

## Arlington County Civic Federation Resolution Recommending a Balanced Allocation of Bond Funds for Park and Recreation Uses May 2020

WHEREAS, since 2012, voters have approved \$126 million in bonds for parks and recreation, the Arlington County Civic Federation (ACCF) Parks and Recreation Committee (P&R Committee) evaluated how money borrowed with parks and recreation bonds addresses the community’s needs, as articulated in survey responses to the 2016 [Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey](#) and codified in the 2019 [Public Spaces Master Plan \(PSMP\)](#).

WHEREAS, of the approved bond funds, the P&R Committee found that approximately 86% has been dedicated to recreational uses, whereas less than 5% has been spent on land acquisition and less than 2% on open space and natural habitat, as reflected in the following table:

<b>Bond-Funded CIP Projects (2 years)</b>	<b>Total Bond Funds</b>	<b>Park</b>	<b>Recreation</b>	<b>Open Space–Natural Habitat</b>	<b>Open Space–Urban</b>	<b>Unallocated–Land Acquisition</b>
FY 2013-14	\$51,034,187	\$96,905	\$49,937,282	\$0	\$0	\$1,000,000
FY 2015-16	\$17,860,200	\$1,347,200	\$13,843,000	\$220,000	\$450,000	\$2,000,000
FY 2017-18	\$26,840,000	\$1,862,500	\$21,797,500	\$180,000	\$0	\$3,000,000
FY 2019-20	\$30,520,000	\$5,347,000	\$23,210,000	\$1,618,000	\$345,000	\$0
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$126,254,387</b>	<b>\$8,653,605</b>	<b>\$108,787,782</b>	<b>\$2,018,000</b>	<b>\$795,000</b>	<b>\$6,000,000</b>
Percentage	100%	6.85%	86.17%	1.60%	0.63%	4.75%

Note: This table summarizes bond-fund allocations, broken down by bond cycle and extracted from the spreadsheet analysis included in Appendix A of the accompanying report, “Arlington’s FY2013–FY2020 Capital Spending for Parks and Recreation: How Are Bond Funds Allocated?” Given that much of the county’s financial data is aggregated (many expenditures are not broken down), the allocation of expenditures is approximate, based on project description and other details found in the biennial CIP documentation.

WHEREAS, the majority of respondents to the county’s “[statistically valid](#)” 2016 survey demonstrated that county residents have a strong need for investment in additional outdoor facilities (especially trails, natural areas, and wildlife habitat) that enable the public to enjoy nature. However, these preferences and needs have gone unmet or have been only partially met by bond funding spent predominately on recreation-related projects, using funds approved in ballot referenda since 2012.

WHEREAS, the P&R Committee finds a shortfall in the acquisition of land in spite of this use having been advertised as a priority in three of the last four park and recreation bond referenda appearing on the ballot in November. For example, based on PSMP data, only 1.82 acres of land have been added to the park inventory since 2015, well below the current 3-acres-per-year goal established in the PSMP. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Public Spaces Master Plan, 2019, p. 169. Calculation is as follows: Sum of additional park lands for 2015–2020 = 6.6 acres. Subtract FY 2017–18 transfer of Taylor ES property to Taylor Park of 4.78 acres [Note: This is not “additional” park land since the County already owned the property.] Net is 1.82 acres of actual land added to parks between 2015 and 2020.

WHEREAS, the 2016 white paper (<http://www.civfed.org/newContent/2016-02/ParksRecParklandAcquisitionReport2016-02.pdf>) published by the P&R Committee notes that there has been a significant drop-off in land acquisition funding since 2008, when, in some budget cycles, funding reached \$8.5 million. Moreover, the PSMP itself underscores the urgent need for more public space in [Priority Action 1](#): “Add at least 30 acres of new public space over the next ten years.”

WHEREAS, the P&R Committee finds that the 2019 [Public Spaces Master Plan](#) and the [2014 Stormwater Master Plan](#) are not complementary to each other concerning land acquisition with respect to flood mitigation, notwithstanding that the Stormwater Master Plan specifically mentions that the history of past park land acquisition was, in part, tied to flood mitigation.

AND WHEREAS, Arlington has set aggressive stormwater-management goals in its [Stormwater Master Plan](#), is ramping up countywide [flood-resilience efforts](#), and has set energy-use reduction targets with urban heat island mitigation strategies in its [Community Energy Plan](#), acquiring land to preserve and harness natural infrastructure is essential for meeting these goals while also providing public health and other benefits.<sup>2</sup>

BE IT RESOLVED that the Arlington County Civic Federation recommends the following:

1. That the County balance its fiscal year (FY)2021 and FY2022 CIP investments to fund passive park features (including wildlife habitat and open space), trails, and park land acquisition on a more equitable basis with respect to its recreational investments so that these investments more closely align to the public’s demonstrated needs beyond mandated elements such as rain gardens and other environmental mitigation.
2. That the County should demonstrate more forward thinking and commitment to land acquisition for passive park use, as reflected in the PSMP, by purchasing the 9-acre Rouse property at the corner of Wilson Boulevard and N. McKinley Road since it is identified as a “Generational and Unique Opportunity” site in the strategic plan.
3. That the County should consider as a high priority dual-purpose sites that can be used for flood mitigation and Open Space–Natural Habitat, as mentioned in the Stormwater Master Plan.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the accompanying report should be considered a follow-up to the 2016 Civic Federation white paper (<https://projects.arlingtonva.us/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2016/03/Parks.Rec-Parkland-Acquisition-Report-2016-02.pdf>) concerning park land acquisition. The accompanying report also falls under the auspices of the 2016 Civic Federation resolution (<http://www.civfed.org/newContent/2016-02/ParksRec%20Parkland%20Acquisition%20Resolution%20Adopted%202016-02.pdf>) asking the County Board to acquire a minimum of 3 acres of park land per year, on average, over the coming decade, which was passed by a vote of 63-1-1 in February 2016. The county subsequently adopted this recommendation in its approved PSMP in 2019.

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<sup>2</sup> EPA, “Benefits of Green Infrastructure,” <https://www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure/benefits-green-infrastructure>