

PREPARING FOR THE OPENING OF THE LONG BRIDGE AQUATICS & FITNESS CENTER

The Long Bridge Aquatics & Fitness Center is anticipated to open to the public in early 2021. Full funding for the center's operations will be requested during the FY 2021 budget process; however, the County Manager's Proposed FY 2020 Budget includes funding for two key staff positions to help with preparations for the center's opening. The County remains committed to pursuing partnership and sponsorship opportunities for the Center to help offset the amount of taxpayer support for maintenance and operations. As the project moves closer to completion, we remain optimistic that our efforts will be successful.

Developing Operational Readiness for Opening

In order to be operationally ready for opening, the Manager's proposal includes \$110,000 in partial-year funding to allow for the recruitment and hiring of two key staff positions: a Long Bridge Aquatics & Fitness Center General Manager and a Maintenance Technician. Hiring these two positions prior to the facility opening will allow the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to develop standard operating procedures; ensure mastery of all building systems, including specialized aquatics equipment; procure inventory; and develop staff training plans.

The center will house a 50-meter pool with 1-meter, 3-meter, and 5-meter diving that will support competitive swimming, diving events, community lap swimming, aquatics classes, private swim lessons, water polo, synchronized swimming, and other community events. The center will also house a leisure pool featuring a water slide, lazy river, water play features, and additional lanes for community lap swimming.

In addition to the aquatic elements, the center will feature an 8,000-square foot fitness center, exercise studio, two wet classrooms and three multi-purpose community rooms. The capital project will also expand the park by developing an additional 10.5 acres of parkland which will include the extension of the Esplanade from the existing park.

Meeting Community Demand for Recreational Programming

The Long Bridge Aquatics & Fitness Center will allow DPR to expand its existing high-demand aquatics program offerings including classes and private swim lessons. In FY 2018, DPR served nearly 6,000 individuals in over 10,000 enrollments in aquatics classes which accounted for just over one third of the entire enrollments in DPR Enjoy Arlington classes, which includes aquatics, gymnastics, fitness, sports, music, dance and other classes. Expanded program offerings will help alleviate waitlists for these programs – currently there are over 500 participants on the waitlist for winter 2019 swim classes, and more than 100 participants on the waitlist for private swim lessons. The center will also support the Arlington Aquatic Club team, which has more than 500 participants, as well as provide additional opportunities to the community for lap swimming.

The County's draft Public Spaces Master Plan (PSMP) update contains several recommendations that will be realized after the development of the Long Bridge Aquatics & Fitness Center and expansion of the park. Specifically, recommendation 1.5.1 calls for the completion of the remaining elements of the 2013 Board-adopted Long Bridge Park Master Plan. The recommendation outlines a variety of improvements including the need for additional parkland and aquatics programs which has been well documented over 18 years of planning and design for the Long Bridge Park project.

The draft PSMP also identifies an important asset to the community: casual-use space. This type of space provides areas for relaxation, reflection and informal activities. The event lawn being constructed as part of this phase of development at Long Bridge Park will be one of the largest spaces in Arlington County dedicated purely to casual use. The completion of the Esplanade, included as part of the construction of the center, will provide even more such space.