-held site and potential public needs that could be met on the site (this could be done through a separate need assessment and/or site selection process).
2. Once a site is recommended, staff will perform a pre-planning site evaluation, considering the following criteria:
 - a. Site Characteristics
 - i. Parcel size, dimensions, and other physical characteristics;
 - ii. Existing conditions and inventory of uses – which may include data on daily users; special event attendance/use; history of attendance if available; etc.
 - iii. Transportation and multi-modal accessibility;
 - iv. Environmental features, such as Resource Protection Areas and tree canopy;
 - v. Neighborhood context and compatibility;
 - vi. Legal and regulatory framework, such as covenants, easements, and zoning; and
 - vii. Land use policies.
3. Based on the pre-planning evaluation, the County Manager will recommend a scope of study to the County Board. This scope may indicate specific programs to be considered; addressing the following:
 - a. Programs and Uses
 - i. The space needs of the public facilities or programs to be considered;
 - ii. County-wide and area-specific programs and uses that have been identified through previous plans and studies;

4. The County Manager will also recommend to the County Board the scope of work and timeline that may include the establishment of a working group or using an established advisory Commission or group to lead the community review process.
 - a. The purpose of this group is to collaborate with staff to maintain a balance among County priorities as the site is evaluated based on defined criteria and planning principles and to provide strategic advice to the Board.
 - b. The composition of this group should include both representatives from the property's immediate community and representatives who have a County-wide perspective.
 - c. In addition to a formal working group, all interested citizens and parties should be given opportunities to participate in the planning process.
5. The County Board will review the County Manager recommendation and take public action that establishes the scope and process.
6. In addition to the criteria listed in 2a, any planning process involving County-held land should also consider the following evaluation criteria:
 - a. County Policies and Priorities
 - i. Conformity with the County's articulated goals and policies with regard to parks and open space; affordable housing; historic preservation; land use; transportation; parking; accessibility; energy, sustainability, and the environment; and education; among others;
 - b. Impacts to Programs and Uses
 - i. Impacts on the current level of public services provided to County residents;
 - ii. Analysis and mitigation of impacts on the surrounding neighborhood;
 - iii. Opportunities to combine multiple priority programs and uses on a single site;
 - c. Fiscal and Timing Considerations
 - i. Site development costs, including added costs due to complicated construction or phasing;
 - ii. Long term operating costs; and
 - iii. Ability to complete a project within the necessary timeframe.

d. Site Planning and Building Design Considerations

- i. Compatibility within the neighborhood context and surroundings;
- ii. Compatibility with urban design principles;
- iii. Compatibility with sustainable design principles;
- iv. Minimization of construction on undisturbed natural areas;

This list of criteria is not intended to be comprehensive. Additional guiding principles or evaluation criteria that recognize the unique nature of the site or program may be developed for each planning process.

- 7. Based on the analysis, the County Manager will recommend uses and a conceptual site design or design principles to the County Board for its consideration at a public session. The working group and/or established advisory Commission/group may also provide recommendations.
- 8. After acceptance by the County Board, the Public Facilities Review Committee (for a County or Arlington Public Schools project) or the Site Plan Review Committee (for a private development, such as affordable housing) will review any related land use applications for site development and follow the usual established processes and procedures, which involve public meetings with County Board Advisory groups and public hearings with the County Board, all of which offer additional opportunities for community participation.

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