

Why Asset Management Is Essential to the Parks and Recreation Department

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The Asset Management (AM) Team is a critical backbone of the Parks and Recreation Department, ensuring the long-term stewardship, functionality, and strategic investment of the City's Park system. The AM team oversees the department's entire park asset portfolio, one of the largest and most complex municipal park systems in the country, comprising more than 537 park sites, 64 recreation centers, 16 aquatic centers, 13 skate parks, 3 golf courses, over 350 playgrounds, hundreds of athletic fields and courts, 28 dog parks, 116 Joint Use Parks (23 City-owned), a cemetery, 42,000 acres of parkland, and 26 miles of shoreline.

Asset Management is responsible for prioritizing, initiating, and coordinating the delivery of more than 170 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) projects valued at approximately \$1.2 Billion. The team manages capital funding strategies, pursues and administers state and federal grants (currently at \$134 Million), coordinates with external agencies, and oversees the department's five-year CIP outlook for Council budget adoption. Without this centralized oversight, the department would lack the strategic coordination necessary to deliver capital projects efficiently, equitably, and in alignment with City priorities.

Beyond capital delivery, the AM Team provides department-wide planning, programming, design, and construction support. This includes conducting condition assessments of existing park facilities, maintaining comprehensive asset data sets, and reviewing plans, specifications, and permits for all park-related projects either implemented by other City Departments or processed through Development Services Department. This includes review of discretionary and ministerial projects that are adjacent or within park land. This function is essential to protecting park assets, ensuring compliance with City standards, and safeguarding public investments.

The Asset Management (AM) Team's role as liaison and project manager for Developer Delivered Park projects is crucial to the successful expansion of the City's park system and the long-term sustainability of new public assets. Developer Delivered Parks are among the most complex and high-risk projects the department undertakes, requiring early, continuous, and highly coordinated oversight to ensure parks are delivered per the park development agreements, to City standards, and without creating future financial or operational liabilities.

The AM Team establishes and enforces park conditions within discretionary (development), and ministerial (building) permits, translating policy requirements into clear, enforceable obligations. This work ensures that park size, programming, design quality, accessibility, and construction standards are defined at

the outset—when the City has the greatest leverage—and protects against scope reductions or cost-driven compromises that could permanently diminish public benefit.

Working closely with the City Attorney's Office, the AM Team prepares Park Development Agreements that legally bind developers to deliver parks that meet City standards. These agreements are essential risk-management tools: they define construction requirements, timelines, bonding, inspection authority, and remedies if obligations are not met. Without this level of coordination and technical expertise, the City would be exposed to incomplete projects, substandard construction, or unfunded maintenance responsibilities.

Equally critical is the AM Team's role in establishing maintenance standards and negotiating maintenance agreements. These documents ensure that new park facilities are designed and built with long-term operations in mind, preventing the transfer of unsustainable assets to the City. This work directly protects the General Fund by aligning design decisions with realistic maintenance capabilities and lifecycle costs.

The AM Team also coordinates with Real Estate Assets to prepare Park Purchase and Sale Agreements, ensuring that land acquisitions are legally sound, environmentally appropriate, and aligned with approved park plans. This coordination safeguards the City's ownership interests and ensures that parks are accepted only when they meet all regulatory, design standards, and construction requirements.

In short, the AM Team's oversight of Developer Delivered Parks protects the City from legal, financial, and operational risk while ensuring that new parks are delivered equitably, safely, and to a standard worthy of public trust. Without this work, the City would risk inheriting incomplete, poorly designed, or unsustainable park facilities—undermining both community expectations and long-term park system viability.

A core responsibility of Asset Management is coordinating over 130 joint-use agreements with school districts, from early planning through design and construction. The team provides in-house landscape architecture, engineering, architectural, and planning expertise to support the delivery of shared-use recreational facilities, expanding public access while reducing costs and maximizing public benefit.

The AM Team also oversees all telecommunications projects on parkland, evaluating environmental, stormwater, historical resource, coastal, and infrastructure impacts to protect sensitive public assets. In addition, the team's GIS-based asset management and mapping services support operational divisions by informing maintenance best practices, lifecycle planning, and future capital investment decisions.

The AM Team also serves as the primary implementer of City policies and regulatory frameworks affecting all park infrastructure and facilities. This includes compliance with the Climate Action Plan, Complete Streets, accessibility and equity initiatives, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), municipal and land development codes, Council policies, the Parks Master Plan, Community and General Plans, Public Facilities Financing Plans, Impact Fee Studies, General Development Plans and other park planning and development related policies and regulations at the local, state, and federal level. This policy integration role ensures that parks are planned and delivered consistently, legally, and in alignment with long-term City goals.

Finally, Asset Management serves as the department's primary liaison to Engineering and Capital Projects, Real Estate Assets, Transportation, Stormwater, Economic Development, General Services, Environmental Services, City Planning, and Development Services. This cross-departmental coordination is essential to navigating complex projects and ensuring Parks and Recreation has a strong, informed voice in Citywide infrastructure decisions.

In summary, the Asset Management Team ensures that the Parks and Recreation Department is not only maintaining parks—but managing them strategically, sustainably, and responsibly for current and future generations.

Website Reference: <https://www.sandiego.gov/parks-and-recreation/design-development>