

The Role of Political and Financial Factors in the Provision of Parks: The Case of Logan City, Queensland

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Abstract: Researchers have found that open space provision (e.g. parkland) is vitally important for meeting the social, economic and environmental needs of urban populations globally. The international literature on park provision identifies many factors that influence a local government's ability to provide adequate parkland including political agendas, governance tools and resources. This paper draws upon a conceptual model devised through a systematic review of the open space literature to critically examine the challenges for the City of Logan in providing adequate parkland to support its urban population. Recent legislative changes in Queensland mean significantly less developer funding is available to support the provision of parkland for Logan residents. This paper addresses three important questions: (i) What is the current approach to planning for green space in Logan? (ii) What are some of the factors that influence the provision of parks in Logan and how do they compare to those identified in the literature? And (iii) are there alternative approaches to providing parks in Logan? Like many other Australian cities, in the face of competing economic, social and environmental demands Logan exhibits a widening gap between planning standards and actual provision of parks. With rapid urban growth and land use intensification set to continue in South East Queensland (SEQ), now is a critical time to evaluate the success of the current approach to planning open space in Logan, as a major regional city. This paper mobilises findings from the international literature on open space provision to identify directions for future research.

Introduction

By the middle of this century, three quarters of the human population will inhabit cities (Roberts, 2011). Environmental impacts associated with such rapid urbanization include soil and water contamination, air pollution, declining biodiversity and the loss of green and open spaces (Wolch *et al.*, 2014). Ensuring equitable access to urban green spaces such as parks, reserves, playing fields and recreation areas is becoming a major policy challenge (Zhou and Wang, 2011, Wolch *et al.*, 2014). For example, poor access to green spaces brings physical and mental health problems (Richardson *et al.*, 2013), and reduced green space compromises ecosystem service functions such as stormwater interception, cooling and pollution reduction (Byrne *et al.*, 2015). Important questions include: 'do cities have sufficient green space'; 'do built environments have the right green space mix for diverse urban populations'; 'is more green space needed and if so, how can it be provided'? Moreover, fiscal austerity creates management challenges. Although a large scholarly literature recognizes the manifold benefits of urban green space, we know comparatively little about the institutional and financial difficulties facing local governments in providing and maintaining their urban green space assets.

This paper begins the task of examining the capacity of local governments to maintain and enhance municipal green space assets using Logan City Council as a case study. Logan City (see figure 1) is a rapidly expanding city in the South East Queensland (SEQ) conurbation – one of Australia's faster growing urban areas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014) Typical of many local governments nationally, Logan City is grappling with a range of green space challenges (Merrilees *et al.*, 2013). The paper considers how governance structure and political leadership, organisational structure and culture, financial and human resources, legislative changes, property market dynamics, shifting local economies and opportunities to acquire land affect green space provision and management.

The paper is informed by a concise review of the scholarly literature on urban green space provision and maintenance at the local government scale. Methods used to collect and analyse data for the paper included a Systematic Quantitative Literature Review (following (Pickering and Byrne, 2014)) and a case study analysis of Logan City data. Trends in scholarly research (derived from peer reviewed articles published in the past 20 years) are assessed against relevant planning strategies and policies sourced from document analysis and informal interviews with relevant council officers. Case study data was collected and analysed by the principal author, who is a senior manager at the subject council. The purpose of the research has been to identify the factors influencing how local

governments acquire and manage green space. The scope of green space follows the conventions used in (Byrne and Sipe, 2010); the focus is on parks.



Figure 1. Location of Logan City, Queensland (Source: Logan City Council)

Factors Influencing Park Provision

A diverse range of factors influence the provision of urban green spaces such as parks (Byrne and Wolch, 2009). A review of the peer-reviewed journal scholarly literature reporting the results of empirical research on urban park provision indicates that governance tools play an important role. In most cases (97% of reviewed studies), governance tools such as legislation and laws, policy, strategy, plans, programs, guidelines, standards, and other such instruments strongly configure the provision of parkland. Importantly, in 54% of the studies we have examined, laws, legislation and/or policy was reported as the dominant driver. Strategies, plans and/or programs also featured prominently within many studies (31%), suggesting that these governance tools directly impact the provision of urban parkland. However, the literature also identifies a range of factors that can inhibit park provision (e.g. local finances, land availability and politics), despite clear intentions enshrined within governance tools. While in many cases there is an overtly strong framework guiding park provision and management, a suite of less obvious influences can affect decision-making about the timing and extent of park provision. As illustrated in Figure 2, these factors operate across scales (locally, nationally and globally) as well as both external and internal to local and regional governance (e.g. councils).



Figure 2. Factors that Influence the Provision of Green Space in Cities (Source: Authors)

Our analysis of the literature has identified six key domains of influence: (i) governance structure and political leadership; (ii) organisational structure and culture; (iii) resources (finances and human); (iv) amendments to State legislation and policy; (v) property markets and local economies; and (vi) opportunity to acquire land. We address them in turn.

1. Governance Structure and Political Leadership

The structure of the governing organisation and the efficacy of political leadership affects the provision of parks and green space areas, (identified by 58% of studies we examined). The literature demonstrates that the governance structure and political leadership are equally influential. This includes examples from North American cities such as Toronto (De Sousa, 2003) and Los Angeles (Pincetl and Gearin, 2005), as well as several Asian cities such as Hong Kong (Lo and Jim, 2012) and Beijing Province (Li *et al.*, 2005). European cities – including Helsinki (Tyrväinen *et al.*, 2007) and Berlin (Rosol, 2010) – were also represented. Scholars assert that a lack of political desire to enforce regulations (Lara-Valencia and García-Pérez, 2015), poor administration of planning processes at the local level, and a reluctance to make good planning decisions for fear of revenue loss (Pincetl and Gearin, 2005) can all affect local park provision and management.

2. Organisational Structure and Culture

Of the articles we reviewed, few (just 8%) discussed how organisational structure and culture can affect park provision. Researchers have reported that for some major cities, including Hong Kong, Milwaukee and Los Angeles, this factor can play a significant role. In Los Angeles for example, municipal functions (e.g. transport, sanitation and parks) are often privileged over others, for certain parts of the city (Pincetl and Gearin, 2005, Wolch *et al.*, 2005). In Milwaukee, disparate views held by the County Executive, the Parks Manager, and County Supervisors about approaches to reduce expenditure and increase revenue have impacted that city's ability to provide parks (Perkins, 2009). In Hong Kong, the privileging of technocratic advice at the expense of local knowledge (i.e. park user views) has strongly shaped park provision (Lo and Jim, 2012). Importantly, scholars have found that poor leadership and insufficient attention to organisational structure and a culture, especially in fostering collaboration and collective agreement, has impacted these city's strategic priorities, in turn undermining the provision of parks and other green spaces.

3. Resources (Financial and Human)

The availability of resources (including budgets, staff and community expertise) can play a significant role in park provision. More than half (55%) of the studies we reviewed identified resources as the most important factor. Budgets/funding (34%) and professional expertise (21%) typically constrain park provision. For example, research undertaken in London has shown how administrative changes, budget reductions and staff retrenchments diminished the use of green space, particularly among marginalised and vulnerable residents (Burgess *et al.*, 1988). In Beijing, China (Li *et al.*, 2005) scholars found that financial difficulties diminished the efficacy of green space protection from development pressures. But other resource constraints can play a role too, including access to reliable data (42% of studies) and information systems and technology (13% of studies). For example, in Phoenix, Arizona (Ibes, 2015), recently found that planning tools cannot readily align measures of park equity with community social characteristics. In other words, there is little certainty that park provision is appropriate to community needs. Such issues can reduce participation of local community stakeholders (37% of studies), as has occurred in Guangzhou, China (Jim and Chen, 2006).

4. Amendments to State Legislation and Policy

National and state legislation and policy can impact local park provision. In Australia, responsibilities for park acquisition and management are usually divested to local government. Studies suggest that changes to policy or laws at national, state and regional levels can impact the provision of urban parks and green spaces (though only accounting for 16% of the cases we examined). The international literature is instructive. In Hermosillo, Mexico for example, following difficulties enforcing state law, the municipality "modified its own regulations to require that new developments designate as open space suitable land" (Lara-Valencia and García-Pérez, 2015:356). In Sweden, researchers have found that playground provision has been negatively affected as a result of standards being abandoned and replaced with recommendations (Jansson and Persson, 2010). Similarly, in Adana, Turkey, the City's Development Plan resulted in a significant decrease in both planned and realised green space provision (Alphan, 2003). And in Berlin, Germany, the reorientation of urban policies toward business development affected park provision (Rosol, 2010). Quite notable is the case of Los Angeles, where changes to the method of collecting and distributing local property taxes, including for the provision of parks and green space areas (Proposition 13) effectively drained a key source of municipal revenue, constraining the ability of municipalities to raise loans, with significant long-term impacts on park provision (Pincetl, 2003).

5. Property Markets and Local Economies

At the macro scale, global markets and economies can also influence park provision, by changing the value of the local currency. In Australia, the Federal Reserve Bank adjusts interest rates to influence borrowing and spending, impacting investors and shaping market trends for building and construction. Similarly, “larger firms have advantages in terms of long planning horizons, excess capacity, finance, advertising, land acquisition strategies and so on” (Coiacetto, 2009). Almost half of the literature reviewed (39%) identified that global and national economic fluctuations can affect the provision of parks and green spaces locally. Scholars have reported impacts across a diverse range of countries. In Hermosillo, Mexico, for instance, global economies – though the “growing influence of transnational capital and markets” – impacted urban development and park provision locally (Lara-Valencia and García-Pérez, 2015:350). Researchers have found that at the national scale, economic growth through natural resource exports can also affect park provision (for example in the Middle East (Hashem, 2015)). At the local level, scholars have noted that park provision in Berlin was curtailed following “severe cuts in public funding for public green space, due to a severe fiscal crisis of the city of Berlin” (Rosol, 2010: 551). In contrast, in Yokohama, Japan, cheap land prices enabled development and provision of parks by developers (Yasumoto *et al.*, 2014), while in Hermosillo, Mexico, the arrival of international investment in property development resulted in “privatization of public space and intensified uneven urban development” (Lara-Valencia and García-Pérez, 2015:362).

6. Opportunity to Acquire Land

Finally, even if financial and political support facilitates park provision, and there are no legislative impediments, an opportunity must exist for land acquisition. In North America, scholars have noted that alternative sites for parks include brownfields, such as flood-prone land that was reclaimed in Toronto, Canada following a hurricane (De Sousa, 2003). Similar park creation has occurred in New Orleans. Other novel sources of parkland include bequests in Baltimore (Boone *et al.*, 2009), land reclamation in Milwaukee, (Perkins, 2009), and conversion of surplus land from infrastructure projects (e.g. rail lines, flood levees) in Los Angeles (Hise and Deverell, 2000 in Pincretl and Gearin, 2005). In Hong Kong, scholars have noted that topography can play a role too – land too steep or swampy for development enabled the creation of generous parks and reserves on the urban periphery (Lo and Jim, 2012).

While there is a wide array of factors that configure park provision in cities internationally, we know comparatively less about park provision in Australian municipalities such as Logan City, Queensland.

Logan City: A Case Study

In Australia, local government typically requires property developers to make contributions to providing infrastructure to support the increased population resulting from development.ⁱ Green space planning in Logan City is much like other local government areas in SEQ in that there is a Planning Scheme and Desired Standards of Service (DSS) for the provision of parks. There also appear to be some challenges specific to this rapidly growing regional city. With more than 300,000 residents, Logan is the fifth-most populated local government area in Australia, and is expected to grow to 473,000 by 2031. With an area of 957km², the city has a mix of rural and urban areas, a range of business as well as industrial and educational land uses. Logan has a diverse population (215 ethno-racial groups), which is mostly employed in technical/trades (17%), clerical/administration (16%) and labouring (14%) roles. Other than English, Samoan is the most common language spoken at home and 12% of the population come from a countries where English is not the primary language. The city has a significant portion of public housing stock, with some suburbs as high as 17-18%. Residents of Logan are more likely to live in a separate house than residents within the region and State (Logan City Council, 2013).

Logan has 924 parks including more than 5,000 hectares of environmental parks (Logan City Council, 2014). Park planning in Logan occurs under the auspices of the *Logan Planning Scheme 2015*, a statutory instrument. The Scheme, prepared in accordance with Queensland legislation (*Sustainable Planning Act 2009*), “sets out Logan City Council’s intention for the future development over the next 20 years”; and “seeks to advance state and regional strategies, including state planning policies and the regional plan, through more detailed local responses” (Logan City Council, 2015:P1-1).

The current approach to green space planning in Logan is focused on parks and environmental facilities. *Parks* are defined as “premises accessible to the public generally for free sport, recreation and leisure and may be used for community events or other community activities. Facilities may include children’s playground equipment, informal sports fields and ancillary vehicle parking and other public conveniences” (Logan City Council, 2015:S1-13). *Environmental Facilities* are defined as “facilities used for the conservation, interpretation and appreciation of areas of environmental, cultural or heritage value” (Logan City Council, 2015:S1-6). The Logan Planning Scheme provides a strategic framework that sets the policy direction across 11 themes, of which four themes make strong references to green space:

- (i) community (open space and recreation uses and facilities, parks and recreation trails);
- (ii) natural environment;
- (iii) design place making and amenity (built and natural environment); and
- (iv) infrastructure (networks for parks, storm water and community facilities).

While there is no specific “green space plan” for the city, Council does have network plans each for natural area conservation and park infrastructure, including a Park Strategy.ⁱⁱ The Park Strategy addresses parks and environmental areas for recreation, and has been prepared at a detailed level as extrinsic material to inform the Logan Planning Scheme. Logan’s Park Strategy identifies current and future park supply, based on the *Logan Development Projections Model* (LDPM), which includes population projections from the State Government (Queensland Government Statistician’s Office), as well as other data. Based on the gap analysis identified by the Park Strategy, Council then applies a prioritisation methodology to determine greatest infrastructure funding needs (both for land acquisition and embellishment).ⁱⁱⁱ The highest priority parks are then proposed for delivery in five year intervals through Council’s *Priority Infrastructure Plan* (PIP) *Schedule of Works* (SoW) for park infrastructure - once Council has determined how much land and embellishment works are affordable through a Revenue Sufficiency Analysis.^{iv} The intent is that this SoW will be formally adopted as part of Council’s Ten Year *Capital and Operational Major Projects and Enhancements Schedule* (COMPES). Parkland acquisition and embellishments are programmed and delivered annually, informed by COMPES in consultation with Divisional Councillors reflecting divisional priorities.

The range of factors impacting the provision of green space that are specific to Logan are represented below in Figure 3 and described below.

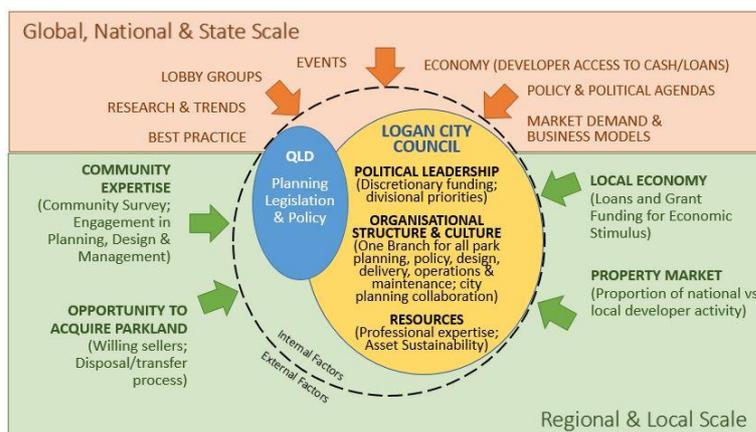


Figure 3. Factors that Influence the Provision of Green Space in Logan City, Qld

1. Governance Structure and Political Leadership

The provision of green space areas in Logan is highly sensitive to political influence and leadership of elected officials (councillors). The city is divided into 12 electoral divisions with one elected representative for each, as well as the mayor.^v It is Council that endorses the city’s annual budget priorities, policy and corporate plan, including the capital works programs based on Council’s long-term financial model. These strategic decisions are supported and guided by the results of the annual community survey (called *Logan Listens*), which gauges resident opinions about importance and satisfaction with Council’s services. This is an annual telephone-based survey of a very small portion (approximately 0.26%) of the community aged 18 years or older, residing in the City for at least six months. Council’s 2014 community survey suggests Council’s services for parks are getting closer to

meeting community expectations. Community priorities and demand at the divisional level will often play a strong role in determining the capital works improvements at a divisional level. Community engagement activities for park provision and embellishments are usually led by the Divisional Councillor.

2. Organisational Structure and Culture

Organisational culture including strong leadership, relationships built on trust as well as a shared appreciation of needs, concerns and responsibility, have been demonstrated to improve an organisation's success with sharing information (Yang and Maxwell, 2011). Council's structure and culture also influences the provision of green space and parks. Council's Parks Branch is unusual compared to many other capital and regional local governments because the policy, planning and strategy functions are delivered by the same branch that delivers operations and maintenance services. In many other municipalities, including Brisbane and Gold Coast cities, park planning and policy roles are completely separated from park operations and maintenance responsibilities. The personal and professional relationships within Logan's Parks Branch, which derive from this integrated structure help to collectively inform the planning and design of future parks and green space areas. A high level of collaborative decision-making and support for organisational priorities over individual Branch/Program priorities (supporting the greater good) has meant that the provision of roads and water infrastructure are sometimes compromised for the provision of parks and storm water infrastructure.

3. Resources (Finances and Human Resources)

As noted earlier, financial and human resources are a key issue for many cities that impacts the provision of green space. For Logan City, park funding comes from two main sources: most funding is provided through a discretionary budget being the Councillors *Divisional Infrastructure and Capital Improvement Program* (DICIP); the remainder is mostly funded by development contributions. This annual funding is available for road, park and community facility infrastructure (embellishments) and is recommended by the Divisional Councillor and approved Council. In 2014/2015 the *Parks Capital Work Program* was valued at approximately \$25m; a significant portion of the new funding was from a discretionary source.^{vi} Not only does this mean that the funding is largely driven by political priorities (and politics), but it also means that the planning and programming of capital works in parks and green spaces is undertaken mostly in the short term as a result of the annual funding program and budget cycles.

Federal and State initiatives also enable local government to achieve community outcomes by offering competitive funding arrangements (grants) for delivery of infrastructure^{vii} including park and green space areas. For Logan this has meant almost bi-annual federal and/or state funding to support and complement Council's efforts to delivering park infrastructure projects, for example Tygum Park, Waterford West (an important district/community park) received federal and state funds in the order of \$2m.

Financial Impacts

There are both short and long term fiscal impacts associated with the provision of parks and green spaces in Logan. In the short term, there is increasing political desire to maintain annual rate increases to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) whilst continuing to provide services to the same standard or better.^{viii} There is also pressure to accommodate the demands of rapid urban growth. The combination of rapid urban growth, limited Council funding and increasing community expectations for park facilities is a 'perfect financial storm'. It has combined with pressure from developers for reduced area of parks and green spaces in developer contributions to produce:

- 1) greater fragmentation of park areas;
- 2) increased quantities of park assets to a standard "above and beyond" the Desired Standards of Service (DSS) set by Council's Park Strategy and Planning Scheme; and
- 3) more complex and sophisticated park assets, particularly water play assets.

For the provision of parks and green space areas, this means increasing financial liability in assets through whole of life costs, resulting in short term gains for long term pain, as assets age and maintenance and renewal is not economically sustainable. Council has recently undertaken a trial approach to acquiring parkland areas where the land value must not exceed the equivalent financial

contribution for the development. While the benefit was reduced financial risk of having to provide unfunded infrastructure charge refunds,^{ix} the cost has meant fragmented and incomplete park area acquisitions or “broken teeth”.

The smallest portion of the “whole of life” costs of park provision is the capital works. The balance of these costs are associated with annual proactive and reactive maintenance, and asset renewal. This means that the selection of land for parks and park embellishments aims to achieve a maximum asset life for prolonged service. Flood immunity, high levels of durability and resilience (e.g. vandalism and graffiti), efficiency, reliability, readily replaceable and available parts for repair all seek to ensure a high level of service and value for money, with limited interruption.

Maintaining and providing parks and green spaces in Logan is a significant financial liability for the City and Council’s recurrent budget for park and green space maintenance has continued to increase annually in an attempt to keep pace with Logan’s growth and to meet community expectations.^x A review of the renewal value (at the time of installation) for all park assets overdue and due for renewal in 2015/2016 demonstrates that the funding gap is significant (approximately 90%) and is increasing annually. Consequently, as assets reach the end of their useful life, facilities are only replaced as *funding allows*. Once the annual funding source is exhausted, there typically is no asset renewal, only removal. While the value of donated assets and new capital works exceeds the value of decommissioned assets, the long-term fiscal burden is increasing. The approach taken by Council to manage this risk is to calculate the *Asset Sustainability Ratio (ASR)*.^{xi} Logan’s ASR is currently within 10% of the target (Logan City Council, 2014) though, for park assets this is likely to be much less. However, the scholarly literature seldom recognizes this constraint (Pincetl, 2003, Wolch *et al.*, 2005). As we noted earlier, the economics of park-provision is an under-studied and poorly understood issue in the scholarly literature.

Asset Rationalisation

The historic requirement for parkland areas to be dedicated as Crown Reserves^{xii} (with the purpose usually for parks and/or recreation) has also significantly limited the flexibility for councils to transfer, swap and/or dispose of surplus or unusable parcels of park and green space areas. The process requires Council to declare a park as surplus to the city’s requirements, demonstrated by a majority of community support for disposal. The State can then determine if there is another purpose that can be applied, and if none is considered desirable or appropriate, proceeds from the sale of the land are retained by the State. Logan City Council has trialled a strategy of “land swaps” with the State, trading parkland provided in fee simple for an equivalent area of Crown Reserve for park and recreation to facilitate disposal. The outcome has been that while land ownership outcomes were achieved, the political outcomes were not considered successful. The community was confused about who was responsible and to be held accountable for the outcomes (desired or otherwise).^{xiii}

Human Resources

Attracting and retaining professional staff to undertake planning and project delivery for the provision of parks and green spaces in Logan is a second resource challenge. Wages for these staff are funded directly from the capital works program. As the Parks Capital Works Program comprises mostly discretionary funding, approximately one third of these staff are appointed to temporary positions. Finding experienced professionals from diverse backgrounds is necessary to deliver park provision. Attracting and retaining staff that have relevant experience, including an appreciation for demands on public space and competency at working in a local government context, and who possess the behavioural and attitudinal characteristics that are aligned with Council’s values and culture, is a constant challenge when short term contracts are offered. Without this staff, the delivery of parks and green spaces that are creative, innovative, relevant to the community and affordable, is almost impossible.

4. Amendments to State Legislation and Policy

State legislation impacts the provision of green spaces in Logan, including the relevant acts and regulations associated with fire management, environmental protection and biodiversity, workplace health and safety. Amended State planning legislation (the *Sustainable Planning (Housing and Affordability and Infrastructure Charges Reform) Amendment Act 2011*) has meant that Queensland Councils are restricted in how much they can charge for developers to provide infrastructure to support population growth, specifically by applying a capped or nominated infrastructure charge. With respect to park and green space areas, this means that revenue from development has been

significantly reduced and greater demand is placed on the local property tax (general rate) base to fund park development. Previously, councils were able to determine the standard of park infrastructure to be provided, could calculate the existing and ultimate park network values resulting from their plan, as well as the equivalent “cost per head”, in order to determine development contributions for infrastructure. This approach enabled councils to ensure that new infrastructure was funded by developers who provided housing for new residents. The outcomes of the amended legislation have meant that councils now have two options for levying infrastructure charges for parks:

- 1) applying an Adopted Infrastructure Charge; or
- 2) applying a Fair Value Infrastructure Charge.^{xiv}

In Queensland, the State Government also provides a separate statutory planning authority for Priority Development Areas (PDA) of the State. There are two PDAs in Logan: Yarrabilba and Greater Flagstone, which are being planned and delivered under different planning legislation, including related requirements for the provision of parks and green space areas. This means that these areas introduce inconsistent levels of service and demand greater budgets for maintenance and asset renewal. Other cities in Australia have experienced similar impacts for example, where major state infrastructure projects, (e.g. transport network expansion), consumes existing park areas^{xv}.

5. Property Markets and Local Economies

Shifts in the property market and local economy impact the ability of Council to provide green space in Logan. This occurs as a direct result of the varying volume of development applications for new development and consequently Council’s revenue to fund new infrastructure. In Logan, development activity has varied significantly in the last five years. A review of the monetary value of Infrastructure Charge Notices issued over the period 2008/2009 to 2014/2015 demonstrates that the value varied approximately 350%.^{xvi} It is important to note that revenue generated through ICNs (issued at the decision stage of a development application), is only realised once the associated development approval is implemented. Figure 4 below demonstrates that this means that there has typically been a lag of several years, (approximately four in this case) before approvals are completed and revenue is received by Council.

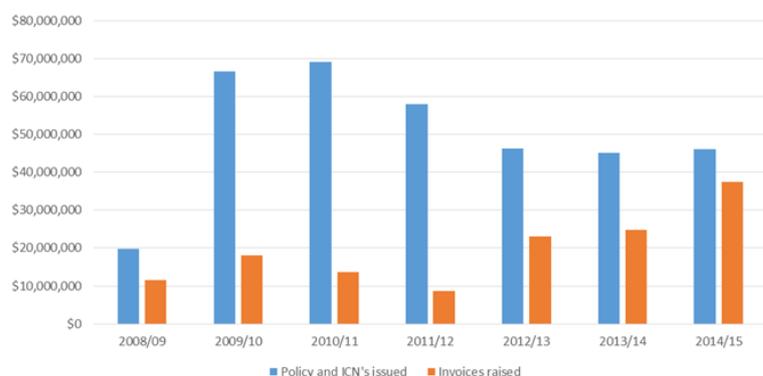


Figure 4. Logan City Comparison of Cash Flow associated with Infrastructure Charge/Policy Notices

Locally established small developers tend to be more susceptible to economic fluctuations than nationally-established companies (such as Lend Lease / Delfin, Stockland and PEET) who are seemingly more resilient to these influences. Logan’s *Development Incentive Fund* is a recent initiative to stimulate the local economy by offering savings on infrastructure charges. The limited take-up has more typically been by smaller/sole developers than the larger national developers. In addition, Council itself has committed to borrow ^{xvii} \$59.1m in 2015/16 to support growth and development of the city through the provision of new infrastructure including water, roads, parks and community facilities.

6. Opportunity to Acquire Land

Logan’s experience has demonstrated that the opportunity to acquire land is essential for new parks and green spaces. The land acquisition process is much simpler, easier and more often successful

when there is a willing seller or property developer with realistic expectations about the value of their property. Since 2010, the shortest timeframe for acquiring new parkland has been seven months, from identifying an emerging opportunity (such as a property being advertised or offered for sale, or determined to be a very high priority) to the finalisation of the acquisition. Conversely, where there is reluctance to sell, or other factors obstruct the sale of land to Council for park purposes (such as negotiating with home owners unfamiliar with the process), acquisition can be expensive (for example legal fees, court appearances by expert witnesses, and eventually the compensation payment). One parkland acquisition case took almost ten years to complete and be free from legal constraints. Not surprisingly, significant reluctance politically to pursue the acquisition of future parkland occurs unless it is a high priority supported by the broader community, and there is a willing seller.

Some commentators suggest that rehabilitation of former waste sites offers a solution to park provision (Wortley *et al.*, 2013). Although Logan’s park network includes several former and existing landfill sites (e.g. Waller Park and Logan Metro Sports Park at Browns Plains), experience demonstrates that there are many costly constraints to overcome, including maintaining the integrity of the landfill cap. For example, the former Mt Taylor Gold Mine site, converted to public green space at Kingston (retained and managed by the State as Mt Taylor Reserve), is so heavily contaminated that no facilities or new planting can be established.

Conclusion(s): An Alternative Approach to Providing Parks in Logan?

This paper has reviewed the scholarly literature to identify international trends and experiences with municipal park acquisition and management. These trends have been compared with Logan City, Queensland, to identify points of convergence and divergence. Similarities are particularly aligned with the availability of resources, property markets/local economies, and opportunities for land acquisition. Conversely, there is some divergence with governance structures and political leadership, organisational culture and structure, legislation and policy changes (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of literature and case study findings

Issue / Challenge	International Literature	Logan Case Study
(1) Governance structure & political leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of political desire to enforce regulations ▪ Poor administration of planning systems ▪ Fear of revenue loss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Driven by community demand particularly at local level
(2) Organisational structure & culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Privileging of some municipal functions ▪ Conflict over structural change ▪ Dominance of technocratic expertise ▪ Poor leadership ▪ Limited collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Holistic Parks Branch structure (planning, policy, design, delivery, operations and maintenance) ▪ Good staff relationships ▪ Collaborative organisational culture
(3) Resources (financial and human)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Budget availability ▪ Professional expertise ▪ Staffing resources ▪ Limited finances for monitoring ▪ Data limitations ▪ Information systems and technology limitations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Budget availability ▪ Professional expertise ▪ Staffing resources ▪ Community engagement/expertise ▪ Asset rationalisation/limitations
(4) Legislation & policy changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unrealistic state laws ▪ Changes to regulations without consultation ▪ Abandoning standards ▪ Neoliberal policy ▪ Loss of local revenue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limitations to revenue (quantity and use) ▪ Inconsistent standards of service
(5) Property markets & local economies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Footloose capital ▪ Investor confidence ▪ Fiscal austerity / cuts to public funding ▪ Value of local currency ▪ Natural resource dependencies ▪ Privatisation of public space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Footloose Capital ▪ Investor confidence ▪ Fiscal austerity / cuts to public funding ▪ Local government borrowing
(6) Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Land reclamation/rehabilitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Land reclamation/rehabilitation

for land acquisition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Brownfield sites▪ Flood-prone land▪ Philanthropy▪ Infrastructure conversion▪ Topography	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Legal process▪ Willingness/reluctance to sell
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(Source: Compiled from systematic quantitative literature review)

The Logan City case study has revealed that there are several challenges facing Queensland local governments, which are mostly absent from the scholarly literature. Specifically, the financial constraints faced by municipalities in maintaining existing park assets and in procuring new parks are poorly understood. Researchers have seldom recognised that there are significant financial constraints for municipal park planning and management.

Internationally, park scholars are calling for more parks and green spaces to offset biodiversity losses, and augment health and ecosystem service benefits. However the experience of Logan – like local governments internationally – has been that short-term budget cycles, competing state government priorities, and political and other constraints affect park provision. For example, local politics and divisional priorities in Logan can limit park spending. Moreover, the financial investment in capital works at Logan is the lowest portion of expenditure while maintenance and asset renewal are the most significant costs. Scholars seldom understand this point. Although commentators typically call for more elaborate parks designs, in a fiscally austere institutional context, park acquisition and embellishment simply aims to maximize asset lifespan. This can lead to homogeneity in design and uniformity in facility provision. Although Queensland's performance-based planning system is somewhat unique, there are nonetheless lessons for other cities – both in Australia and globally.

Some compelling questions for future research include: how do political and financial constraints impact product diversity, such as “all access parks” and facilities for young people? How might institutional constraints contribute to park fragmentation and unrealised aspects of municipal park strategies? Could broader inclusion of commercial enterprises provide an alternative source of funding, or might this lead to a ‘coffee shop in every park scenario’ (Perkins, 2009)? How might fiscal austerity and limitations in park embellishment affect the global competitiveness of Logan City (and other municipalities), where footloose capital and highly mobile professional workforces are increasingly attracted to liveable cities? Could ecosystem service benefits (cost savings) be factored into the local economies of park acquisition, embellishment and management? Should Logan City and other Councils respond to the new and emerging pressures such as increasing demand for community gardens, men's sheds, Wi-Fi, and other community facilities? Better urban policy will depend upon finding the answers to these questions.

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ⁱ Developer contributions required depend on the relevant state and local government planning instruments. These typically require cash payment, the dedication of land, works or a combination of any/all of these.

ⁱⁱ The Park Strategy provides *Desired Standards of Service* (DSS), which provide guidance about what is considered to be acceptable areas of green space for park purposes. These are framed around a hierarchy of park types and four key components: Area (size); Distribution (location, distance & catchment service areas); Design (site characteristics e.g. shape, grade, flood immunity, road frontage); and Embellishment (facility provisions). This means that green space areas that carry a high level of risk (safety and/or financial) to Council and the community are excluded. Characteristics of such spaces include: steep sites; irregular shaped lot configuration; limited/no road frontage; areas highly prone to regular flooding.

ⁱⁱⁱ The *Logan Development Projections Model* is based on recent City development trends and is used to determine where future development and employment generation is most likely to occur. This in turn establishes the extent of the *Priority Infrastructure Area* (PIA). Logan City Council has determined a policy position that only land will be acquired to serve the PIA; the risk for Council is that should the modelling be inaccurate, acquiring future parkland areas not servicing the PIA as the opportunities arise are lost.

^{iv} A *Revenue Sufficiency Analysis* is a requirement of the State Government to demonstrate that the proposed Priority Infrastructure Plan (PIP) Schedule of Works is affordable and can be delivered without Council taking on undue financial risk.

^v In accordance with the State requirement to hold Local Government elections on a four year cycle, it is inevitable that decision making for policies and budgets will reflect the Council's fluctuating appetite for political risk, as well as individual Councillors alignment of political vision, priorities, interests and personal political experience (in turn reflecting their confidence).

^{vi} Approximately 67% of the total new funding provided for Parks Capital Works Program was from a partially or fully discretionary source for the 2014/2015 financial year.

^{vii} Federal and State funding programs are occasionally released specifically to assist local government in Australia with the delivery of community infrastructure through a grant scheme. Councils can make an application and are assessed according to how well they can demonstrate that they can/will meet the funding program objectives. If/when successful, the acquittal of funds is subject to strict compliance with the Funding Agreement (including project deliverables, milestones, community engagement and records of expenditure).

^{viii} Logan City Council has recently delivered a third consecutive budget with a CPI rate increase (1.4%) while maintaining current service delivery.

^{ix} Where land is sought from development for parkland, developers are only required to provide an area equivalent to the value of the infrastructure charge. Where more land is sought, developers then are entitled to a payment for the balance monetary value (referred to as an infrastructure charge refund). Council therefore needs to budget for such refunds where it is likely that more land will be sought than the equivalent charge.

^x For the 2015/2016 financial year, this is approximately \$30m (comparable to and exceeded respectively only by Councils recurrent budgets for roads and water).

^{xi} The Asset Sustainability Ratio (ASR) is expressed as a percentage reflecting the rate at which a Local Government is replacing assets. The State ASR target is 90%.

^{xii} Crown Reserves are properties owned by the State with designated specific purpose (such as park and recreation, road, forestry, cemetery) and provided to the local authority to manage usually as a Trustee.

^{xiii} Disposal of Crown Reserves is generally neither encouraged by the State nor pursued by Council because it is too difficult to achieve given the required process.

^{xiv} Council must utilise charges in accordance with the *Infrastructure Planning and Charging Framework* which sets the requirements for planning and providing parks and community facilities (typically land only with very minimal embellishments). The *Fair Value Infrastructure Charges Schedule* provides for reduced charges for residential development and reduced interest rates for borrowed funding as an incentive for Councils to adopt this option. Logan has an Adopted Infrastructure Charge.

^{xv} The experience in East Perth, Western Australia and Pymont and Ultimo, New South Wales was that state governments relaxed the standards for park provision, reduced the area of green space, and increased residential densities.

^{xvi} Council issues an ICN at the decision stage of a Development Application. The total value of ICNs for all infrastructure (including roads, sewage, water, parks, storm water) issued in 2008/2009 was \$19.7m; in 2010/2011 the value was \$69.1m.

^{xvii} In Queensland, Councils are able to access loan funding from the State Treasury, providing that Council is well placed to essentially service the level of borrowing, has effective internal controls to manage risk and is financially sustainable.