

Achieving Best-Managed Goals Through Strategic Capital Planning and Portfolio Management

The City of Austin spends approximately \$650 million each year on its Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The CIP touches nearly every department within the City organization—be it Parks and Recreation, Health and Human Services or Neighborhood Housing and Community Development—and affects citizens’ quality of life. Through well-planned and properly maintained infrastructure, we are providing an essential service to Austinites.

The Capital Planning Office (CPO) was established in 2010 to create a more robust, comprehensive and integrated CIP that supports the City’s planning goals and priorities.

CAPITAL PLANNING OFFICE SERVICES

The Capital Planning Office helps achieve the City’s goal of being best managed by striving to achieve organizational objectives and performance goals through the Capital Improvement Program. The role the Capital Planning Office plays in portfolio management can be found in more than half of all organizations, according to the Project Management Institute, and helps capture enhanced value in the CIP as well as provide better outcomes for the community.

CPO’s approach, initiatives and services are guided by industry standards and practices established by professional organizations such as the Government Finance Officers’ Association, the International City and County Management Association and the Project Management Institute.

CPO provides services in four main areas: planning, coordination, bond development and oversight, and communication.

PLANNING

CPO assists in the development of the Capital Improvement Program from an organizational perspective. The primary planning tool is the Long-Range CIP Strategic Plan (LRCSP), which is produced by the Capital Planning Office each year and developed with the help of departments throughout the organization. The Planning Commission uses the LRCSP as the vehicle to make its annual recommendation to the City Manager about projects necessary or desirable to implement the comprehensive plan, per its role in the City Charter.

COORDINATION

CPO participates in and leads inter-departmental coordination efforts aimed at more strategic and effective capital improvement outcomes. CPO also liaises with other government agencies on long-range CIP planning initiatives to determine where there are opportunities for improved alignment of

What we achieve through long-range planning

The Long-Range CIP Strategic Plan provides value in a variety of ways.

- 1) The Rolling Needs Assessment, a key element of the LRCSP, improves transparency and understanding of capital needs citywide and articulates these to decision-makers in preparation for future funding and leveraging opportunities.
- 2) The Strategic Investment Areas Analysis shows the geospatial overlap of organizational initiatives as well as identified capital needs and is a tool for identifying opportunities for strategic CIP investments.
- 3) The Comprehensive Infrastructure Assessment assembles and analyzes information about the condition of the City’s capital assets across the array of infrastructure categories to inform CIP priorities.
- 4) The LRCSP creates a stronger link between the City’s Comprehensive Plan and the Capital Improvement Program.

investments and leveraging to the benefit of local taxpayers.

BOND DEVELOPMENT AND OVERSIGHT

CPO manages the development of general obligation bond programs that City Council ultimately considers for placement on an election ballot. CPO also provides management and oversight of the City's existing voter-approved bond programs, which includes assistance with project sequencing, development of spending milestones and ongoing monitoring of progress. CPO performs these activities to ensure that bond programs meet community outcomes and expectations as approved by the voters.

An important component of CPO's monitoring role is to provide information on status and progress of the City's CIP and voter-approved bond programs to City Council, City management and the public throughout bond program implementation.

Enhanced Outcomes

Capital Planning Office efforts result in:

- Communication of unfunded projects earlier in the planning stages, leading to better project scopes, enhanced internal coordination and public transparency
- Coordination and streamlining of multi-agency efforts as well as the identification of potential coordination opportunities
- Delivery of projects that meet multiple needs using fewer tax-supported funds
- Organizational framework to consistently identify capital projects for future funding over the long term
- Ongoing reporting on bond-funded projects/programs, enhancing public understanding and trust
- Informs the development of the Five-Year CIP Plan and the Capital Budget

COMMUNICATION

CPO supports the City's open government goals by providing information, reports and updates about the Capital Improvement Program to internal and external stakeholders. Information ranges from basic profile information about the Capital Improvement Program, frequently asked questions, realities of CIP implementation and voter information about upcoming bond elections.

CAPITAL PLANNING: THE BIG PICTURE

Capital Planning Office initiatives do not replace or supersede departmental operations related to planning and implementing the CIP. Each department is responsible for balancing key drivers of the CIP, such as City Council priorities, urgent needs, public input and planning priorities, to decide which projects to put forth each year for inclusion in the Capital Budget.

The Capital Planning Office takes the "30,000-foot view" by providing the tools necessary to identify strategic capital investments, or projects that deliberately implement the City's comprehensive plan and other City priorities. Strategic investments generally include innovative approaches to service delivery, responses to specific City Council- and City Manager-identified capital program priorities or projects that extend beyond the work of any one City department.

CPO's organization-wide view allows us to help identify partnering opportunities and maintain big-picture goals regarding public expectations, bond program completion and policy objectives.

REPORTING AND INFORMATION RESOURCES

CPO website (www.austintexas.gov/cip): As a portal to the CIP, the website contains information about voter-approved bond programs, CPO services and answers to frequently asked questions.

CIVIC (www.austintexas.gov/CIVIC): The Capital Improvements Visualization, Information and Communication website is an online portal featuring an interactive map containing active capital improvement projects funded by recent bond programs.

Long-Range CIP Strategic Plan (www.austintexas.gov/strategicplan): The Long-Range CIP Strategic Plan bridges recommendations of long-range plans, such as the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan, and capital projects.

Capital Planning Office News

eNewsletter: Distributed monthly, the newsletter contains updates on capital projects and announcements about open houses, ribbon cutting ceremonies and other events related to the CIP. Sign up at www.austintexas.gov/cip.

The following reports are available on the CPO website (www.austintexas.gov/CIP) under 'documents.'

Bond Programs Report: This quarterly report has project updates and status information about the City's voter-approved bond programs.

CIP Annual Report: The CIP Annual Report includes statistical information about the CIP, data on voter-approved bond program spending as well as highlights from the prior fiscal year. ■