PARK PLANNING HANDBOOK

Los Angeles County
Regional Park and Open Space District

July 2019

This page is intentionally blank.

INTRODUCTION

This handbook is part of the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District's (RPOSD) Urban Parks Technical Assistance Program (TAP) and provides information that helps you plan a park or open space project in your community. It includes information on the benefits of parks and an overview of the steps involved in the planning and development of a park using Measure A funds. These steps include community outreach and engagement, site selection, funding, design, and construction. After reviewing this handbook you will have a greater understanding of what is required to successfully plan and develop a park project using Measure A funds.

The information in this handbook focuses on developing a park that is eligible for Measure A funding. Much of this information reflects generally accepted best practices for park planning, with additional specifics about the Measure A requirements you need to be aware of during the process. Measure A can provide funding for all aspects of a project and there are several ways to access these funds, such as through annual allocations, technical assistance, and competitive grant programs. Your project may be eligible for funding from additional sources as well. Please refer to the Recommended Outside Resources section of RPOSD's website for some of these opportunities.

For detailed information on all Measure A requirements, funding opportunities, programs, and procedures refer to the Measure A Basics Handbook, visit RPOSD.LACounty.gov, or contact RPOSD at 626.588.5060 or info@rposd.lacounty.gov.

Why Parks?

Parks are essential infrastructure that help improve health, promote community cohesion, deliver environmental benefits, and contribute to a healthy economy. Building new parks and improving existing parkland and open space can help ensure that every LA County resident benefits from all that parks have to offer.

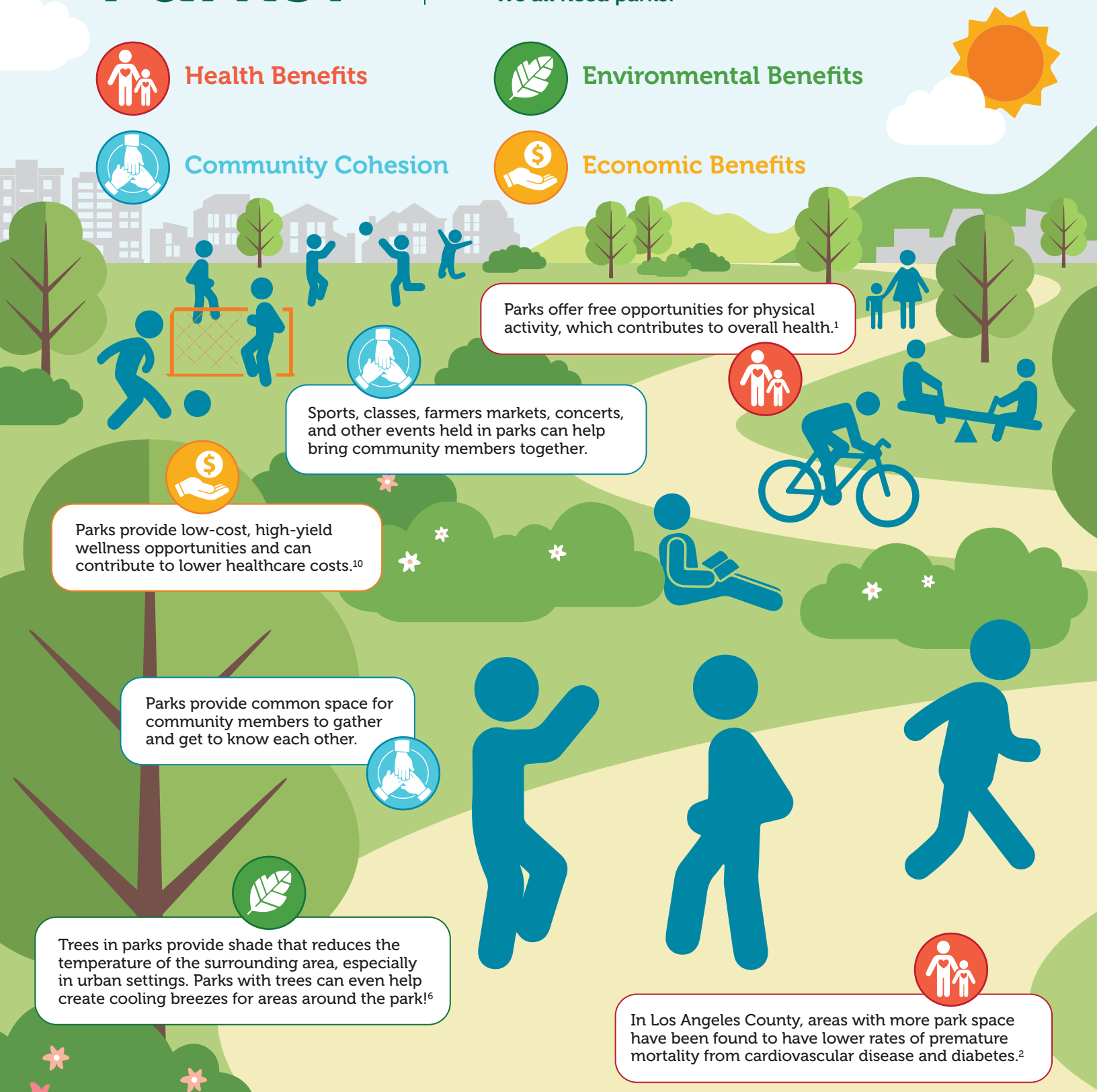
We all need parks!

Health Benefits

Environmental Benefits

Community Cohesion

Economic Benefits



Parks offer free opportunities for physical activity, which contributes to overall health.[1]

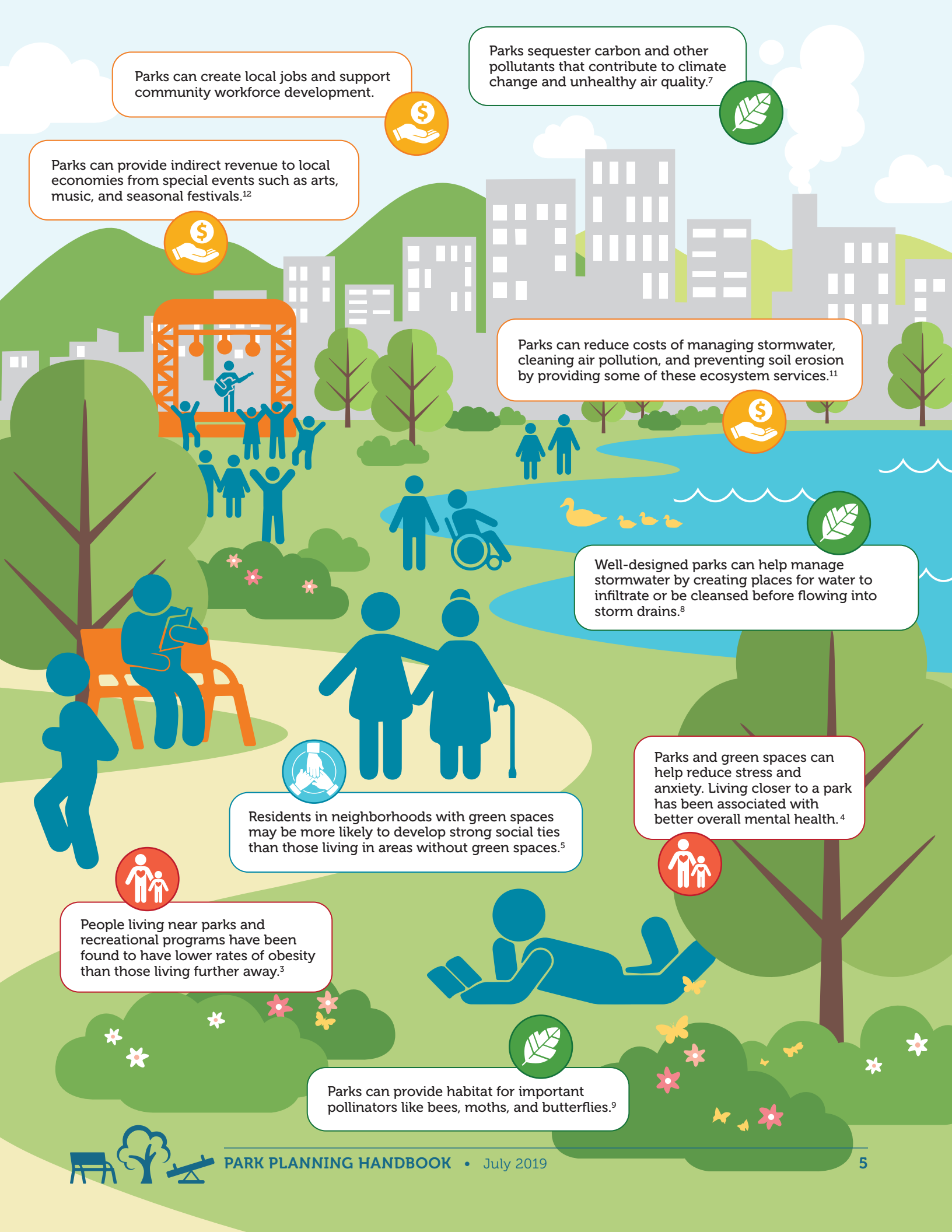
Sports, classes, farmers markets, concerts, and other events held in parks can help bring community members together.

Parks provide low-cost, high-yield wellness opportunities and can contribute to lower healthcare costs.[10]

Parks provide common space for community members to gather and get to know each other.

Trees in parks provide shade that reduces the temperature of the surrounding area, especially in urban settings. Parks with trees can even help create cooling breezes for areas around the park![6]

In Los Angeles County, areas with more park space have been found to have lower rates of premature mortality from cardiovascular disease and diabetes.[2]


Parks can create local jobs and support community workforce development.
Parks sequester carbon and other pollutants that contribute to climate change and unhealthy air quality.[7]
Parks can provide indirect revenue to local economies from special events such as arts, music, and seasonal festivals.[12]
Parks can reduce costs of managing stormwater, cleaning air pollution, and preventing soil erosion by providing some of these ecosystem services.[11]
Well-designed parks can help manage stormwater by creating places for water to infiltrate or be cleansed before flowing into storm drains.[8]
Residents in neighborhoods with green spaces may be more likely to develop strong social ties than those living in areas without green spaces.[5]
Parks and green spaces can help reduce stress and anxiety. Living closer to a park has been associated with better overall mental health.[4]
People living near parks and recreational programs have been found to have lower rates of obesity than those living further away.[3]
Parks can provide habitat for important pollinators like bees, moths, and butterflies.[9]

MEASURE A

Recognizing the importance of parks to their communities, nearly 75% of Los Angeles County voters approved Measure A in 2016, creating a long-term, stable source of funding for park and open space projects throughout the County. Measure A provides a variety of grant funds through annual allocations, competitive grants and other funding programs for park and recreation projects. These grants are available to eligible public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and schools. Available funds can be used for any phase of the development of a project, including planning, construction, acquisition, and maintenance and servicing, in accordance with the requirements of each grant program.

All parks funded with Measure A grants need to meet Measure A's requirements. This handbook will help ensure that your planning process contributes to a park project that can be funded by Measure A grants.

For more information about each Measure A grant program refer to the Measure A Basics Handbook or contact RPOSD at 626.588.5060 or info@rposd.lacounty.gov.

All parks funded with
Measure A grants
need to meet Measure A's requirements. This handbook will help ensure that your planning process contributes to a park project that can be funded by Measure A grants.

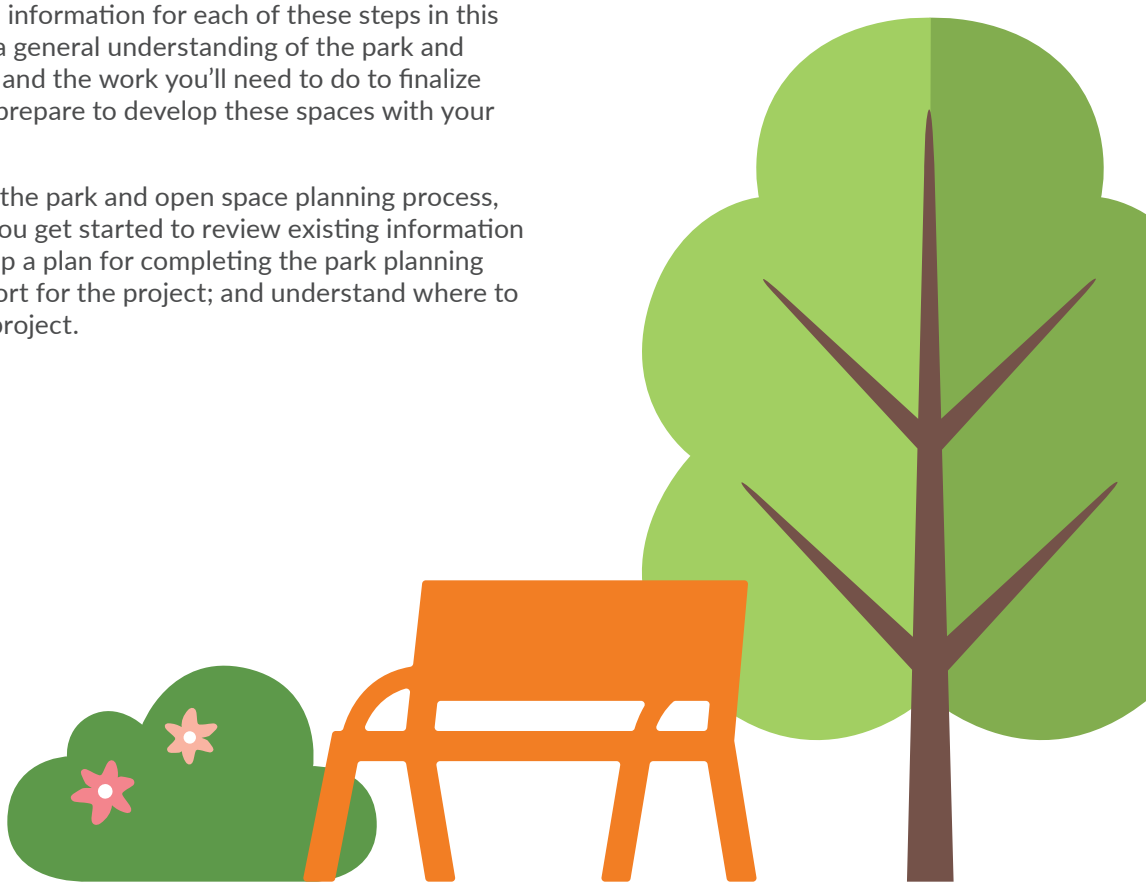
GETTING STARTED

Planning a new park or open space project is a significant undertaking, especially if you aren't familiar with the process. Familiarizing yourself with the general steps required to complete the process can help you move through the process in an effective manner. Although the requirements vary in each jurisdiction, in general you'll need to consider the following steps:

- Engaging Your Community
- Identifying Funding Needs and Potential Sources
- Selecting a Site
- Developing a Design
  - » Conceptual Design
  - » Schematic Design
  - » Design Development
  - » Construction Documents
- Managing the Construction/Development Process
  - » Bidding and Contracting
  - » Construction
  - » Celebrating Success!
- Closing Your Grant
- Operating and Maintaining Your Project

Reading through the detailed information for each of these steps in this handbook will help you gain a general understanding of the park and open space planning process and the work you'll need to do to finalize your project as you begin to prepare to develop these spaces with your community.

In addition to understanding the park and open space planning process, make sure you take time as you get started to review existing information related to the project; develop a plan for completing the park planning work; cultivate internal support for the project; and understand where to look for assistance with the project.



Reviewing Existing Information

When initiating a new park or open space project, be sure to review existing resources—including planning documents, existing community feedback, and other site-specific assessments—to make sure you have a thorough understanding of the history of the project (if any), your community's concerns and priorities, and a general sense of potential areas of concern as you move forward. Existing information can also provide important details that could help manage community expectations appropriately, leading to greater support of any new projects.

For example, reviewing the prioritized projects list from the 2016 Parks Needs Assessment may reveal a different set of priorities than those identified in planning documents such as Parks Master Plans, Comprehensive Plans, and Specific Plans and may change over time. This may indicate that your agency or organization may want to consider additional community engagement to be sure the community's concerns and priorities are accurately reflected in your documents.

Creating a Plan

Creating a plan that outlines your anticipated approach to the park planning process can help ensure that you're accounting for all necessary steps in the process and keep you on track as you get under way.

Your plan could include the anticipated steps of the process; expected approach to staffing; a preliminary overall schedule; a rough budget; initial ideas for when and how community outreach and engagement will occur; a list of potential challenges the project could face; or any other information that is critical to your park planning process.

The plan does not need to be a lengthy, complicated, or overly refined document. You may want to consider using bulleted lists, a timeline, or other diagrams to make the plan as useful to you as possible. You should anticipate revisiting your plan throughout the planning process as information is refined.

Developing Internal Support

Internal support is critical to the successful development of any park or open space plan, whether you work with a public agency or a nonprofit organization. Regardless of where the initial idea for planning a new park or open space project comes from, support from leadership will contribute greatly to the project's success.

Plan to meet with elected officials, the city manager, or your executive director (as applicable) to discuss the project and your anticipated approach as early in the process as feasible. You may learn that the project has the full support of leadership, and you can use this support to garner additional support and mobilize resources. Or, you may learn that your initial ideas for the project need additional refining before leadership can support the project.

Who Can Help You?

Even with a solid plan and the support of your agency or organization, most park and open space projects face a variety of challenges during the planning stage. You may want to consider developing strategic partnerships that offer resources and services that will help you face these challenges and successfully complete your project.

YOUR STAFF

Planning a park or open space project can be a complicated and multi-disciplinary task. You will likely need assistance from several different departments within your agency or organization. Consider working closely with staff familiar with community engagement, recreation or community services, master plans, siting and permitting, construction and maintenance, funding and accounting, project management, and communication.

RPOSD

RPOSD offers many resources to applicants. Every registered applicant and grantee is assigned a Grants Officer that is available to answer questions about your project to ensure it complies with Measure A funding requirements.

RPOSD also offers a variety of digital technical assistance resources, such as this handbook, to assist you throughout the planning process. Additionally, the RPOSD Technical Assistance Program continues to expand and will provide high-need and very-high-need communities with targeted resources. Visit RPOSD's Managing Your Measure A Grant page to view and download digital resources including:

- Grants Administration Manual for Measure A
- Measure A Basics Handbook
- Measure A Grant Writing Handbook

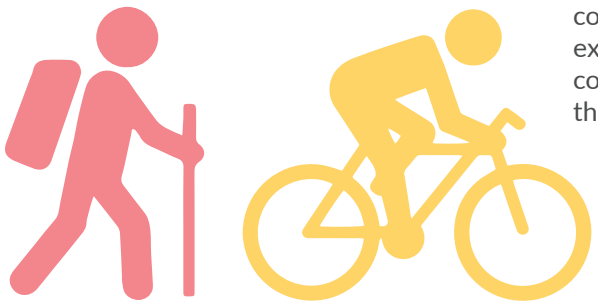
Contact your Grants Officer to learn more about the types of technical assistance that may be available to you and your agency.

COMMUNITY-BASED PARTNERS

Partnerships between public agencies and community-based organizations can support the park planning process. Community-based organizations may help public agencies connect with the community by developing appropriate outreach materials and participating in outreach efforts; facilitating engagement events; providing translation services; and providing direct connections to the community to ensure inclusive representation of local values and goals. Community-based organizations can benefit from the support of public agencies as they both work to improve community resources. Measure A funds can be used to work with community-based organizations.

CONSULTANTS

Developing a park project can be a slow and costly undertaking, particularly if you have limited staff capacity. To make this process more efficient, you may consider working with a consultant whose expertise can expedite the process. Consultants can assist you with developing comprehensive community engagement strategies as well as conducting community outreach and facilitating meetings and events. Consultants often work closely with community-based organizations and may relieve the burden of managing multiple organizations. In addition to outreach and engagement, consultants can help you during the park design and construction management phases of park development by offering expertise and staff that your agency or organization may not have. Hiring consultants does require funding, and Measure A funds may be used for this purpose.



ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

Community engagement can provide critical insights on residents' needs and how the project can meet those needs, while also communicating the requirements and resources your agency or organization is operating with. For example, if your agency has a policy that prevents the development of dog parks, it's important that the community understand the policy and why it's in place from the beginning of the project to avoid frustration, disappointment, and disillusionment.

Effective community engagement creates a transparent dialog that allows both community members and agency staff to understand the other's needs and constraints. Effective community engagement can also help build trust, improve communications, and create understanding of and support for a project from initiation through long term operation. As your agency or organization builds meaningful relationships with the community, your park projects are likely to deliver more of the types of benefits your community needs, becoming vibrant and well-used assets for the entire community.

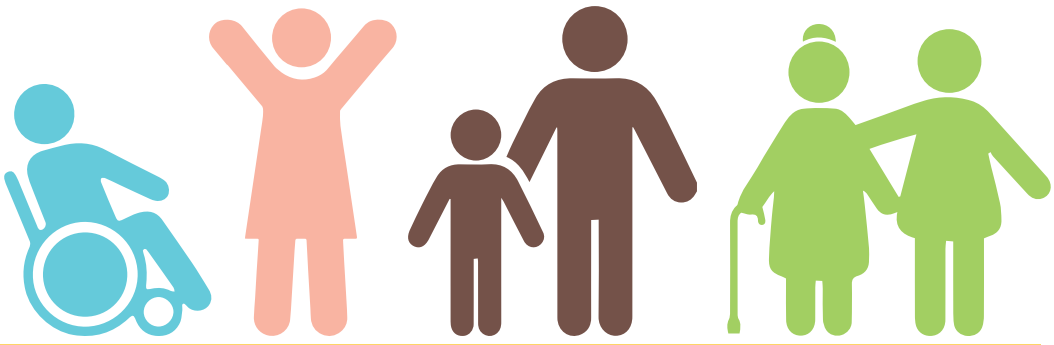
Measure A Requirements

Before you begin community outreach and engagement efforts for your project, it is important to understand Measure A grant program requirements for **outreach**, **engagement**, and **language access**. Projects that do not meet these minimum requirements may need to complete additional outreach and engagement in order to secure Measure A funding.

Outreach provides information to residents and informs them that a meeting, workshop, or other engagement event is scheduled. **Engagement** occurs when community members participate in a discussion—either by receiving information or providing input—about the project under consideration.

Language access provides translation and interpretation for linguistically isolated community members.

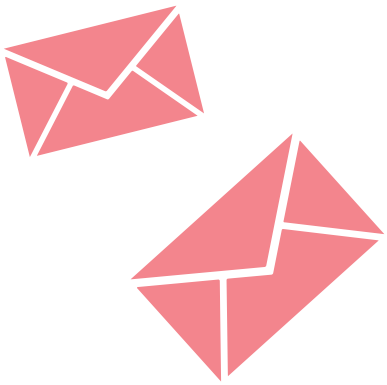
Engaging the **Community** is a key component of the park planning process and is required for **all** projects funded with Measure A grants.



OUTREACH METHODS

All community engagement must be preceded by robust outreach that encourages meaningful public participation and inclusive decision-making processes.

Measure A requires that you use at least one outreach method from each of the three categories listed below, for a minimum of three outreach methods per engagement event. Examples of some of the acceptable outreach methods are listed below each category for your reference. You may want to consider partnering with a local community-based organization for help selecting the most appropriate outreach methods for your community.

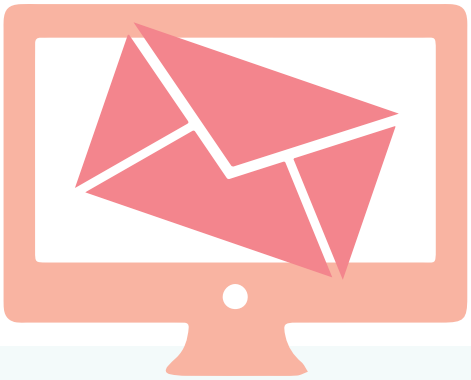


Online Media Outreach

- Email blasts
- Social media
- Publication on a website

Local Media Outreach

- Newsletters
- Local and regional newspapers
- Local radio and television



Grassroots Outreach

- Door-to-door canvassing
- Phone banking
- Surveys and focus groups
- Distribution of flyers or other printed materials

Important Tips:

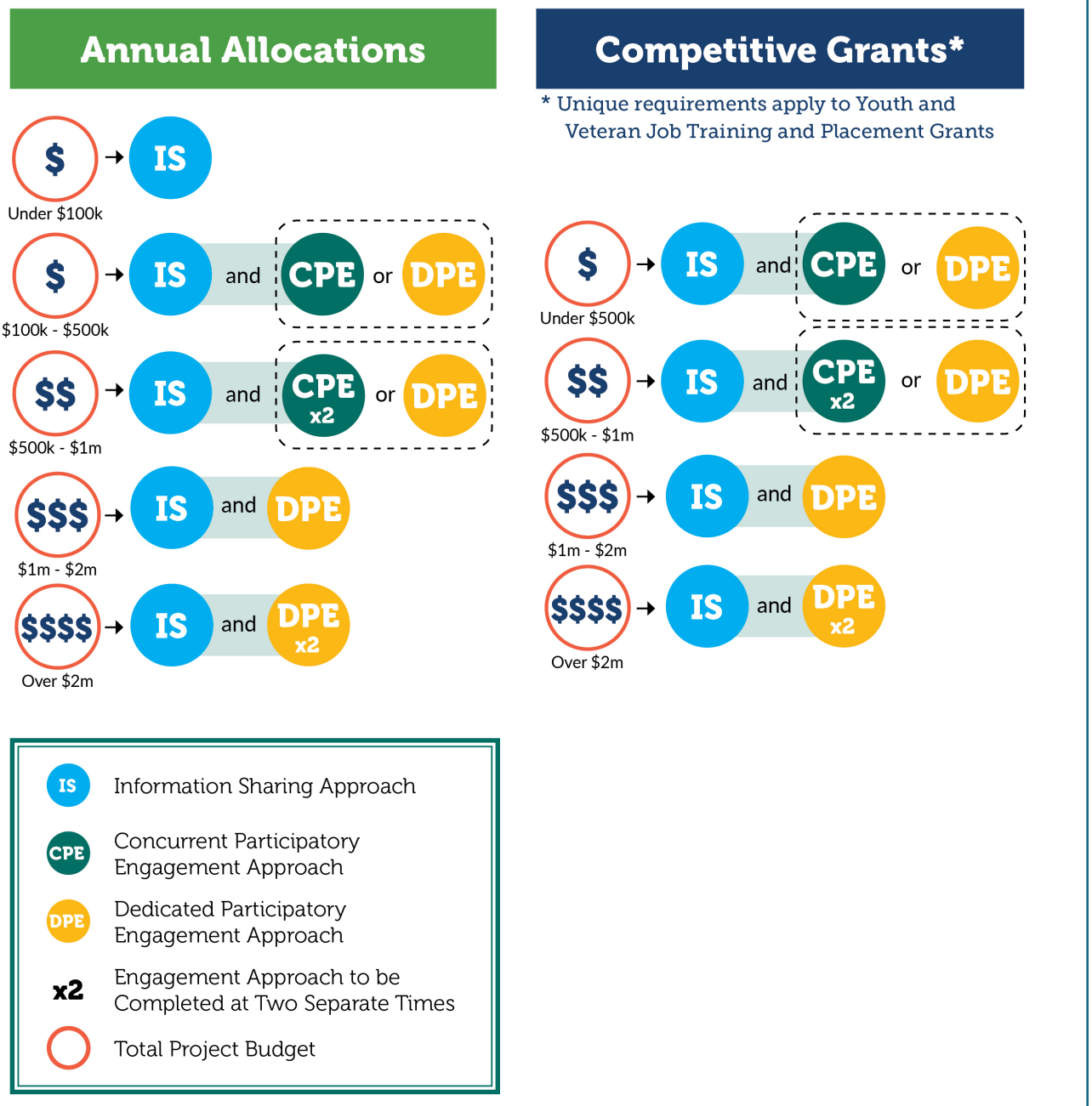
- If you have not started or completed community outreach and engagement for your project, you must be prepared to **report the status and plans** at the time of application.
- You can use **Measure A grant funds** to support your outreach and engagement efforts!

ENGAGEMENT APPROACHES

Measure A recognizes three distinct approaches to engagement, ranging from simply sharing information with community members to participatory approaches that seek robust input on a project. Engagement requirements are based on the project type and total project budget. Each engagement approach is summarized below and detailed in the Grants Administration Manual for Measure A (click on "Community Outreach and Engagement" and select Section 3.3.2).

Minimum Engagement Requirements

Find your funding type and total project budget to determine minimum community engagement requirements.



Information Sharing

Information Sharing (IS) is any type of engagement that educates and informs community members of potential and ongoing projects, facility needs and challenges, funding opportunities, and available programs and services. **IS** can occur at meetings, in the form of written communications such as newsletters or website posting, or through individual contact.

Concurrent Participatory Engagement

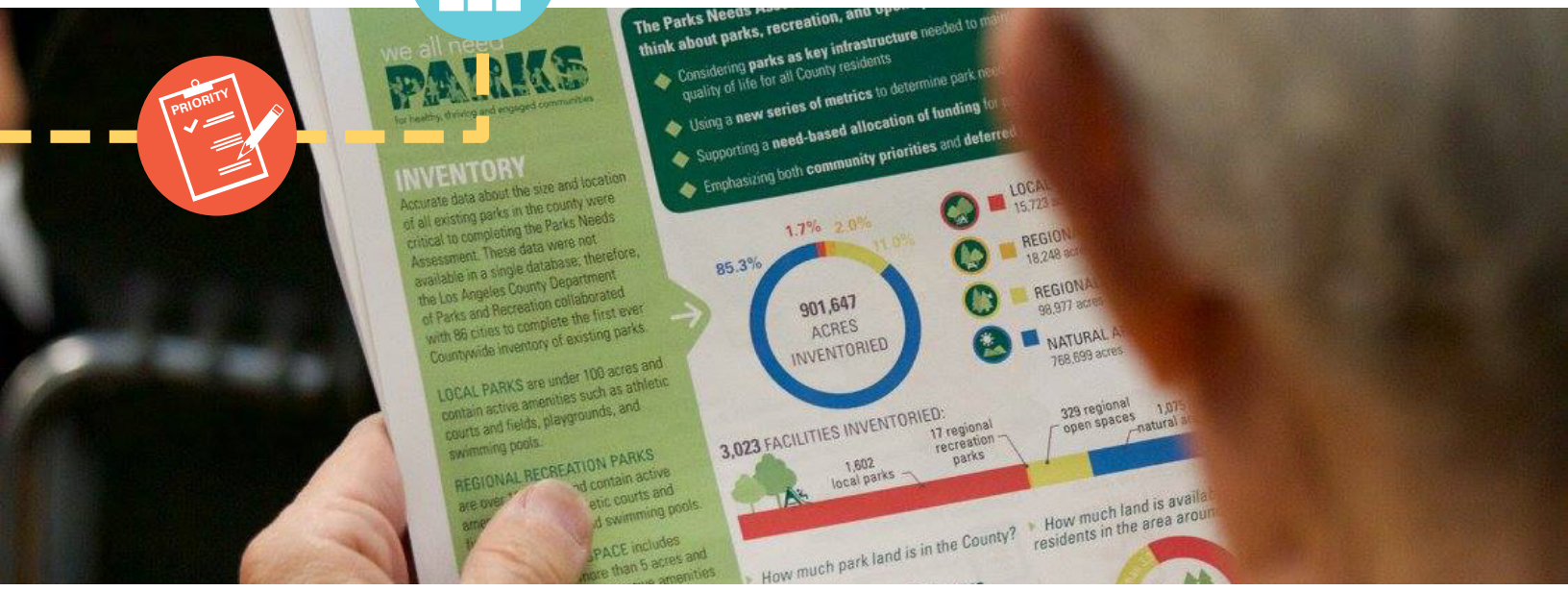
The **Concurrent Participatory Engagement (CPE)** approach actively seeks input from community members while allowing agencies the flexibility to discuss Measure A–funded projects and plans in conjunction with other public meetings or events.

CPE events may occur as part of any public meeting with multiple agenda items such as council, commission, or committee meetings where public input is invited; or at special community events such as festivals, fairs, or open houses where a table or booth may be set up for the engagement event.

Dedicated Participatory Engagement

The **Dedicated Participatory Engagement (DPE)** approach actively seeks input from community members and engages them in robust discussion while building strong, sustainable, authentic partnerships by enabling community members to identify needs and priorities and inform project decisions.

DPE events must focus entirely on parks and open space projects, plans, or priorities and may not include agenda items that do not pertain to specific projects, plans, or priorities. DPE events include but are not limited to: public workshops or meetings, design charrettes, collective design/ visioning, community mapping, model making, and participatory budgeting.



LANGUAGE ACCESS

When conducting community outreach and engagement, you must consider cultural and language needs to encourage participation from groups that typically face barriers to participation and are thus less likely to participate in the public process.

To ensure inclusive practices, all outreach and engagement conducted for Measure A-funded projects must adhere to **language access requirements**. Requirements are based on the percentage of linguistically isolated populations speaking a given language within a given Study Area.

Refer to the Grants Administration Manual for Measure A (click on "Appendices" and select Appendix D) to learn about the specific language access requirements for the Study Area in which you're working.

LANGUAGE ACCESS REQUIREMENTS		
TIER	**DEFINITION**	**REQUIREMENT**
Tier 1	**15% or more** of the population is linguistically isolated for any given language	Workshops and any in-person meetings must provide consecutive or simultaneous interpretation services. In addition, all written materials must be translated, including outreach materials, signage, agendas, and all other printed meeting materials.
Tier 2	**5–14.9%** of the population is linguistically isolated for any given language	Key written materials must be translated, including all printed meeting materials and at least one form of outreach. Workshops and any in-person meetings must provide consecutive or simultaneous interpretation services only if a specific request is received.
Tier 3	**1–4.9%** of the population is linguistically isolated for any given language	It is recommended (but not required) that outreach materials and printed meeting materials be translated.

DOCUMENTATION

Measure A grant applications require that you provide documentation of the outreach methods and engagement approaches used during the project.

Acceptable supporting documentation may include a combination of the following items: vendor invoices, outreach flyers, log of canvassing, media ads, other graphics; sign-in sheets; photos; activity sheets; public comment cards; and meeting minutes, staff reports, and other summary documents.

Best Practices for Community Outreach and Engagement

In addition to meeting the minimum Measure A requirements, it's important that your outreach and engagement efforts are authentic and inclusive. Using accepted best practices for outreach and engagement will help you meaningfully engage a diverse range of community members. Community participation in identifying, prioritizing, programming, and designing park and open space projects can strengthen your project, resulting in spaces that are strongly supported by the community. Best practices include engaging the community at the appropriate time; employing inclusive outreach methods; removing barriers to accessing engagement events; and incorporating feedback into project plans as described below. For helpful resources about outreach and engagement practices, visit RPOSD's Recommended Outside Resources (Outreach and Engagement).

ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY AT APPROPRIATE TIMES

Although the most appropriate time to engage the community will vary depending on the project type, it is important that community members have an opportunity to raise questions and offer suggestions when their input can still influence the outcome of the project. Consider these best practices when determining when to engage the community:

- Participants should be engaged during points in the project that allow them the opportunity to identify issues and needs; conceptualize project scopes; identify project goals; assess constraints, challenges, and opportunities; and influence the project outcomes.
- You may want to consider engaging the community during the initial visioning of the project and subsequent design phases; construction and project completion; and through ongoing programming.

EMPLOY INCLUSIVE OUTREACH METHODS

Your outreach efforts influence who participates in your engagement activities. Inclusive outreach can greatly increase the diversity of the community participating in your engagement activities.

- Inclusive outreach should seek to engage all people whose interests are affected by the project plans, including those groups who typically experience barriers to participation such as ethnic minorities, non–English speakers, and members of low-income communities. Culturally appropriate outreach conducted in multiple languages as needed can encourage participation from all community members.
- You may want to work with local community-based organizations to identify different community groups and members who should be proactively included in all outreach efforts.

REMOVE BARRIERS TO ACCESSING ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

To maximize opportunities to engage in the public process, you should mindfully remove any practical, financial, or cultural barriers to participation. Participation in engagement events by a broad spectrum of the community will benefit your project by ensuring that multiple viewpoints are incorporated, greatly increasing the likelihood that the project will be strongly supported by the community.

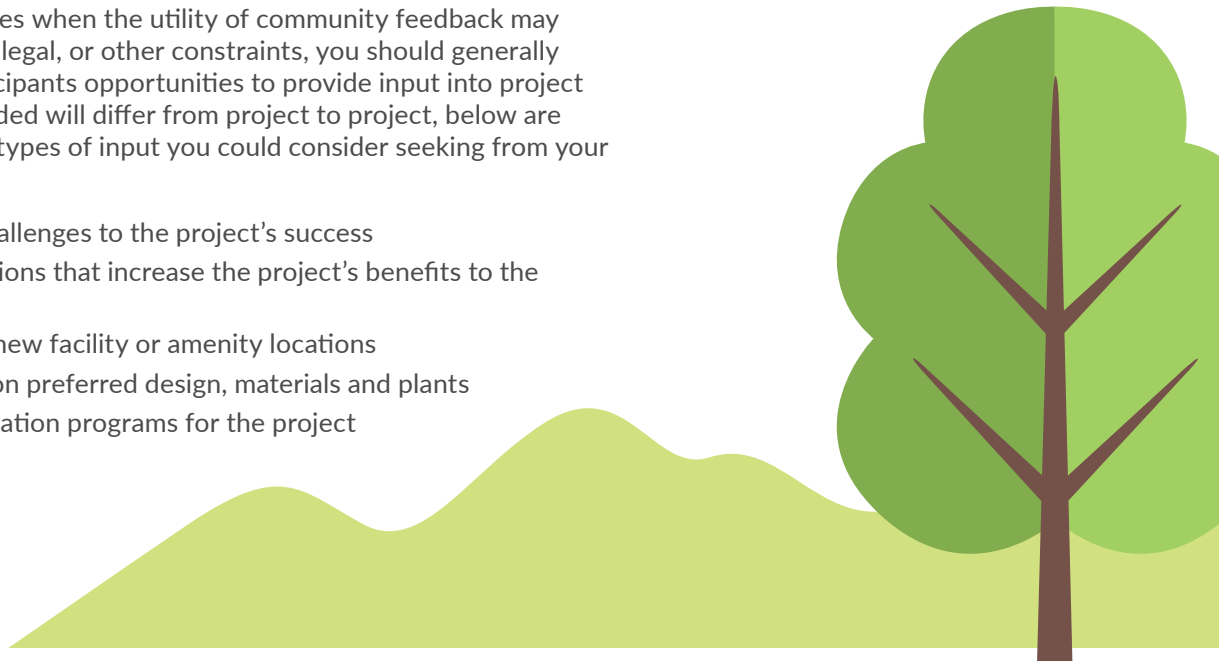
- Reduce **practical barriers** by selecting event locations that are easy to access by multiple modes of transportation; providing child-care services or kid-friendly engagement activities; providing easy-to-read wayfinding signs; scheduling meetings during weekends or evenings; using ADA compliant venues; providing adequate audio-visual devices; and providing refreshments if meetings are scheduled close to traditional meal times.
- Reduce **financial barriers** by providing free or reimbursed parking; providing free child-care services or child-friendly engagement activities; and avoiding scheduling meetings during traditional work hours.
- Reduce **cultural barriers** by providing language translation services; utilizing culturally relevant messaging; and partnering with community-based organizations who are familiar with the community's cultural sensitivities.

INCORPORATE COMMUNITY INPUT INTO PROJECT PLANS

Input from all community members should be actively sought during community engagement. Incorporating community input into project plans is essential to building a mutually beneficially and collaborative relationship between park owners and the communities they serve. Participants should always have a clear understanding of how their feedback will or will not be incorporated into project development and a general understanding of how policies and regulations may influence the project development.

Although there are cases when the utility of community feedback may be hampered by fiscal, legal, or other constraints, you should generally consider offering participants opportunities to provide input into project plans. While input needed will differ from project to project, below are some examples of the types of input you could consider seeking from your community:

- Identifying of challenges to the project's success
- Suggesting solutions that increase the project's benefits to the community
- Recommending new facility or amenity locations
- Providing input on preferred design, materials and plants
- Suggesting recreation programs for the project



FINDING FUNDING

It's important to begin considering funding for your park or open space project early on in the project's planning, as the amount of funding available can influence the project design and timeline. Measure A's multiple grant programs offer many funding opportunities, although these grants may not cover the entire cost of your project. If you are seeking funding for your park projects, consider the following:

Using Capital Improvement Project Funds

Often, comprehensive planning processes for general plans, park master plans, strategic plans, or other visioning efforts will result in the identification of high priority projects for inclusion in an agency's capital improvements plan (CIP). If your agency or organization has a CIP, consider working within that process to get funds allocated for your projects. Make sure you understand the requirements of your agency's or organization's CIP process, including timing considerations.

Sharing Measure A Funds

Public agencies with Study Areas receiving annual allocations may consider sharing these funds with agencies in adjacent Study Areas to fund projects that benefit both. Sharing funds in this manner can reduce the total cost of the project to each individual agency. For more information about sharing annual allocation funds, refer to the Grants Administration Manual for Measure A (click on "Annual Allocations" and select Section 2.1).

Partnering with Nonprofit Organizations

Public agencies may consider assigning their annual allocation funds to a nonprofit organization who is responsible for operating parks. This may assist your agency by freeing up staff capacity in the daily and ongoing operations and maintenance of a park.

Applying for Additional Grants

Projects with larger budgets may require funding from multiple sources. You may want to consider applying to federal, state, or private grant programs for additional funds. Start your research into these types of opportunities by visiting RPOSD's Recommended Outside Resources (Outside Funding Opportunities).

Phasing

Consider phasing your project if the budget exceeds the funding that you're able to identify. Measure A funds can be used for phased projects. Contact your Grants Officer for additional considerations for phased projects.

Important Tips:

- Many federal, state, and private grant programs require you to obtain **matching funds** from other sources.
- You may be able to use **Measure A funds**, including annual allocation funds, for this purpose!
- Be sure to check all relevant **grant requirements** to ensure there are no conflicts that would exclude Measure A funds from qualifying as matching funds.

SELECTING A SITE

Many park projects start with a site—for example, your community may ask for improvements at an existing park, or the community has identified an empty lot as a great location for a new park. Other park projects start without a site selected—you've learned of your community's needs, but the need could be met in a variety of locations.

If you have a good sense of your community's needs and the funding available to meet the need, but no site selected, consider the following:

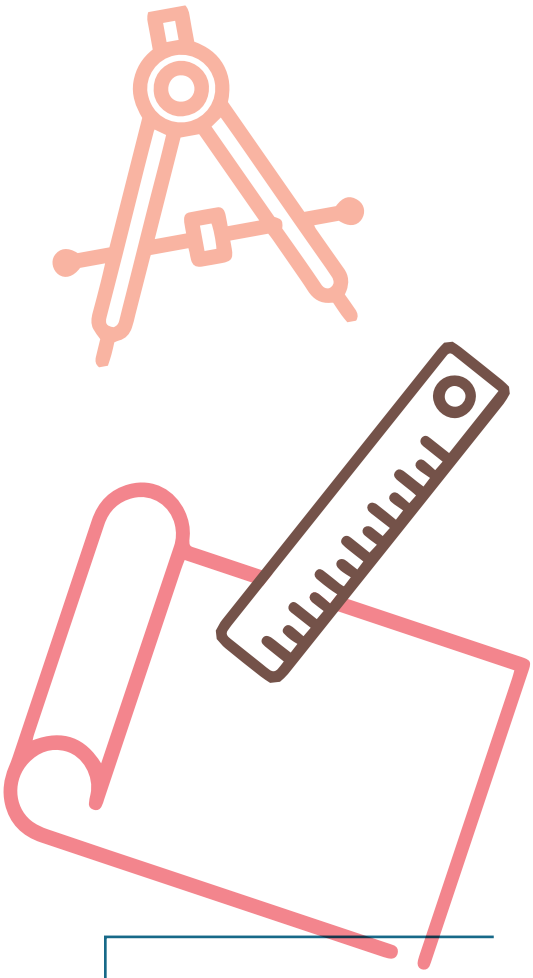
- **Locate your project in an existing park.** This may be a cost effective way to meet some community needs. For example, if your community needs safe walking paths, consider adding walking loops to your existing parks. Or consider renovating existing amenities to meet needs—a tennis court could be converted into a futsal court or a volleyball court could be converted to a fitness zone.
- **Build a new park on a site that's not currently a park.** If your community needs more park acreage, the site will have to be large enough to accommodate needs. Some communities will have vacant lots that could become parks, while other communities will need to consider converting an existing use into a park.
- **Develop creative partnerships for joint use and shared use.** Partnering with schools, hospitals, libraries, and other facilities with space can meet some community needs. Utility corridors, flood control channels, or alleys could also provide opportunities to meet park need.

Regardless of the site you choose for your park, you will need to conduct an initial feasibility study of the site to assess whether or not the site will meet your community's needs. The initial feasibility study should consider the following:

- **Availability.** If you're considering locating your project in an existing park, make sure the area you're considering is available for the use you have in mind. If you're considering building a new park on a site that's not already a park, you'll need to determine if the owner is willing to sell the land or provide a long-term lease and if the land can legally be used for a park. Keep in mind that all projects that use Measure A funds are required to be maintained and operated in perpetuity.
- **Location.** Is the site located in an area that will support the park project while meeting community needs? Consider zoning, pedestrian access, parking requirements, proximity to areas of need, community input, and any other requirements of your jurisdiction that are affected by project location.
- **Conditions.** Adverse site conditions can add expenses to park projects. If the site you're looking at may have soil or water contamination, it's important to understand these potential adverse conditions as early in the process as possible so that remediation can be budgeted for and completed. Alternatively, if your site supports important habitat it will be important to consider how your design will protect this habitat or mitigate its loss. If you're not sure if your site is contaminated or contains important habitat, consider completing a feasibility study to gather this information before moving forward. The information from this type of study can help influence acquisition and development decisions, funding needs, project timelines, and design.

Consult your **Study Area's profile** from the 2016 Parks Needs Assessment to get a clear understanding of the geography of park need in your Study Area.

DEVELOPING A DESIGN



Once you understand your community's broad needs, have initiated the task of securing funding, and have selected a site, you are ready to begin designing your park project. The design process develops creative solutions to the challenges of creating a park that meets community, environmental, and regulatory requirements by creatively synthesizing information from many sources. Moving from ideas and visions to a built reality generally involves a series of iterative efforts that each generate, develop, and evaluate various design solutions.[13]

Although the exact process will vary in each jurisdiction and for each project, the following phases are commonly included in the process of designing a park and are described in more detail below:

- Conceptual Design
- Schematic Design
- Design Development
- Construction Documents

It is important to keep the public involved throughout the design process to ensure a transparent, collaborative, and equitable process that results in a successful project. Although the type of engagement will vary throughout the design process, continued community engagement helps ensure that the completed project meets the expressed desires and needs of local residents.

Well-designed parks can contribute to improved health of community members, create community cohesion, contribute environmental benefits, and provide economic advantages. For resources on best practices in park design, visit RPOSD's Recommended Outside Resources (Park Design).

Your agency or organization

may have a standard approach to the design process that needs to be followed for park design. This process may contain a different number of phases, or the phases may have different names.

There is no single "correct" way to move through the park design process: the following information is intended to inform your understanding of the design process, not dictate how it should be done.

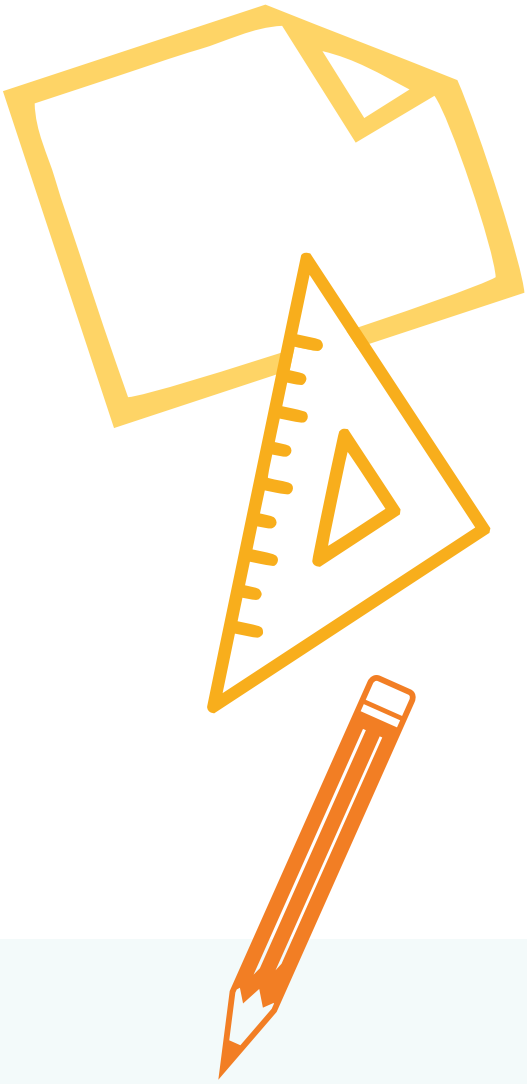
Although it is possible for park agencies to complete the design process using in-house staff, many agencies and organizations prefer to hire consultants with demonstrated expertise in the process to help ensure an efficient and effective process that results in a successfully completed project. Consultants may include landscape architects, architects, civil engineers, geotechnical engineers, surveyors, electrical engineers, or ecologists. Consultants may assist with the entire design process or specific phases of the project.

Conceptual Design

The **conceptual design** process synthesizes information about the site and community input to develop a comprehensive design for the project.

Conceptual design defines the type of use the project will support, how the project will relate to the surrounding built environment, and what the project might look like. During this phase, information from existing plans, documents, and studies is synthesized with community input to develop an initial design for the project. Conceptual design may initially include more than one alternative for the design, but a single concept should be agreed upon before moving into the next phase. The final products of this phase may include high-level site planning diagrams documenting opportunities, constraints, or locations of various uses; inspirational imagery; documentation of project goals and requirements, potential amenities, an initial cost estimate, and a project timeline.

Community engagement is critical at this stage of design to ensure that the vision for the project is aligned with the community's needs to the greatest extent possible. You may want to consider hosting design charrettes, site walks, open houses, or pop-up events to ensure deep engagement during this phase.



Important Tips:

- Design decisions can impact maintenance and operations requirements as well as programming possibilities.
- You may want to consider including park maintenance and recreation staff as well as the public safety staff in the design process to make sure their perspectives are understood.

Key Considerations:

- **Community Input.** Understanding the community's concerns and desired outcomes is critical to developing a design that maximizes the potential benefits of your project.
- **Existing Plans and Documentation.** Existing plans for parks and open spaces in the community and information about community need may influence the type of project that is feasible and desirable on the site.
- **Site Feasibility Study.** Physical opportunities and constraints identified during preliminary studies will help the community, park designers, and project managers understand the unique conditions of the site and develop approaches that maximize the project's potential for success.
- **Operations, Maintenance, and Programming.** Anticipated operations and maintenance requirements for new and existing uses should be considered while developing the initial conceptual design, as should desired recreation programming.
- **Budget.** You will need to carefully balance the cost of what the community wants with the likelihood of securing the amount of funding required to build it and maintain it for the long-term. You may need to consider phasing the park construction or asking the community to prioritize their needs.

Remember that the **design process** is unique for every project: some projects may include different elements in each phase or skip some phases entirely.

Schematic Design

The **schematic design** process advances the conceptual design and begins providing solutions to challenges discovered during conceptual design.

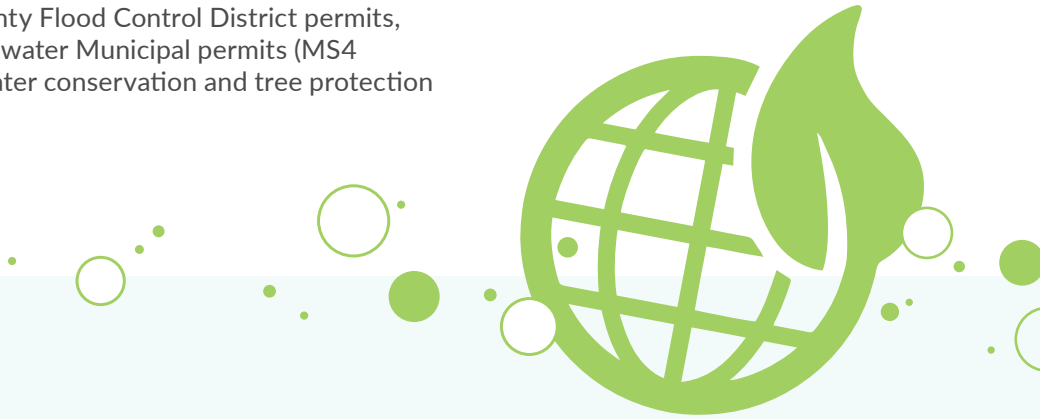
Schematic design focuses on how the physical elements of the design relate to each other and how these relationships affect use. During the schematic design phase, a deeper understanding of the physical properties of all proposed park elements contribute to a refinement of the park design that considers spatial relationships, scale, and form of elements in the park to a more specific level. This work often involves evaluating and refining the ideas generated in conceptual design. The final products of this phase may include a site plan with all desired elements, product cutsheets, and an updated cost estimate.

While a CEQA analysis and document cannot be completed until the project location, components and potential impacts are known, it is recommended that all projects consider the anticipated CEQA review process during the early planning phases. This is advantageous because it may help in minimizing potential environmental impacts during the planning and design phase, and helps ensure that the project schedule incorporates the anticipated CEQA review process. For more information about the CEQA process, visit RPOSD's Recommended Outside Resources (CEQA Requirements).

Community engagement is important during schematic design to ensure that proposed design solutions adequately meet the community's needs. You may want to consider hosting open house or pop-up events to gather feedback on proposed solutions.

Key Considerations:

- **Spatial Relationships, Scale, and Form.** Physical relationships between all proposed park elements should be carefully considered to ensure a built project that invites use while meeting needs.
- **Technical Requirements.** A basic understanding of the technical requirements of each park element is required at this phase to limit unexpected challenges and ensure that all elements will function as envisioned. These requirements may range from water and power needs to codes and regulations that govern the project.
- **Community Input.** Ongoing communication and information sharing to inform and obtain continued feedback from the community, especially on proposed solutions to design challenges, should be incorporated into the schematic design.
- **Additional Environmental Permits.** Additional environmental design regulations and permits that may apply include LA County Stormwater Ordinance, LA County Flood Control District permits, Los Angeles Water Board Stormwater Municipal permits (MS4 permits), and local landscape water conservation and tree protection ordinances.



Important:

- Environmental assessments are mandated by and should be prepared in accordance with the **California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)**.
- An Initial Study outlines potential impacts of the project; if it is determined that the project will not have a significant impact upon the environment or the impact can be reduced to insignificant levels, it qualifies for a Negative Declaration or Mitigated Negative Declaration. An Environmental Impact Report is required if the project may have a significant impact on the environment.

Design Development

The **design development** phase builds on the work completed during schematic design by refining technical details related to project systems, materials and products, costs, and schedules.

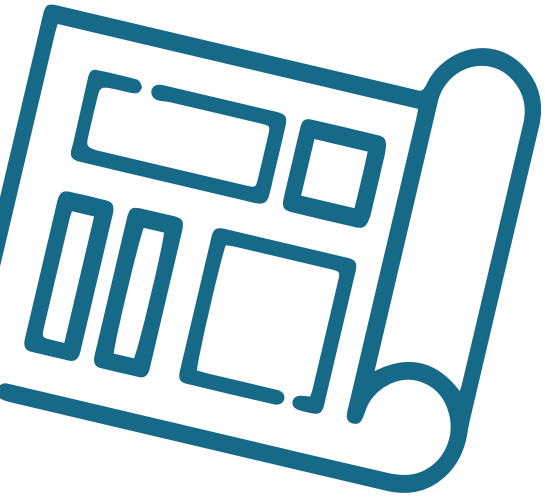
Design development continues the process of resolving challenges by developing more detailed information about the proposed project elements. Technical details about required systems, materials, and products are incorporated into the design to a greater degree and building materials and products are further researched. Final products of this phase may include a final site plan, product cutsheets, plant and material palettes, and revised cost estimates.

Community engagement during the design development phase includes sharing information with the community through illustrative sketches and renderings, and gathering input on less technical elements of the plan. As the design process proceeds and focuses on the more technical aspects of the project, the number of elements open to community input often decreases.

Key Considerations:

- **Systems.** All required project systems, such as drainage, irrigation, power, and lighting should be identified to ensure that each can be addressed during the next phase.
- **Materials and Products.** Maintenance requirements, durability, and aesthetics of materials and products should be carefully considered to ensure that physical forms meet expectations. Planting materials should also be carefully considered in this phase and a plant palette developed.
- **Costs and Schedule.** With the refined information developed during this phase, cost estimates and schedules should be further refined.

Construction Documents



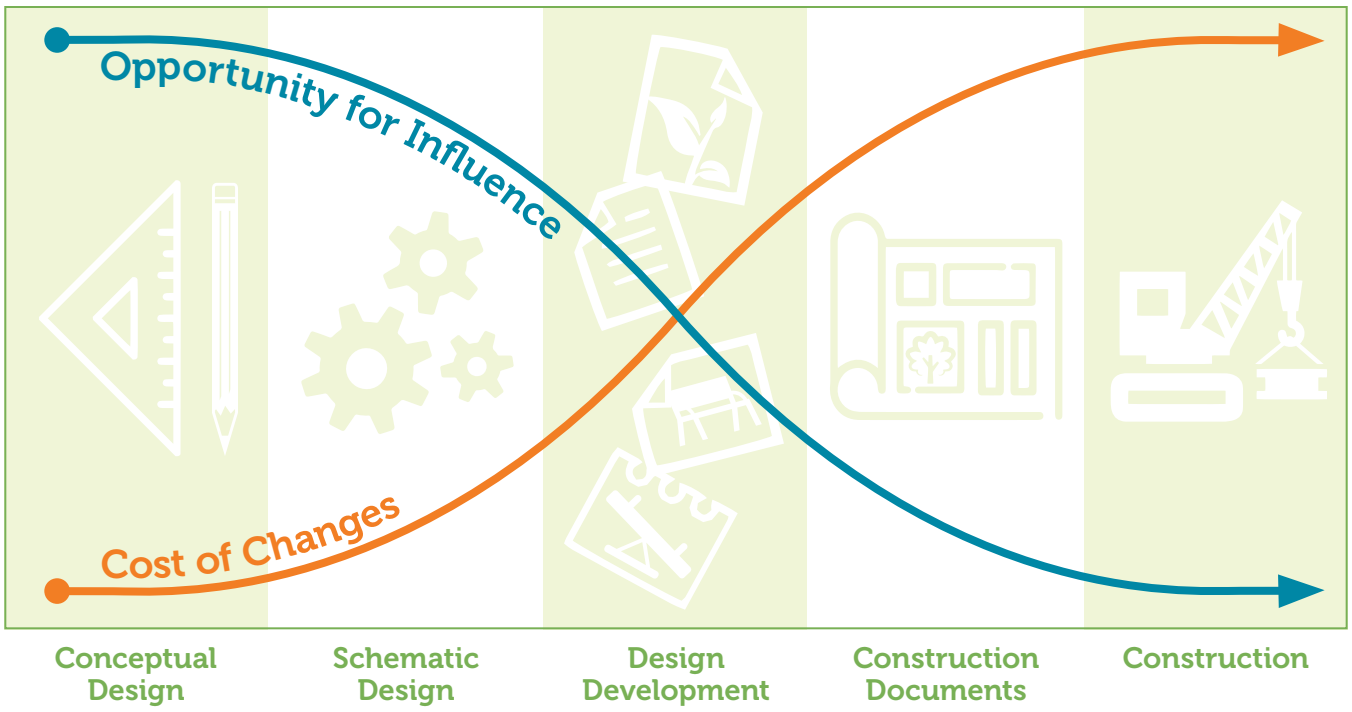
The **construction documents** (CDs) translate the design into the technical drawings and specifications that are used to permit and construct the park.

CDs are typically developed in stages to ensure that the evolution of the design in this phase remains true to the overall vision for the project. During this phase the small details of every element of the project, from benches to irrigation systems, are developed and finalized through coordination between the project owner, designers, engineers, and product manufacturers. Final products of this phase will include a complete set of technical drawings that are detailed enough for any contractor to build the project, written technical specifications for all materials and products, a final cost estimate, and a project construction schedule.

Community engagement during this phase is generally limited due to the technical nature of the work.

Key Considerations:

- **Coordination and communication.** Thorough coordination and communication between all disciplines working on the CDs is critical to the successful construction of the project. Good coordination reduces the number of unforeseen issues that occur during construction, and improves the accuracy of cost estimates. When it occurs at the beginning of the CD phase, coordination can have large positive impacts on project outcomes, including cost.
- **Thoroughness.** The construction documents are reviewed by contractors prior to bidding on a project, and during the construction phase. Any items not included in the CDs will not be bid on or constructed, so it's critical that every aspect of the design be documented in the CDs.
- **Permitting.** The CDs are used to secure building permits and other permits that may be required in your jurisdiction. In general, the team working on the CDs is also responsible for securing these permits



The importance of timing for community input, coordination, and communication

In general, towards the beginning of the lifecycle of a project, costs associated with project changes are relatively low, while the opportunity to influence project design and construction is quite high. This is the most effective time for community input and general coordination between design disciplines.

Costs associated with changes that are made towards the end of the lifecycle of a project are relatively high, and the opportunity to influence project design and construction is very low.

MANAGING THE CONSTRUCTION/ DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Once your CDs are done, you are ready to begin building your project. This starts with the bidding and contracting process, includes the construction of the project, and finishes up with a celebration of the opening of your project.

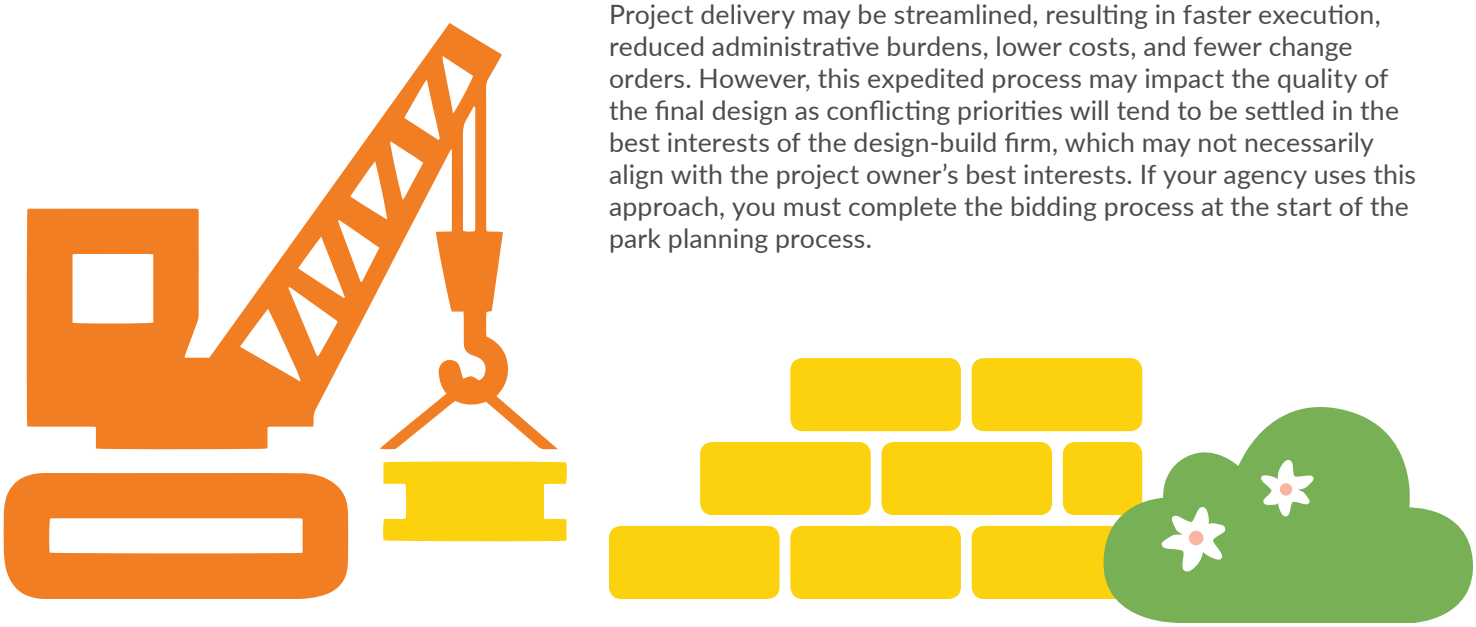
Bidding and Contracting

The **bidding** process allows the project owner to select the best contractor(s) for managing and constructing the project and is followed by a process to contract with the selected firm to complete the work described in the bid documents.

In general, the **bidding** process includes the issuance of a Request for Bids and a bid set of CDs. In addition to the complete set of CDs, the materials provided to potential bidders may include the project purpose, scope of work, and attachments regarding other requirements of the jurisdiction. There are several different approaches to the **bidding** process, and it's likely that your agency or organization has already determined the approach that works best for them.

The most common approaches to the bidding process that help ensure the project stays on time, within budget, and meets quality and performance requirements are:

- **Design-Bid-Build.** In this approach, the project owner hires one firm for design work and a separate firm for construction work. Owners often have more control of the design and construction in this approach, which can increase ease of implementation, but may be at risk for higher construction costs if there are design errors.
- **Design-Build.** The project owner contracts with a single firm to complete both design and construction for a single fee for all work. Project delivery may be streamlined, resulting in faster execution, reduced administrative burdens, lower costs, and fewer change orders. However, this expedited process may impact the quality of the final design as conflicting priorities will tend to be settled in the best interests of the design-build firm, which may not necessarily align with the project owner's best interests. If your agency uses this approach, you must complete the bidding process at the start of the park planning process.



- **Construction Management at Risk.** As in the design-bid-build approach, different firms handle design and construction. However, the construction manager joins the project at the beginning before designs are developed, often working closely with the designers during the design process. The benefits of this approach to the project owner include greater cost control, reduced risk, and superior project management. On the negative side, the owner must cede some control to the construction manager who may have to balance conflicting priorities. If your agency or organization uses this approach, you must complete the bidding process at the start of the park planning process.

Community engagement during the bidding process is limited to advertising the request for bids.

Key Considerations:

- **Request for Bids.** You will need to determine what information to include in the Request for Bids. You may need to work with your procurement, contracting, and or legal departments to ensure that your Request for Bids meets all agency or organization requirements.
- **Selection Process.** Construction procurement is generally divided into four types: lowest bid, traditional, integrated, and negotiated and managed. Prior to initiating a competitive bidding process, you will need to determine which process to use. This may be dictated by the rules and regulations of your agency or organization.
- **Contracting.** Once the bidding is concluded, you will need to work with your contracting and accounting departments to execute the contract. The most common types of contracts include cost plus fee (all supplies, labor, and additional contractor profit); guaranteed maximum price; time and materials (price based on time and materials); fixed price; and target price (contractor tries to meet or come in below the price). It is likely that the type of contract will be predetermined by your agency or organization.

Construction

The **construction** phase is when the project is built. All construction is based on the requirements specified in the CDs.

The **construction** work is often divided into different phases to help track progress, ensure the project is built to the plan specifications, and resolve any issues that may arise. Project managers are usually responsible for subcontractor approvals, submittals, change orders, and payments. Construction staff oversee daily operations of the project and should submit weekly progress reports to your agency or otherwise meet your agency's documentation requirements.

Community engagement during construction includes providing updates on the project schedule and progress. Consider holding a groundbreaking ceremony, or sharing photos and videos of construction progress on social media and at community meetings to maintain support for the project. RPOSD can assist you by advertising your ceremony on their social media channels—be sure you follow the timing requirements outlined in the Grants Administration Manual for Measure A (click on "Application, Grant Administration & Project Delivery" and select Section 3.4.5).

Key Considerations:

- **Construction Administration.** The project owner should be in regular contact with the construction team to ensure that construction is being completed in accordance with the CDs, approve the quality of materials and workmanship, help solve any construction issues that may arise, and observe the pace of progress.

Celebrating Success!

Once your project is complete, it's time to celebrate! An opening celebration encourages everyone involved in the project to admire what they have accomplished and is required by most Measure A grant programs. Acknowledging the work of community members, partners, funders, and elected officials and highlighting how they contributed to the creation of a new community resource can strengthen and nurture these partnerships.

Measure A grantees must coordinate with their Grants Officer to ensure RPOSD representation at all ceremonies and celebrations. RPOSD will provide social media support to help promote the event, as long as requests for social media support are made at least four weeks in advance.

OPERATING AND MAINTAINING YOUR PROJECT

Measure A-funded projects have long term obligations that vary from grant program to grant program, as detailed in the Grants Administration Manual for Measure A (click on "Application, Grant Administration & Project Delivery" and select Section 3.4.5). For development projects, these obligations include ensuring that the project remains accessible to the public in the future. An Operations and Maintenance Plan can help you meet this obligation. This plan should identify the estimated cost of maintenance and operations as well as the agencies and/or organizations who are responsible for these costs.

Although this type of formal plan or strategy is not required by RPOSD, taking this step can help ensure that your project is compliant with Measure A requirements and continues to meet the community's needs well into the future.

Remember that Measure A's Maintenance and Servicing program can **provide funds** for the increased maintenance costs of projects planned, designed, or built with Measure A funds.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Operations and Maintenance Plan establishes standards and guidelines that support the purpose of the new park or open space project. It is used by volunteers, employees, and administrative staff to understand, budget for, and implement the day-to-day and long-term maintenance and operations of the facility. The plan guides the frequency of maintenance, including a schedule to ensure facilities are clean, safe, and accessible for all users; and provides specific rules and policies that affect management of the park. Standards should be reviewed periodically and updated as necessary so the park continues to support high-quality recreational opportunities.

WHAT TO CONSIDER INCLUDING IN THE PLAN

If your agency or organization has developed operations and maintenance plans for other parks, you can model your plan on these. The plan does not have to be extensive, but should establish standards that promote safety and access and ensure compliance with Measure A's long term obligations. You may want to collaborate closely with your maintenance staff when developing an Operations and Maintenance Plan for your project. Consider including the following information in your plan:

Maintenance

- **Responsibilities.** This is a list of the basic tasks required to maintain the project. These tasks are determined by the elements present in the park or open space. For example, trash removal, restroom cleaning and repairs, lawn care, irrigation system repairs, and tree pruning are common maintenance responsibilities in most developed parks.

- **Schedule.** The schedule ensures consistent upkeep and monitoring of the project. Schedules may be organized as a calendar, matrix, or frequency list. The more detailed the schedule is, the easier it is to organize maintenance staffs' daily duties.
- **Standards.** The standards clarify to what level each element of the project must be maintained. Some of these standards are required to maintain health and safety of park visitors while others address aesthetic or functional aspects of the park. The standards can also include inspection requirements that help maintenance staff understand whether or not the standard is being met.

Operations

- **Organization Structure and Staffing.** Includes information about the administrative staff, recreation staff, maintenance staff, and volunteers necessary for the park to operate efficiently; hours required from each on a weekly or monthly basis; and responsibilities for each position.
- **Energy and Water Efficiency.** Guidelines that promote water and energy efficient practices without compromising the safety and comfort of staff and users.
- **Safety and Security/Risk Management.** Identifies public safety service provider, and sets standards that ensure park maintenance and program facilitation promote staff and user safety. May include or complement existing risk management safety initiatives, such as ongoing safety training for staff.
- **Contractors and Leased Equipment.** If the project will contract for services and/or equipment, it's important to establish hiring policies, standards, and insurance requirements.
- **Budget.** Outline of anticipated capital and labor costs including equipment, salaries, and other maintenance-related costs. You may want to consider budgeting several years into the future, to help prepare for larger anticipated costs, such as replacing worn out equipment.
- **Funding Mechanism.** Sustainable funding sources that allow the park to operate in the short and long term. In addition to your agency's or organization's regular budget, consider donations from private individuals or groups (including in kind donations) and Measure A Maintenance and Servicing funds.

HOW TO USE THE PLAN

The plan will guide maintenance, inspection, and administrative activities to ensure the park operates safely and efficiently. Maintenance supervisors may use the plan when assigning daily/weekly general maintenance duties, as well as during safety inspections to identify and address any issues. Administrative staff may use the plan to monitor operations and management of the park, ensuring consistently well-managed activities and facilities that meet the community's needs. The plan should be updated regularly to ensure that it accurately represents and fully supports the park or open space over time. Consider incorporating community input on maintenance and operations into these updates.

Measure A includes grant funds to support the ongoing maintenance and servicing of projects funded by either Measure A or Proposition A. For more information, refer to the Grants Administration Manual for Measure A (click on "Maintenance and Servicing Funds" and select Sections 2.3, 2.3.1, and 2.3.2).

REFERENCES

1. K. R. Evenson, F. Wen, A. Hillier, and D.A. Cohen, "Assessing the Contribution of Parks to Physical Activity Using Global Positioning System and Accelerometry," *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise* 45, no. 10 (October 2013).
2. Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, "Parks and Public Health in Los Angeles County: A Cities and Communities Report," May 2016.
3. J. Wolch, et al., "Childhood Obesity and Proximity to Urban Parks and Recreational Resources: A Longitudinal Cohort Study, *Health and Place* 16, no. 3 (2010): 137–57.
4. K. L. Wolf, and E. Housely, *Feeling Stressed? Take a Time Out in Nature*, (Annapolis, MD: The TKF Foundation, 2013); R. Sturm and D. A. Cohen, "Proximity to Urban Parks and Mental Health," *Journal of Mental Health Policy and Economics* 17, no. 1 (March 2014).
5. Frances E. Kuo et al., "Fertile Ground for Community: Inner-City Neighborhood Common Spaces," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 26, no. 6 (1998).
6. American Planning Association, "How Cities use Parks for Climate Change Management," City Parks Forum Briefing Papers, 2007.
7. American Planning Association, "How Cities use Parks for Climate Change Management," City Parks Forum Briefing Papers, 2007.
8. Paul Sherer, "The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More Parks and Open Space," The Trust for Public Land, 2006.
9. Matthew Shepperd, Mace Vaughn, and Scott Hoffman Black, Pollinator Friendly Parks, The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, Portland, OR, 2008.
10. K. R. Evenson, F. Wen, A. Hillier, and D. A. Cohen, "Assessing the Contribution of Parks to Physical Activity Using Global Positioning System and Accelerometry," *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise* 45, no. 10 (October 2013); Deborah Cohen et al., "The Potential for Pocket Parks to Increase Physical Activity," *American Journal of Health Promotion* 28 (2014): S19–S26; Peter Harnik, Jessica Sargent, and Jennifer Plowden, "Economic Benefits of the Public Park and Recreation System in the City of Los Angeles, California," The Trust for Public Land, 2017.
11. Peter Harnik, Jessica Sargent, and Jennifer Plowden, "Economic Benefits of the Public Park and Recreation System in the City of Los Angeles, California," The Trust for Public Land, 2017.
12. National Recreation and Park Association, "Why Parks and Recreation Are Essential Public Services," January 2010, accessed April 30, 2019, https://www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/nrpa.org/Advocacy/Resources/Parks-Recreation-Essential-Public-Services-January-2010.pdf.
13. Gottfredson, John A. "Design Process in Landscape Architecture: Developing a Learning Guide for the Design Workshop Archives at Utah State University" (2014). All Graduate Plan B and other Reports. 378. http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/gradreports/378

This page is intentionally blank.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY
REGIONAL PARK AND
OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

MEASURE A

626.588.5060 • info@RPOSD.lacounty.gov • RPOSD.LACounty.gov