Needs + Priorities

The City of San Diego
PARKS MASTER PLAN

April 2020

The City of
SAN DIEGO

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Balboa Park

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1.0
Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The Existing Conditions report uses historic, physical, and demographic context; recreational trends; ongoing City planning efforts; and a profile of current park assets and programming to highlight initial gaps, opportunities, and challenges within the parks and recreation system. As the second step in the PMP process, the Needs and Priorities report builds on these findings to identify a set of guiding themes. Together, results form a broad outline of possible strategies and innovative solutions for the PMP.

The two remaining phases of the planning process – Visioning and Implementation - will explore and refine these themes to develop recommendations that meet the recreation needs and priorities of residents today and in the future.

To develop the set of guiding themes, the PMP planning team drew from a mix of public and staff input, benchmarking results, best practices case studies, and additional analyses of service standards and recreation programming.

1.0 SUMMARY

The Needs and Priorities analysis is the second step in the four-step PMP process. The report builds on Existing Conditions findings to identify a set of guiding themes. To develop themes, the PMP drew from a mix of public and staff input, benchmarking results, best practices case studies, and additional analyses.

Public input consisted of:

- Statistically valid survey;
- 10 regional workshops; and
- Online activity.

More than 4,000 residents shared ideas through a workshop, the statistically valid survey, or online questionnaire. Input gathered across all input methods revealed common priorities for residents in the City of San Diego:

- Neighborhood parks;
- Open space and trails;
- Off-leash dog parks;
- Fitness and wellness programs;
- Senior programs;
- Nature/outdoor programs;
- Maintenance of existing parks and facilities; and
- Efforts to make parks more active and safer.

This feedback is essential for understanding community needs, highlighting opportunities for improvement, and prioritizing future actions.

Regional Workshop

1.2 Overview of Public Involvement

Community involvement is the cornerstone of the Needs and Priorities analysis. The PMP implemented a four-part engagement strategy throughout Phases 1 and 2, including workshops, pop-up events, stakeholder interviews, a survey, and online questionnaire (see Figure 1). The goal of the involvement effort was to create a convenient, inclusive multi-pronged platform for sharing ideas across the City's diverse communities.

The scale of the City of San Diego and variability in the rates of participation in traditional planning processes can limit the breadth and richness of feedback collected. To overcome these obstacles, the PMP emphasized geographic balance in the location of workshops, with a session in each of the nine Council Districts, as well as Downtown. Beyond conventional formats, the PMP offered input opportunities online and as part of community events and standing meetings. The planning team also formed partnerships with non-profit and community-based organizations to engage constituents and community members. In areas with higher numbers of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) speakers, such as San Ysidro, Linda Vista, and City Heights, the team conducted outreach in Spanish, Vietnamese, and Somali – the languages that represent three of the largest linguistic groups in the City.

To allow for a methodologically sound understanding of priorities and needs across the City and within Council Districts, the PMP administered a statistically valid survey as described in Chapter 2. While the other input techniques are qualitative, they nonetheless provide critical complements to the survey, generating place specific ideas, highlighting the intensity of user needs, and further emphasizing priorities for the system. Chapters 2 through 5 summarize input findings across all methods.

The PMP combines quantitative and qualitative information to gather place specific ideas, highlight the intensity of user needs, and set overall priorities for the system.

PMP PUBLIC INPUT

Survey
Statistically valid survey sent randomly to households in all nine City Council Districts

Workshops
Two phases of interactive workshops across the City

Online Activity
Two phases of online questionnaires in multiple languages

Pop-up Events
Outreach at City events and gatherings

Stakeholder Interviews
In-depth discussions with City staff and representatives of the public, private, and non-profit sectors

Figure 1: PMP Input Opportunities

Input by the Numbers

Statistically Valid Survey

1,898 Responses

10 Workshops
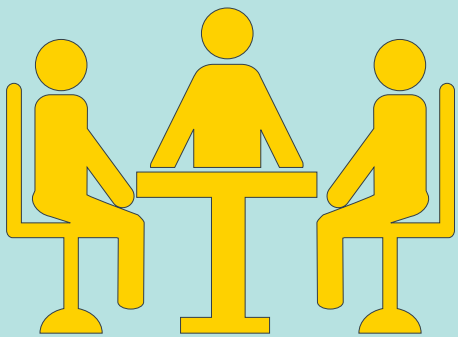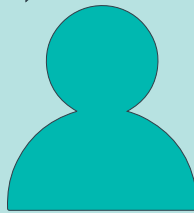
36 Stakeholder Interviews
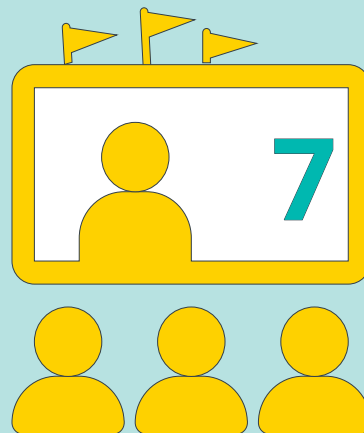
7 Special Events
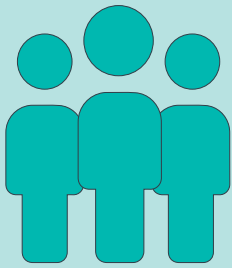
600
Participants

3,220
Responses
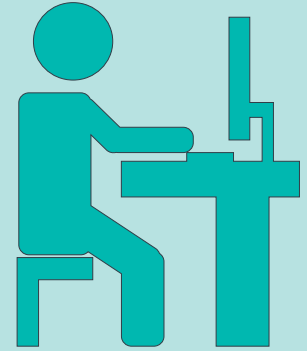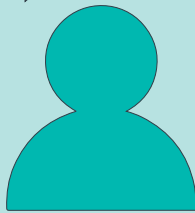
1,750
Online
Questionnaire
Participants

8 **Parks and Recreation agencies used for benchmarking and best practices analysis**

Seattle, WA

Minneapolis, MN

Boston, MA

Chicago, IL

Kansas City, MO

Los Angeles, CA

Dallas, TX

Miami-Dade, FL
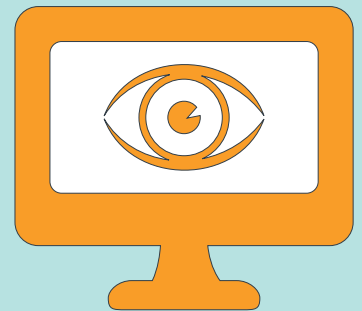
5,719
Comments
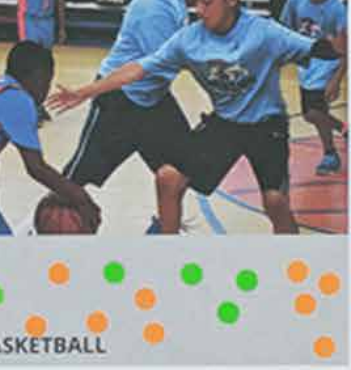
SPORTS
AND
FITNESS

BASKETBALL

GOLF

VOLLEYBALL

GYMNASTICS & TUMBLING

SOCCER

TENNIS

Regional Workshop

Currently participate
Actualmente participan

Need
Necesitan

en and/or orange dot below the image
or members of your household currently
a need for.

ue un punto verde y / o naranja debajo de la
idad(es) de recreación en la cual usted o los
ar actualmente participan o necesitan.

What recreation activities do you or members of your
household currently participate in or have a need for?

¿En qué actividades de recreación usted o los miembros
de su hogar actualmente participan o cuales son las
actividades de recreación que necesitan?

AQUATIC
PROGRAMS

GYMNASTICS & TUMBLING

THERAPEUTIC RECREATION

TENNIS

WATER FITNESS

FAMILY
RECREATION

COMPETITIVE SWIMMING

COMPETITION CLUB SPORTS

NATURE /
OUTDOOR
RECREATION

The City of
SAN DIEGO

Station 4
Leisure
Activities

The City of San Diego
PARKS MASTER PLAN

PICKLEBALL

MINTON

ARDING

2.0   STATISTICALLY VALID SURVEY

2.0
Statistically Valid Survey

2.1 Survey Method and Purpose

In the spring of 2018, the PMP administered a survey to gather resident feedback on levels of satisfaction, needs, and priorities for the parks and recreation system. The survey included questions on park use, program participation, willingness to travel, facility and programming needs, and respondent demographics. Respondents could give input in either English or Spanish through a written, telephone interview or online format.

To achieve statistical validity, the planning team mailed surveys to approximately 15,000 households with a goal of receiving a minimum of 200 surveys across each of the City's nine Council Districts. The survey produced 1,898 responses with a level of confidence of 95 percent and a margin of error of +/- 2.25 percent.

The Community Interest and Opinion Survey report contains additional detail, along with benchmarking data that place the City of San Diego in a national context. The main findings of the survey relate to levels of satisfaction, park use, communication, priorities for facilities and programs, and priorities for system improvements. The PMP will draw from these results to inform recommendations for the development of parks, trails, recreation facilities, and programs. Findings also identify opportunities for the City to improve its service delivery and more effectively meet the needs of residents Citywide.

2.0 SUMMARY

The survey highlighted the following major themes:

- Most respondents (67%) were satisfied with City of San Diego recreation programs;

- Lack of awareness was the biggest barrier (55%) to using parks and programs more often;

- A very high percentage of City residents (92%) used a Regional Park operated by the City in the past year; and

- Respondents were in favor of updating current parks and facilities rather than acquiring or developing new amenities.

Top investment priorities for facilities Citywide were:

- Beaches and shoreline parks;

- Small pocket or neighborhood parks;

- Open space/trails;

- Off-leash dog parks; and

- Aquatic complexes (swimming pools).

Top investment priorities for programs Citywide were:

- Fitness and wellness programs;

- Senior adult programs;

- Ranger led hikes/nature programs;

- Seasonal special park events; and

- Adult sports programs.

Regional Workshop

2.2 Satisfaction

Residents have a positive perception of the City of San Diego Parks and Recreation Department.

67% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the City's Parks and Recreation facilities and programs.

83% of respondents who participated in a program in the past year gave good or excellent ratings for the quality of programs.

Program participants expressed very high levels of satisfaction with:

- Quality of instructors;
- Fees charged for value received;
- Times programmed are offered; and
- Location of programs.

Program participants were least satisfied with:

- Navigation through the City website;
- Online registration process; and
- Availability of information about programs and services.

2.3 Park and Program Use

Use of parks, including regional parks is very high but levels of participation in programs is low.

92% of survey participants used at least one regional park during the past 12 months.

20% of respondents said that a member of the household participated in an recreation program during the past 12 months.

San Diego residents use regional parks at a higher rate than the national average (81%). Balboa Park (82%) was the most visited regional park followed by Mission Bay Park (58%).

Program participation in San Diego was lower than the national average of 34 percent.

Feedback indicates opportunities to make the Department website and program registration process easier to access and develop a coordinated social media strategy to increase awareness of programs and services.

2.4 Communication

Awareness is the biggest barrier to use of parks, open spaces, trails, and recreation facilities or programs.

55% of respondents said that lack of familiarity with offerings was the biggest reason for not using parks and services more often.

Participants most often learned about programs and activities through:

- Friends and neighbors;
- Parks and recreation website;
- Parks and Recreation flyers; and
- Social media.

2.5 Access

Most residents will walk to parks if the park is within a mile of their home.

66% of respondents were willing to walk to a park within a mile of home.

Most respondents either drive (87%) or walk (66%) to parks and recreation facilities.

Little Italy Mercato

2.6 Priorities for Parks and Recreation Facilities

Beaches and shorelines parks and small pocket or neighborhood parks are among the highest priorities for residents.

The top priorities for parks and recreation facilities are:

- Beaches and shoreline parks;
- Small pocket or neighborhood parks;
- Open space/trails;
- Off-leash dog parks; and
- Aquatic complexes (swimming pools).

Survey results highlighting needs for neighborhood parks, open space and trails, off-leash dog parks, fitness and wellness programs, senior programs, and nature/outdoor programs were similar to community input received at Regional Workshops and online.

2.7 Priorities for Parks and Recreation Programs

Programs with opportunities for fitness and wellness, senior adult activities, and hiking/nature are among the highest priorities for residents.

The top priorities for parks and recreation programs are:

- Fitness and wellness programs;
- Senior adult programs;
- Ranger led hikes/nature programs;
- Seasonal special park events; and
- Adult sports programs.

How Do We Identify a Top Priority?

The survey asked respondents to identify the parks, facilities, and programs that their households needed and then how well the need for each item was being met. Priority Investment Rankings show the most important unmet needs for parks, facilities, and programs.

Unmet Need + Importance = Priority Investment Rating

2.8 System Improvements

Most residents think it is important for the City to make improvements to City parks and recreation facilities.

Top ten physical actions that the City of San Diego could take to improve the parks and recreation system:

1. Upgrade existing public restrooms;

2. Upgrade existing public parks;

3. Upgrade existing beaches & shoreline parks;

4. Upgrade existing regional parks;

5. Upgrade security of parks & nearby areas;

6. Upgrade existing trails;

7. Acquire additional parkland & develop new public parks;

8. Develop new trails & connect existing trails;

9. Improve access to existing parks & beaches; and

10. Acquire additional open space.

Respondents were more in favor of updating current parks and facilities than acquiring or developing new amenities.

2.9 Park Security

Residents show strong support for adding security measures and improving park maintenance as a means to make parks feel safer.

Top actions to make parks feel more secure:

1. Provide more security lights;

2. Improve park maintenance; and

3. Add more park security personnel.

Most respondents strongly agreed that parks, trails, and recreation programs improve physical health & fitness, preserve open space & environment, improve mental health & reduce stress, and make San Diego a more desirable place to live.

3.0
Online Questionnaire

3.1 Overview

The PMP held 10 regional workshops across the City. With the exception of Downtown, City Recreation Centers hosted meetings, allowing team members to circulate on site and gather additional input from stakeholders.

The workshops offered a mostly unstructured Open House format with a short introductory presentation followed by self-directed activities designed to solicit open-ended, map-based, and topical feedback.

As a supplement to the workshops, the planning team held three additional sessions with Casa Familiar, the San Diego Foundation, and the Teen Council Committee. Overall, the workshops and additional outreach sessions engaged almost 600 participants.

600

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS

3,220

TOTAL COMMENTS RECEIVED

"

Parks connect me to other people in the community and create opportunity (classes, workshops, activities) to meet people

- Workshop Participant

3.2 Summary of Workshop Themes

While priorities varied among workshops, top themes across all venues highlighted an interest in more biking facilities, trails, recreation programs, aquatic facilities, and sports courts. Participants also stressed improving existing trails and safety and security.

Hiking, walking, biking, family gatherings, and off-leash dog park use are among the most popular activities. Participants also stated a need for additional opportunities related to biking, pickleball, off-leash dog parks, swimming for fun, fitness, and wellness activities. Attendees identified biking, hiking, sports, and aquatics as both nearer- and longer-term recreation activities. In 10 to 20 years, participants expressed hope in seeing the updating of recreation programs and facilities and increases in parkland.

When prioritizing future investments in the park system, participants strongly emphasized efforts to improve existing facilities, followed by adding new, smaller parks.

Top workshop themes:

- Add biking facilities;
- Add trails;
- Improve existing trails;
- Add recreation programs;
- Improve existing parks;
- Improve safety/security;
- Add hiking trails;
- Add aquatic facilities; and
- Add sports courts.

Kid's Activity

Kids' Vision for Parks

Children are among the most frequent and important users of parks. Parks and open spaces offer essential opportunities for play, socialization, exercise, learning, and exploring.

At workshops and pop-up events, kids across the City gave input on what they like to do in parks by pasting pictures of their favorite activities and drawing. Their art work shows the fun, creativity, and energy that parks bring to the community!
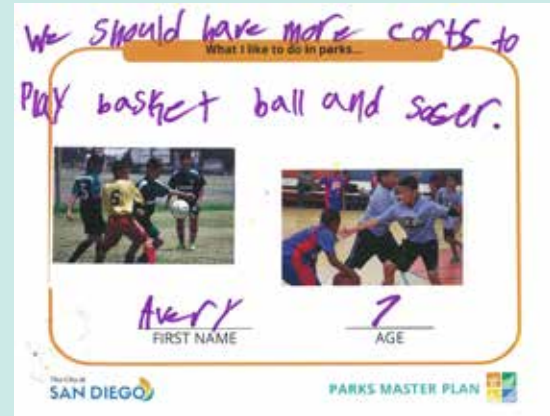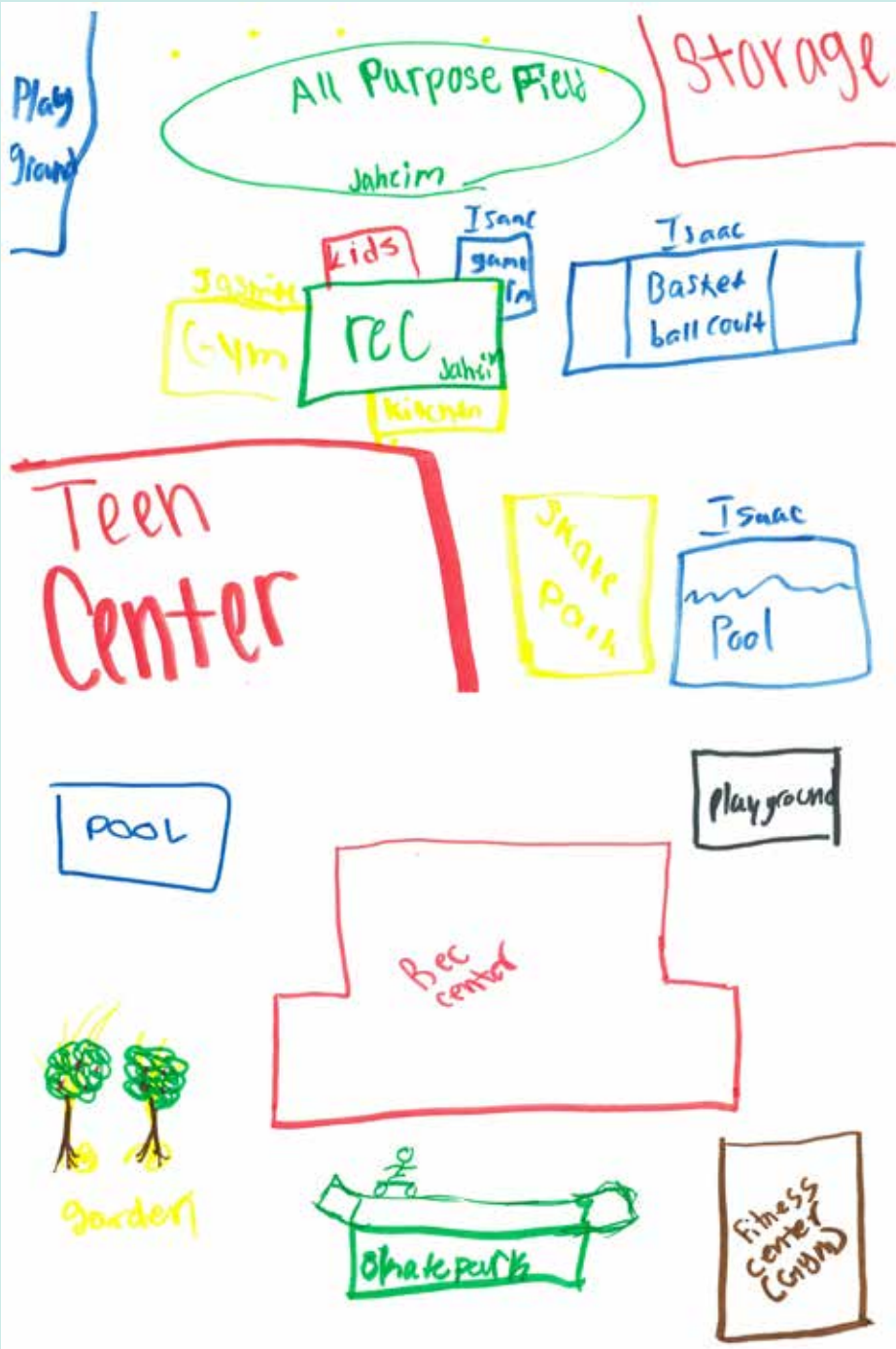
Teen participants wanted to see more options or enhanced facilities related to:

- Wi-Fi;
- Game rooms and electronics;
- Teen centers, teen-oriented activities, and field trips;
- Golf, martial arts, and self-defense;
- Workout and fitness areas;
- Aquatics/pools;
- Update of the food and drink in parks and Recreation Centers; and
- Sports turf.

Regional Workshop

4.0
Regional Focus Group Workshops

4.1 Online Activity

To allow additional community input throughout the first two phases of the PMP process, the project website offered an online questionnaire. The planning team designed the activity to replicate core survey questions related to use, need, access, and importance for recreation facilities and programs. Unlike the survey, which relied on the random selection of households across the City, respondents to the online activity self-selected and do not represent the overall demographic profile of the City of San Diego.

The results, therefore, do not mirror the likely responses of all residents with the accuracy of the statistically valid survey. Findings, however, provide valuable insight on the needs of residents and place further emphasis on priorities identified through other input methods.

1,750
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS

5,739
TOTAL COMMENTS RECEIVED

55,679
TOTAL RESPONSES

4.0 SUMMARY

The online activity highlighted the following major themes:

- Use of regional parks is high;

- Most respondents show a willingness to walk or bike to parks if the trip is 20 minutes or less;

- Responses reflected a need for increased facilities and access for additional sports and outdoor experiences, such as biking/mountain biking, archery, international sports (Gaelic sports, cricket, rugby), pickleball, and slacklining; and

- Respondents saw a need for improved maintenance and access and connectivity to parks and recreation programming.

The following parks and facilities were most important to households but had high levels of unmet need:

- Small neighborhood parks;

- Open space and trails;

- Off-leash dog parks; and

- Large community parks.

The following recreation programs were most important to households but had high levels of unmet need :

- Fitness and wellness programs;

- Ranger led hikes/nature programs;

- Art programs;

- Seasonal Special Park Events; and

- Citywide Special Park events.

Regional Workshop

4.2 Park Importance and Need

Residents had the highest unmet or partially met needs for small neighborhood parks and open space and trails.

Online respondents most often said that their needs were unmet or only partially met for:

- Small neighborhood parks;
- Open space and trails;
- Recreation Centers;
- Large community parks;
- Aquatic Complexes (swimming pools); and
- Off-leash dog parks.

Residents said that beaches and shoreline parks, small neighborhood parks, and open space and trails were most important to their households.

Online respondents chose the following parks as most important to their households:

- Beaches and shoreline parks;
- Open space and trails;
- Small neighborhood parks;
- Large community parks;
- Bays and lakes; and
- Off-leash dog parks.

4.3 Park Use

Use of regional parks is high.

98% of respondents used at least one regional park during the past 12 months.

Balboa Park is the most visited regional destination among respondents followed by Mission Bay Park.

When looking at both importance and unmet need, the following parks and facilities emerged as top priorities:

- Small neighborhood parks;
- Open space and trails;
- Off-leash dog parks; and
- Large community parks.

4.4 Access

Most respondents show a willingness to walk or bike to parks.

70% of respondents used at least one regional park during the past 12 months.

Respondents most often chose ranger led hikes / nature programs, fitness and wellness programs and special events as the most important programs for their households.

4.5 Program Importance and Need

Residents had the highest unmet or partially met needs for fitness and wellness programs and nature programming.

Online respondents most often said that their program needs were unmet or only partially met for:

- Fitness and wellness programs;
- Ranger led hikes / nature programs;
- Adult sports programs;
- Art programs; and
- Special events.

Online respondents chose the following recreation programs as most important to their households:

- Ranger led hikes / nature programs
- Fitness and wellness programs
- Special events
- Adult sports programs
- Senior adult programs
- Youth sports programs

4.6 Comment Analysis

Online questionnaire participants submitted over 400 open-ended responses on their recreation needs and priorities. Respondents most frequently identified a desire to add new parks or upgrade the quality of existing parks, particularly smaller, neighborhood spaces that are readily accessible. Input also stressed the need for improved maintenance and an approach to address people experiencing homelessness in parks.

The most desired recreation facilities and opportunities included trails, biking/mountain biking, archery, multi-purpose fields to accommodate a range of diverse, and aquatics.

Respondents requested both new and enhanced off-leash dog parks and better enforcement of off-leash dog use in unauthorized areas. Feedback highlighted the value of conservation, access to open spaces, and nature-based learning in San Diego. Comments also encouraged efforts to enhance connectivity and access to parks and recreation programming.

Top Online Questionnaire Themes:

- **Add / improve parks;**
- **Biking / mountain biking facilities and access;**
- **Add / manage off-leash dog parks;**
- **Improved maintenance;**
- **Trail facilities and access**
- **Conservation / open space / nature-based learning;**
- **Archery facilities and access;**
- **Add smaller neighborhood parks;**
- **Address homelessness;**
- **Better access / connectivity to parks and programs;**
- **Field space for diverse sports;**
- **Improved communication; and**
- **Aquatics facilities and programs.**

Responses reflected a need for increased facilities and access for additional sports and outdoor experiences, such as biking/mountain biking, archery, diverse sports, pickleball, and slacklining.

Linear Park

5.0

Stakeholder Interviews

5.1 Overview

To supplement input gathered at workshops, the PMP conducted 36 stakeholder interviews with City advisory bodies, other public agencies, non-profit and advocacy groups, and private entities.

Stakeholders gave input during small group discussions organized around common interests or as part of an agenda item at standing meetings. The purpose of stakeholder interaction is to generate deeper, focused dialogue around opportunities, challenges, and lessons learned for the parks and recreation system. Facilitators asked participants to share feedback on general strengths and weaknesses, as well as place-based or topical input drawn from their organizational perspectives, and ideas for strengthened partnerships with the Parks and Recreation Department.

Stakeholders consistently emphasized the critical role of parks and recreation in enhancing quality of life and embraced the PMP as an important collaborative vehicle for planning the City's future. The planning team will look to these guiding themes, as well as additional detail gathered in the interviews in developing the vision and recommendations for the PMP.

Stakeholders highlighted opportunities and challenges related to:

- Parks and user experience;
- Funding and governance;
- Equity;
- Placemaking and activation;
- Network integration and accessibility;
- Partnerships and collaboration;
- Sustainability and the environment;
- Communication and technology; and
- Economic development.

Regional Workshop

Stakeholders highlighted opportunities related to:

Parks and User Experience

- Greater safety, security, and activation in parks; and

- Innovative park concepts, including urban parks, parklets, linear parks, and temporary activations.

Funding and Governance

- New funding strategies to create an expanded, diversified, and dedicated source of revenue; and

- New governance and management that address the unique needs of the City's regional and urban parks.

Equity

- Collaboration with other public or non-profit partners on current initiatives related to public health, community-building, nutrition, and engaging at-risk youth; and

- Need for sustainable funding sources to address ongoing gaps.

Stakeholders highlighted opportunities related to:

Placemaking and Activation

- More activity in parks and other public spaces.

Network Integration and Accessibility

- Enhanced walking and biking access to parks and links within an integrated system.

Partnerships and Collaboration

- Greater private volunteerism, advocacy, and philanthropy.

Sustainability and the Environment

- Sustainability-oriented park projects; and

- Positive contribution of parks to ongoing habitat, urban forestry and climate adaption efforts.

Communication and Technology

- Promotional outreach on parks and programming; and

- Cross-promotion of City programming.

Economic Development

- Ability of parks to activate local community spaces and draw tourism.

Stakeholders highlighted challenges related to:

Parks and User Experience

- Perceived lack of safety in some parks; and

- Difficulty of meeting the City's acreage-based standard.

Funding and Governance

- Lack of stable, adequate funding, particularly for operations and maintenance, and regional parks, such as Balboa Park; and

- Deferred maintenance and deferred capital reinvestment caused by funding shortfalls.

Equity

- Lack of equity in park quantity and quality, particularly for communities in the south and southeast.

Partnerships and Collaboration

- Barriers to effective partnerships between City and other agencies and stakeholders.

Sustainability and the Environment

- Balance between active recreational access and protection of areas of environmental sensitivity.

Stakeholder Session

Regional Workshop

6.0   BENCHMARKING

6.0
Benchmarking

6.1 Overview

Benchmarking assesses the City of San Diego Parks and Recreation Department relative to other large, diverse municipal agencies. Peer comparison uses metrics to place the City's performance on key operational and facility indicators in a national context. The best practices case studies explore topical themes to illustrate innovative ideas in the delivery of parks and recreation services. Benchmark findings identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement and highlight creative responses to the challenges currently facing the City.

The analysis compares the City of San Diego to the following park agencies:

- City of Los Angeles
- Seattle Park District
- City Dallas
- Miami-Dade County
- Chicago Park District
- City of Boston

The selected peers operate complex, urban systems in varied geographic contexts, including coastal environments. The sampling also spans eras of development from legacy cities to rapidly growing Sunbelt regions. To gather information on budget, management, capital facilities, and service standards, the planning team sent questionnaires to agency contacts. The team supplemented direct responses with data drawn from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Park Metrics database. Where available, the comparison also cites median figures for all large urban agencies that serve populations of 500,000 or higher.

6.0 SUMMARY

Analysis of peer jurisdictions suggests opportunities and challenges for the City's park system. Findings highlight that San Diego:

- Has one of the nation's largest parks systems in land area;

- Is below the national median among large urban agencies in the number of developed park acres per 1,000;

- Has staffing levels below leading park agencies;

- Is below peer cities sampled in average capital expenditures;

- Has operations and maintenance revenue substantially below jurisdictions with special parks districts, such as Seattle and Chicago;

- Is on the lower end of the cost recovery range relative to peer cities sampled; and

- Has a comparable service standard of parkland acres per 1,000 residents, but is unique among peer large jurisdictions in basing its acreage-based standard solely on local-serving parkland.

Regional Workshop

6.2 Peer Comparison

Table 1 shows the overall characteristics of the peer jurisdictions analyzed. Currently, three of the agencies have achieved Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) status, which recognizes excellence in providing recreation services and experiences. Within California, the City of Bakersfield, the City of Carlsbad, the Jurupa Community Services District, the County of San Diego, and Riverside County also have CAPRA accreditation. The NRPA also acknowledges communities throughout the US that demonstrate innovation and high quality in long-range planning, resource management and service delivery.

Regional Workshop

Table 1: Jurisdiction Overview

Agency	Population	Jurisdiction Size (Sq. Mi.)	Pop. Size (Sq. Mi.)	CAPRA Accredited (Year)
City of Los Angeles	3,999,759	468.7	8,534	No
Miami-Dade County	2,712,945	2,431.0	1,116	Yes (1995)
Chicago Park District	2,704,958	227.6	11,883	Yes (2012)
City of San Diego	1,419,516	372.0	3,816	No
City of Dallas	1,280,549	340.0	3,766	Yes (2016)
Seattle Park District	724,745	83.9	8,634	No

Park Acreage

Table 2 shows the number of parks and park acreage by jurisdiction. The City of San Diego has one of the nation's largest parks systems in land area. However, just over three-quarters of the Department's managed lands are undeveloped, reflecting a strong commitment to the preservation of the region's sensitive resources. While the relatively low percentage of developed acres highlights a need for additional developed parks, particularly at the neighborhood and community level, the large inventory of open space lands in the City offers significant ecological value, visual relief, and compatible low-impact recreation experiences.

The City of San Diego is below the national median for large urban agencies in the number of developed park acres per 1,000 residents and is roughly in the middle of sampled peer agencies.

Table 2: Number of Parks and Park Acreage

Agency	Number of Parks	Residents per Parks	Acres Managed	Developed Acres	Percent Developed Acres	Total Acres per 1,000 Residents	Developed Acres per 1,000 Residents
City of San Diego	439	3,234	42,097	9,208	22%	29.7	6.49
City of Dallas	397	3,226	23,147	10,879	47%	18.1	8.50
Miami-Dade County	270	10,048	34,442	12,744	37%	12.7	4.70
Seattle Park District	485	1,494	6,414	5,580	87%	8.9	7.70
City of Los Angeles	446	8,968	16,169	3,395	21%	4.0	0.85
Chicago Park District	603	4,486	8,818	7,689	87%	3.3	2.84

Girls Soccer

Recreation Facilities

Table 3 identifies indoor recreation facilities and square footage by agency. The smaller average size of recreation centers in San Diego is a function of the age of facilities. San Diego's milder climate also encourages more outdoor recreational activity.

The total number of volunteer hours contributed in San Diego exceeds all peer cities.

Table 3: Indoor Recreation Facilities

Agency	Number of Indoor Facilities	Total Size of Indoor Rec Facilities (Sq. Ft.)	Avg. Size of Indoor Rec Facilities (Sq. Ft.)	Sq. Ft. per Resident
Chicago Park District	358	7,667,859	21,419	2.83
City of Dallas	172	2,203,178	12,809	1.72
City of San Diego	57	638,768	11,206	0.45
Miami-Dade County	71	217,308	3,061	0.08
Seattle Park District	27	n/a	n/a	n/a
City of Los Angeles	184	n/a	n/a	n/a

Best Practice Nationally = 1.5-2.0 Sq Ft per Resident.

Staffing

Figure 2 shows the number of full time employees (FTEs) for each agency. San Diego exceeds the national median for full time staffing levels in larger, urban jurisdictions but falls below leading agencies, such as Seattle and Chicago.

SEATTLE
12.6

CHICAGO
12.0

MIAMI-DADE
6.9

SAN DIEGO
6.3

DALLAS
5.5

LOS ANGELES
2.6

NATIONAL MEDIAN
3.8
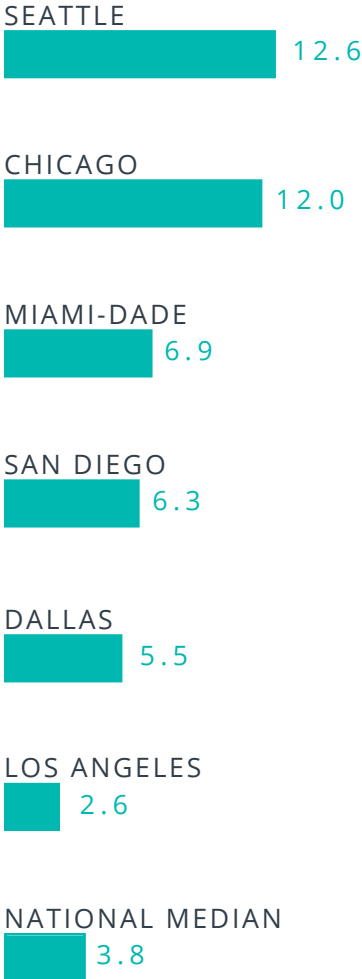
Table 4 shows the contribution of volunteers across agencies. San Diego benefits from a large and highly engaged volunteer base.

Table 4: Volunteers

Agency	Total Volunteers	Total Hours Contributed	Avg. Hours Contributed per Volunteer	Volunteer Hrs Converted to FTEs
City of San Diego	36,637	672,847	18.4	323.48
City of Los Angeles	32,000	640,000	20.0	307.69
City of Dallas	4,000	317,749	79.4	152.76
Seattle Park District	37,772	231,675	6.1	111.38
Chicago Park District	10,105	66,335	6.6	31.89

Budget

Like large, urban systems across the U.S., the City of San Diego Parks and Recreation Department delivers a wide range of programs and services, while maintaining existing facilities and constructing new parks to meet population growth. Limited resources require cities to make choices about investments in future parks.

Capital Improvement Program

The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) identifies new facilities and addresses deferred capital maintenance of existing facilities. Department CIP projects get funding primarily from Development Impact Fees (DIF), along with Maintenance Assessment Districts, Mission Bay Park lease revenue, golf course enterprise funds, private donations, and State and Federal grants.
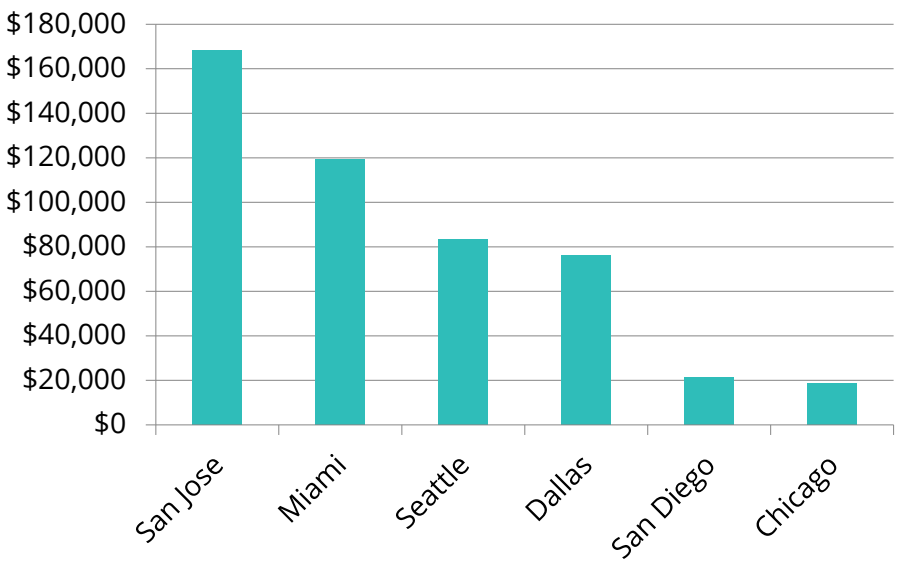
The City of San Diego is below peer cities in average capital expenditures.

Figure 3: 5-year Average Capital Improvement Program Budgets per 1,000 Residents

Operations & Maintenance

The Parks and Recreation Department funds operations and maintenance through General Fund revenues, along with charges for services and dedicated revenue from special districts. As in many cities, traditional sources of funding, including the General Fund and grants, have decreased in San Diego.

Cities such as Seattle and Chicago, which have special parks districts have substantially more revenue available for operations and maintenance.
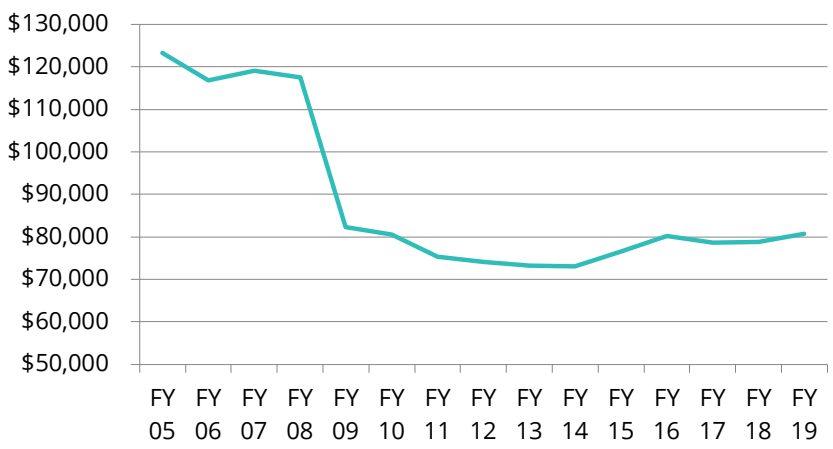

Figure 4: City of San Diego Parks and Recreation Department General Fund Budget per 1,000 Residents, 2005 to 2019
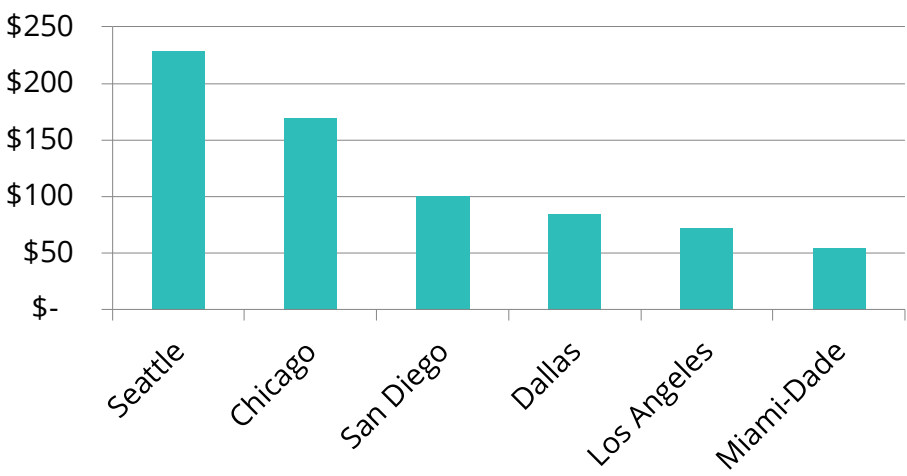

Figure 5: Operations and Maintenance Expenditures per Resident, 2018

Case Study:
Seattle Park District

In 2014, Seattle voters approved the Seattle Park District, which has the same boundaries as the City of Seattle. Seattle City Council members serve as the Park District's Governing Board. Property taxes collected by the Seattle Park District fund City parks and recreation projects, including maintaining parklands and facilities, operating community centers and recreation programs, and developing new neighborhood parks on previously acquired sites. From 2015 through 2018, the district has allocated $114 million for capital projects. The capital budget allocates just under three-quarters of all funding on its Fix It First initiative, which addresses major maintenance backlog and asset management, community center rehabilitation and development, urban forestry efforts, and zoo and aquarium maintenance.

- FIX IT FIRST
- BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE
- MAINTAINING PARKS AND FACILITIES
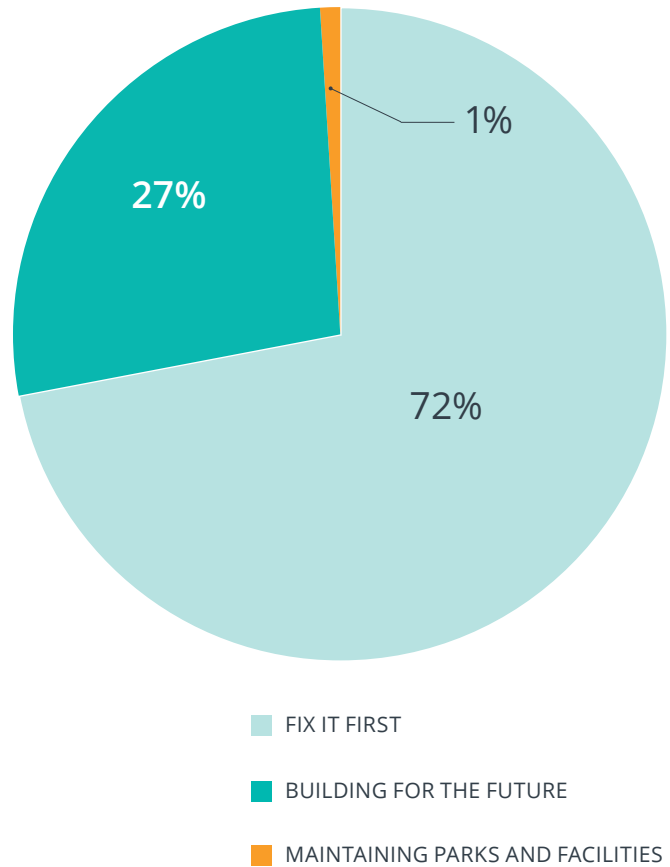
Cost Recovery

Table 5 shows the percent of cost recovery of sampled jurisdictions. Cost recovery is a function of agency-generated (non-tax) revenue relative to total operating budget. According to the NRPA, while the typical agency in the US recovers 28 percent of its operating expenditures from non-tax revenues, the percentage is significantly lower at larger, urban agencies. The findings below indicate an opportunity to revisit cost recovery strategies in the City of San Diego.

Table 5:   Non-Tax Revenue and Cost Recovery

Agency	Total Non-Tax Revenue	Total Operating Expense	Operational Cost Recovery
Miami-Dade County	$62,200,000	$147,590,000	42%
City of Los Angeles	$86,593,000	$235,651,000	37%
Chicago Park District	$35,946,602	$458,068,445	30%
Seattle Park District	$42,068,000	$165,579,683	25%
City of San Diego	$33,202,700	$142,698,792	25%
City of Dallas	$17,996,257	$100,464,611	18%

NRPA Median for Agencies Serving 500K+ Residents = 17.3% Cost Recovery

Case Study: City of Seattle Cost Recovery

The City of Seattle has established an Individual to Community Benefit Continuum to guide cost recovery goals.

	HIGH INDIVIDUAL BENEFIT	MOSTLY INDIVIDUAL / MINOR COMMUNITY BENEFIT	MODERATE INDIVIDUAL / MODERATE COMMUNITY BENEFIT	COMMUNITY BENEFIT / FOCUSED ON INDIVIDUALS AND TARGET POPULATIONS	HIGH COMMUNITY BENEFIT
COST RECOVERY GOAL	90% and Above	70% to 110%	40% to 80%	10% to 50%	Free -10%
SAMPLE PROGRAMS	Golf Food Concessions	Athletics – Adult	Athletics – Youth Performing Arts	Teen Programs	Trails and Restoratrion

Service Standards

Table 6 summarizes acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. An acreage-based metric is among the most commonly used service standards to assess local parks and recreation system performance. Most cities use a tiered system to distinguish local from regional parkland or count all types of parkland in their inventories. The City of San Diego is unique among peer large jurisdictions in basing its acreage-based standard solely on local-serving parkland.

Large, urbanizing cities often fall short of meeting acreage-based standards due to lack of developable land and high land costs. Agencies are increasingly applying access-based measures to determine gaps in service delivery.

The City of Seattle has adopted a long-term acquisition strategy that ties to accessibility goals, expressed as a 5-minute walk within Urban Village Boundaries and 10-minute walk in all other areas of the City. Similarly, the goal of the Miami-Dade County Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Department is to create a more livable and sustainable community where residents can walk or bike to a park within a ½ mile from their home and travel 2 to 3 miles on foot or bike to regional parks. Miami-Dade has not established access criteria for its resource-based parks due to the unique, site-specific recreational experiences of these spaces. The City of San Jose, which is in the process of conducting a Greenprint Update has recommended a shift away from acreage-based standards in favor of regional, community, and local facility siting criteria, including local park space within ½-mile walking and biking distance.

Beyond access, agencies are incorporating factors related to socio-economic conditions, public health outcomes, and population density to determine parks and recreation needs and prioritize investments.

Table 6: Service Standard: Acres per 1,000 Residents

Agency	Juristiction Size (Sq. Mi.)	Level of Service Standard: Acres per 1,000 Residents	Notes
City of Los Angeles	468.7	4.0	4 Acres is for Neighborhood Parks and Community Parks 6 Acres for Regional Parks
Miami-Dade County	2,431.0	2.75	For local recreation open space
Chicago Park District	227.6	2.0	
City of San Diego	372.0	2.80	For population-based parks
City of Dallas	340.0	6.25	
Seattle Park District	83.9	8	No differentiation between park classifications

Case Study:
City of Los Angeles

The City of Los Angeles has incorporated needs mapping into its Park Proud LA Strategic Plan 2018-2022. The approach analyzes three factors: acres of land, access, and population density.

Nearly seven in ten L.A. residents live in areas of high or very high park need. The plan expresses a commitment to closing these gaps by prioritizing investments in communities with the greatest park need. The City will convene community leaders and park advocates as part of a Park Equity Working Group to develop an equity-based ranking system for capital improvements.

PARK NEED

- Very Low
- Low
- Moderate
- High
- Very High

Parks and Recreation 2015 Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment

PARK LAND
Available acres of parkland per 1,000 people — 20%

PARK ACCESS
Percent of the population that lives within one-half mile of a park — 20%

60%

PARK PRESSURE
Analysis of population density in conjunction with park size
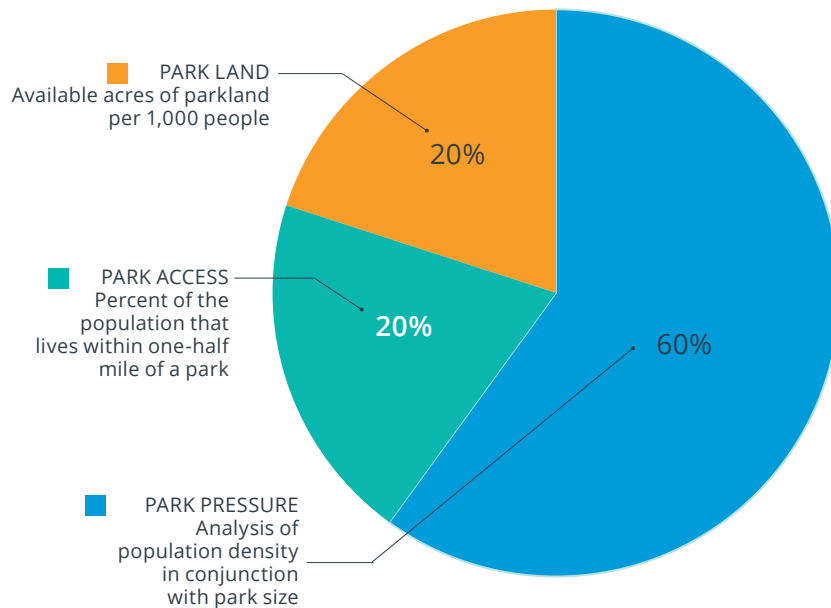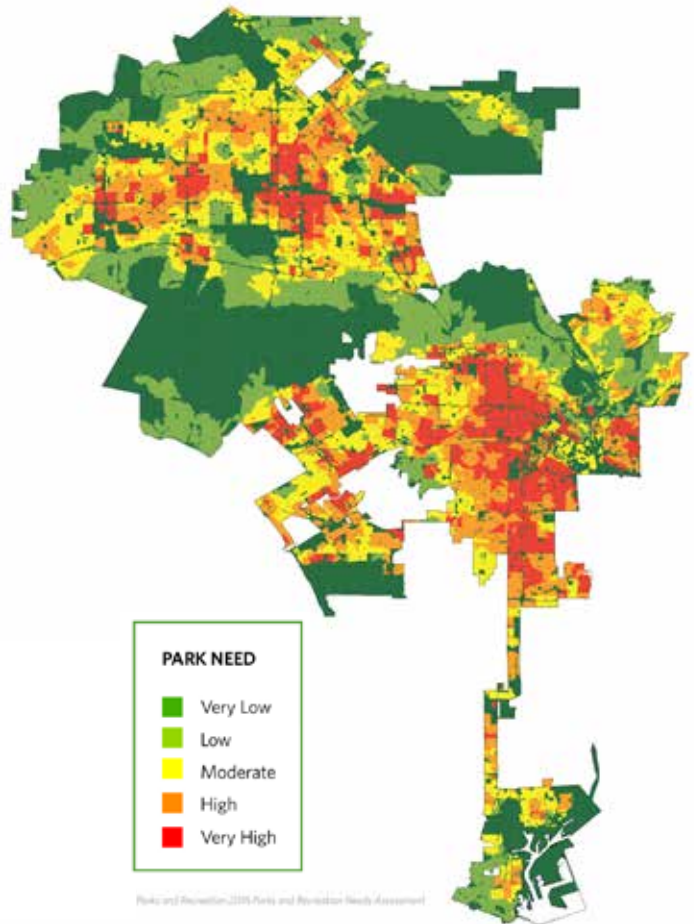
Service Standard: Acres per 1,000 Residents

Hawk Pocket Park

7.0
Service Standards

7.1 Overview

The City of San Diego currently uses a service standard of 2.80 acres per 1,000 residents for population-serving parks, which consist of community parks, neighborhood parks, mini-parks, and joint use facilities with San Diego Unified School District .

As highlighted in the Existing Conditions analysis, the City has an overall shortage of community and neighborhood parks with only a few communities meeting standards. While the City runs a deficit of neighborhood and community-oriented parks, San Diego remains rich in large resource-based space, serving both residents and visitors, and has one of the largest inventories of land per capita among major cities nationally.

A significant challenge in achieving the acreage-based standard for population-based parks is the relative lack of developable land in San Diego, especially in mature, urban communities. Factors such as topography, environmental sensitivity, and continued infill redevelopment combine to reduce the supply of land available for new park development.

The 2008 General Plan recognized the need to address constraints in achieving the acreage-based standard by introducing the concept of park equivalencies as an option for those communities that are land constrained. Equivalencies allow for communities, through their Council adopted community plans, to be more creative and flexible in providing park and recreation facilities when service standards based on land area are not feasible due to their constraints. Those communities that can meet the land-based standard may still do so. Examples of potential equivalencies include more gymnasium space, enhancements in resource-based parks to serve neighboring communities, pocket parks, linear parks and trails, and greater reliance on private provision of recreation.

While an acreage-based standard is a widely used and valuable metric for assessing the relative size and general distribution of parks across a city, it is an incomplete indicator of overall system performance. It does not consider the unique development context of communities, the physical accessibility of parks, the quality of the recreational experience, the intensity of use at particular parks, or the distinct recreational needs of nearby residents. For these reasons, this chapter explores additional service standard options that other large cities use to meet the needs of their residents. As described in Chapter 6, some cities combine multiple metrics into a composite analysis that identifies service gaps and prioritizes the resulting areas of need based on criteria, such as park use or socio-economic conditions.

7.0 SUMMARY

Park agencies increasingly use multiple factors to measure how well their park systems are performing and prioritize future investments based on residents' needs, including:

- Available acres of parkland per 1,000 people;

- Available recreation facilities per 1,000 people;

- Percent of people that live within a ten minute walk of a park;

- Density of people living near a park compared to the park's size;

- Income of people living near a park;

- Percent of children and seniors living near a park;

- Physical condition of parks; and

- Public health outcomes of people living near a park.

Regional Workshop

7.2 Access

Access relates to the guiding principle that all residents should be able to get to parks with comparable ease. Standards can express access as either a physical distance or the length of travel time. The City of San Diego does not currently use an access standard for its park and recreation facilities. An access standard complements a purely acreage-based metric by capturing not just the presence of parkland in a given community, but assessing how readily households can connect to the available spaces and facilities.

Organizations such as the Trust for Public Land and the National Recreation and Park Association actively promote the goal that every person has access to a quality park within a 10-minute walk of home. Cities also increasingly use walk access as a way to measure how well their systems meet the needs of all residents.

Access in the context of parks means that every resident regardless of age, ability, or place of residence should be able to get a park space or recreation opportunity safely and conveniently. Access includes walking, using assistive devices, biking, taking transit, or driving.

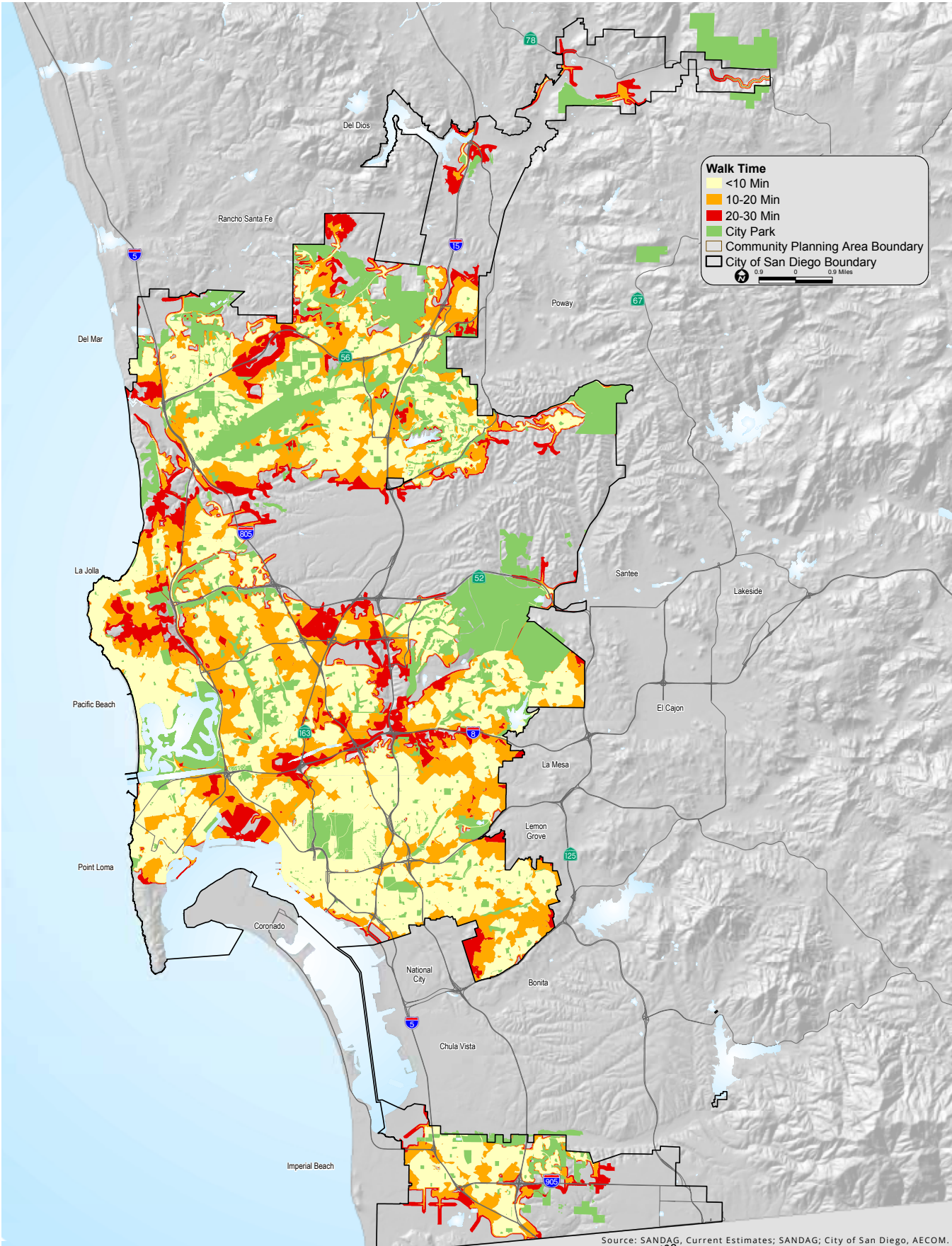A 10-MINUTE WALK, OR ONE-HALF MILE, IS A GOAL FOR MANY URBAN PARK SYSTEMS

ADDING TREES ALONG STREETS CAN MAKE ROUTES TO PARKS MORE COMFORTABLE, ATTRACTIVE, AND SAFER.

Walk Time
- <10 Min
- 10-20 Min
- 20-30 Min
- City Park
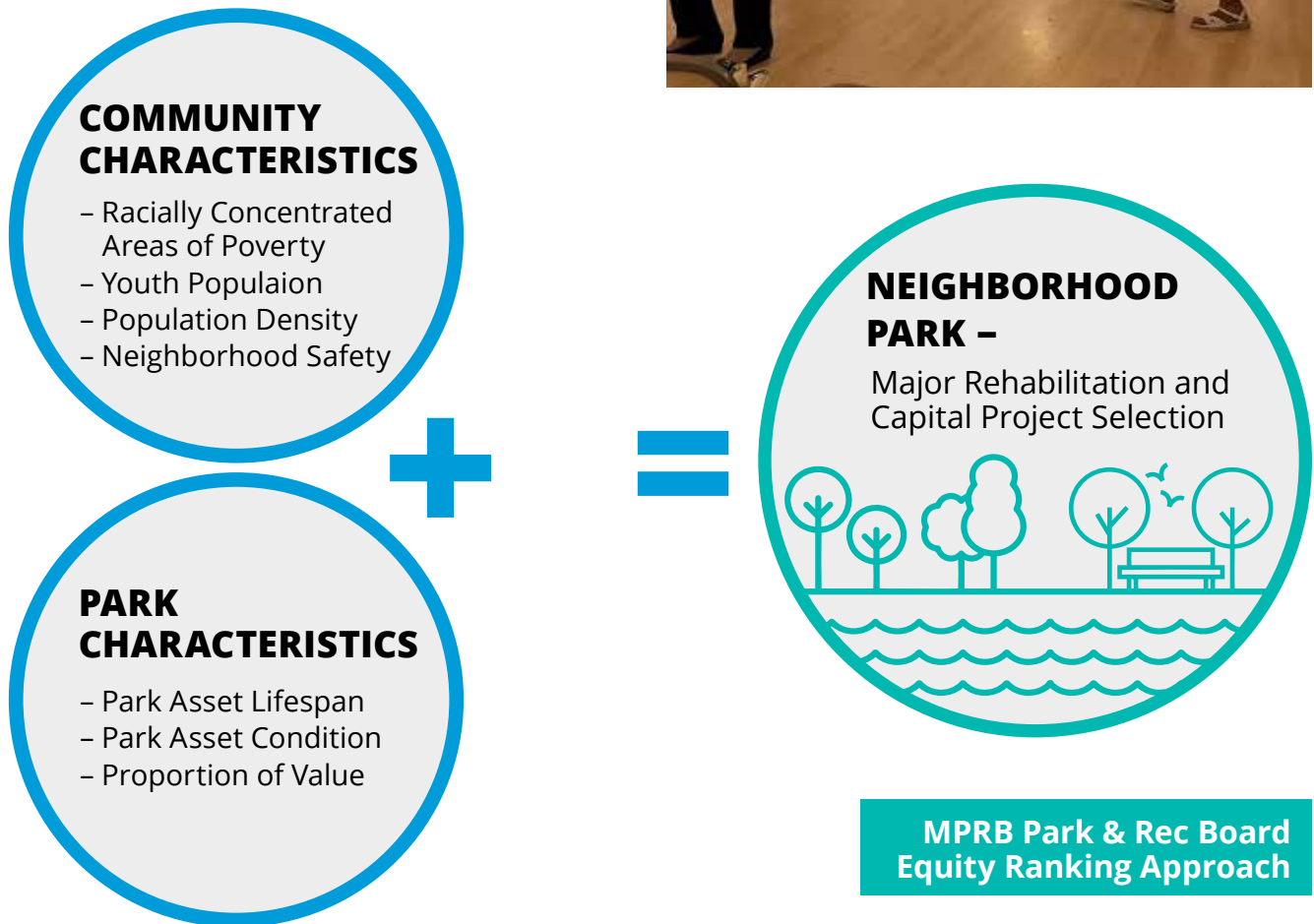- Community Planning Area Boundary
- City of San Diego Boundary

Source: SANDAG, Current Estimates; SANDAG; City of San Diego, AECOM.

Figure 6: Walk Accessiblility to City of San Diego Existing Parks

7.3 Equity

Equity is the principle that public parks and recreation services should be available and accessible to all people regardless of income, ethnicity, gender, ability, or age. Some residents, however, face greater challenges in accessing parks and recreational programming due to a lack of resources, mobility and transportation issues, age or health conditions.

Jurisdictions using equity-based analyses draw from indicators such as income or characteristics of the built environment to identify areas with higher concentrations of residents in need. Equity-based analyses allow jurisdictions to direct park and recreational investments to the areas of highest need and integrate their delivery strategies with broader initiatives to strengthen communities.

COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

– Racially Concentrated
   Areas of Poverty
– Youth Populaion
– Population Density
– Neighborhood Safety

PARK CHARACTERISTICS

– Park Asset Lifespan
– Park Asset Condition
– Proportion of Value

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK –

Major Rehabilitation and Capital Project Selection

MPRB Park & Rec Board Equity Ranking Approach

Minneapolis: Equity Based Planning

In 2016, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) and the City of Minneapolis approved ordinances to reverse years of underfunding in neighborhood parks. The 20-Year Neighborhood Park Plan is a long-term initiative to transform the neighborhood park system through dedicated additional funding for increased maintenance, rehabilitation and capital investments in parks. The plan calls for the use of a data-driven, criteria-based system to help address racial and economic equity and prioritize capital investment and large rehabilitation projects.

To build equity directly into its parks investment decision-making, the MPRB uses a 23-point scoring system that combines community and park characteristics. Staff evaluate parks based on the following scoring criteria:

- Parks in Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty;

- Population density (people per square mile) of the neighborhoods surrounding the park;

- Percentage of the population living near the park under the age of 18;

- Crime rate in the area surrounding the park;

- Rating of the physical condition of park assets;

- Projected lifespan of major park assets from either the time they were built or last had a major renovation. Parks with assets five years or more beyond their lifespan were given the highest priority; and

- Historic investment measured as estimated percent of total maintenance that has already been done at the park since the year 2000.

The MRPB then prioritizes investment in those neighborhood parks with the highest scores.

Youth Sports

8.0

Recreation Programs and Services Assessment

8.1 Overview

This chapter analyzes the City of San Diego's Parks and Recreation Department's program and service offerings. Results assist in identifying core programs, program gaps within the community, and future program direction that aligns with community input and trends. Program findings reflect comments from the statistically valid survey results, public input process, a review of program information, and interviews with City staff.

08 SUMMARY

Based on the survey results and community input, the top priority recreation programs are:

- Fitness & wellness programs;
- Senior adult programs;
- Ranger led hikes/nature programs;
- Seasonal special park events;
- Adult sports programs;
- Art programs;
- Water fitness programs; and
- Adult art, dance, performing arts.

Core programs identified as being essential or of importance to the Department's mission are:

- Therapeutic Recreation;
- Senior Programs;
- Special Events;
- Teen Activities;
- Volunteer Programs;
- Fitness;
- After School Activities;
- Tot Activities;
- Learn to Swim;
- Camps; and
- Mentorship.

Learn to Swim Program

8.2 Program Priorities

The two key metrics that drive overall program priorities are Unmet Need (% of households whose needs are unmet or partially met) and Community Importance (% of households who indicate that a particular program offering is important to them).

The high degree of correlation between needs and importance clearly identifies overall programming priorities for the City.

Based on survey findings, the top five highest unmet needs for households are:

1 Fitness and Wellness Programs
2 Art Programs
3 Ranger Led Hikes / Nature Programs
4 Adult Sports Programs
5 Senior Adult Programs

Based on survey findings, the top five most important programs for households are:

1 Fitness and Wellness Programs
2 Seasonal Special Park Events
3 Senior Adult Programs
4 Ranger Led Hikes / Nature Programs
5 Adult Sports Programs

When combining need and importance, the top priority recreation programs are:

- Fitness & wellness programs;
- Senior adult programs;
- Ranger led hikes/nature programs;
- Seasonal special park events (Egg hunts, Snow days, December Nights);
- Adult sports programs;
- Art programs;
- Water fitness programs; and
- Adult art, dance, performing arts.

8.3 Future Programs

Future program investments should focus expanding access to top program priorities, which have both high unmet need and high importance rankings. Online and workshop input further reinforced programming priorities for fitness and wellness, nature-based learning, biking, hiking, adult and senior programming, and special events. These findings align strongly with national trends, including an aging population, the general shift away from organized sports toward at-will recreation, and the growing focus on activities that promote health, wellness, and social interaction. In addition, San Diego's year-round mild weather and diverse culture are likely to drive higher need for outdoor recreation/nature-based programs, as well as art and cultural programs. Discussions with program staff also stressed the increasing need among residents for additional health and wellness programs, especially for older adult populations.

Top program priorities align strongly with national trends, including an aging population, the general shift away from organized sports toward unscheduled recreation, and the growing focus on activities that promote health, wellness, and social interaction.

Senior Fitness

Core Recreation Programs

Core programs are an essential part of the Department's mission and serve the majority of community members. They also promote equity by expanding recreational opportunities for people with special needs, investing in the development and wellness of children and seniors, and teaching basic safety skills, such as learning to swim.

Core programs identified as being essential or of importance are:

- Therapeutic Recreation
- Senior Programs
- Special Events
- Teen Activities
- Volunteer Programs
- Fitness
- After School Activities
- Tot Activities
- Learn to Swim
- Camps
- Mentorship

Special Recreation Programming

Regional Parks staff indicated additional opportunities to grow special events at the beaches, as well as explore new outdoor adventure activities at the parks. In these meetings, staff also expressed a vision to explore the sports tourism potential of the City's Regional Parks. A regional sports complex could enhance the City's appeal as a year-round sports tourism destination. Along with expanded offerings, the City should continue to focus on delivering core programs that are essential to the Department's mission and serve the majority of community members.

Programming Funding

In addition to offering relevant programming and facilities, long-term delivery strategies should strengthen financial sustainability. It is critical that future programs balance a social equity and community service lens with adequate revenue generation. Potential revenue strategies can take the form of increased rental fees at Regional Parks and beaches or differential pricing for programs along with special event fees / special funds that return to specific parks.

Health and Wellness Programming
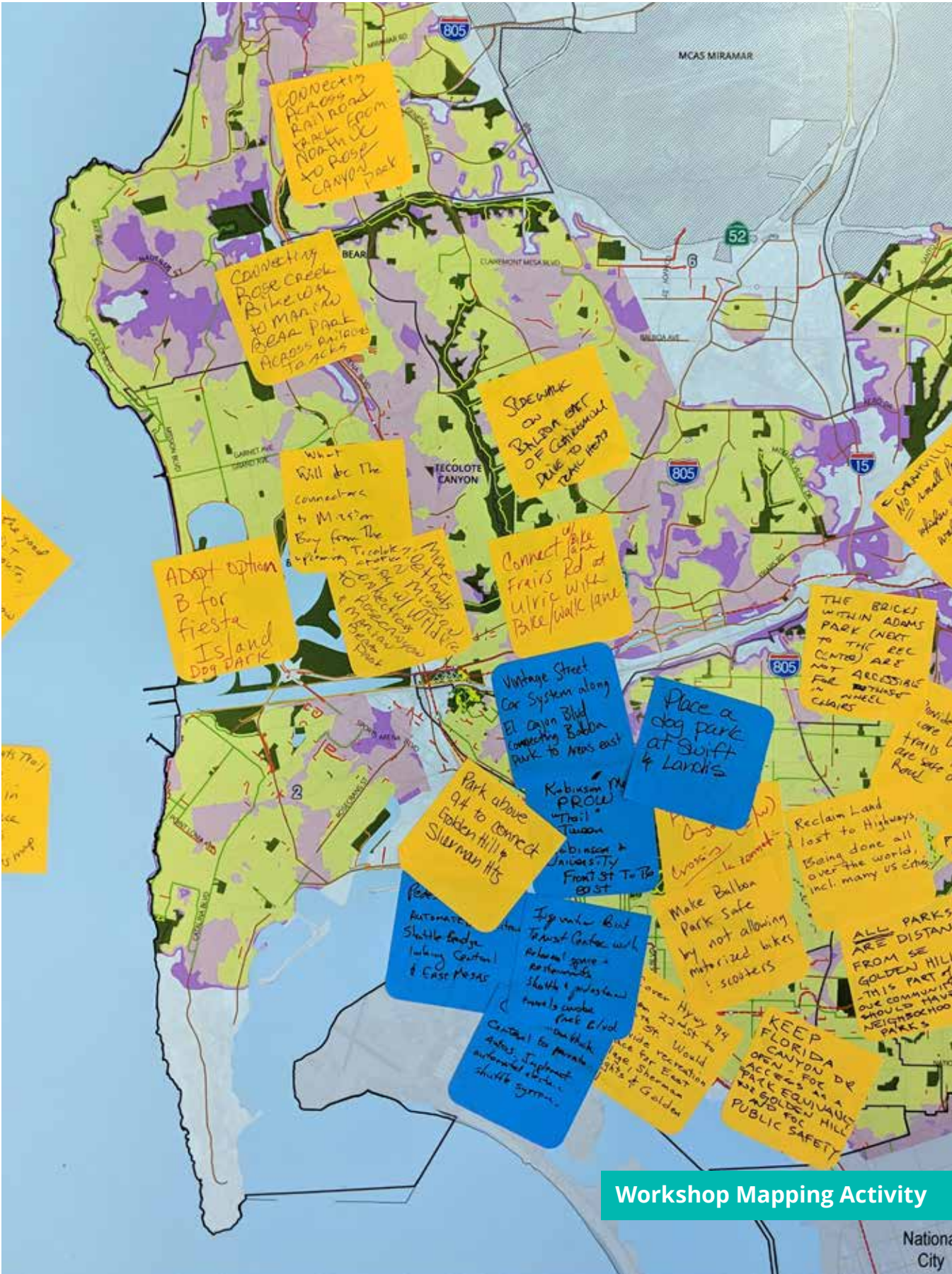
Workshop Mapping Activity

Youth Sports

9.0
Conclusion

9.1 Overview

The PMP used a broad range of techniques to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the City of San Diego's parks and recreation system and identify the needs and priorities of its residents. Through the survey, online activities, and in-person meetings and discussions, residents expressed their ideas, concerns, and hopes for the City's parks and programs. The planning team also received written feedback from stakeholders, advocacy groups, and interested citizens. The planning team further supplemented input by evaluating current recreational offerings and a sampling of 49 parks. Benchmarking also placed the City's parks, facilities, and operations in a national context.

This chapter summarizes the priority facility and program needs and the overarching themes that emerged across these assessment methods. Much of the feedback collected also contained specific references to park and open space concepts and program opportunities. While this summary highlights primary needs and themes, the planning team will continue to explore detailed input as part of the upcoming visioning and implementation phases.

09 SUMMARY

Input gathered across all activities revealed common priorities for residents in the City of San Diego with an emphasis on investing in:

- Neighborhood parks;
- Open space and trails;
- Off-leash dog parks;
- Aquatic facilities;
- Fitness and wellness programs;
- Senior programs;
- Nature/outdoor programs;
- Maintenance and improvements of existing parks and facilities; and
- Efforts to make parks more active and safer.

Regional Workshop

9.2 Park and Programming Priorities

More than 4,200 residents shared ideas through a workshop, the statistically valid survey, or online questionnaires. Input gathered across all activities revealed common priorities for residents in the City of San Diego with an emphasis on investing in:

- Neighborhood parks;
- Open space and trails;
- Off-leash dog parks;
- Aquatic facilities;
- Fitness and wellness programs;
- Senior programs;
- Nature/outdoor programs;
- Maintenance and improvements of existing parks and facilities; and
- Efforts to make parks more active and safer.

Ridgewood Park

9.3 Priority Themes

In addition to park and programming needs, input highlighted themes about the planning, management, design, and function of the parks and recreation system. These themes will frame development of policies for the parks and recreation system and guide discussion of implementation strategies.

Facilities and Programming

- Priority programming investments to expand recreational offerings with a focus on fitness and wellness, adult and senior recreation, hiking and nature-based learning, and special events;

- Priority facility investments with a focus on beaches and shoreline parks, small pocket or neighborhood parks, open space/trails, off-leash dog parks, and aquatic complexes (swimming pools);

- Flexible and reconfigurable recreation facilities with technology and gathering spaces that can meet emerging recreation needs, including unscheduled recreation and activities geared to social interaction and health and wellness;

- Active social media presence and mobile platform to promote recreational programming and facilities;

- Activation of parks and public spaces through regular programming, micro-events, and creative, temporary installations; and

- Wi-Fi and non-traditional recreation at Recreation Centers and parks.

Access

- Access to local park spaces as measured by 0 to 20 minute walking and biking distances;

- Safe pedestrian and bike routes to parks, open spaces, and trails;

- Flexible, innovative park spaces that meet the needs of urban communities and areas of rapid infill development, including gathering spaces, parklets, plazas, green streets, linear parks, and temporary activations;

- Integration of parks, open spaces, natural areas, scenic views, and art and cultural landscapes within an overall Citywide network;

- Green streets and quality public realm to connect and complement parks; and

- Network linkages and community green spaces.

Identity

- Early integration of unique features, such as site-generated art and preserved natural and historic elements to express local character and create authentic park experiences;

- Enhanced wayfinding and brand identity of parks; and

- Enhanced community and City branding.

Sustainablility

- Multiple benefit built and green infrastructure that combines environmental, social, and economic value;

- Balance between the preservation of habitat and sensitive resources and designation of active recreation areas and access;

- Alignment of PMP strategies with Climate Action Plan goals;

- Growth of tree canopy;

- Promotion of non-vehicular access to parks and programming, including active transportation links and transit;

- Promotion of water and energy efficiency in the design and operation, and maintenance of parks, recreation facilities, and systems; and

- Electric and natural gas vehicles.

Equity

- Equitable funding for park investments;

- Use of criteria to identify areas of need and prioritize park and programming investments;

- Parks and recreation as part of broader community-building and quality of life initiatives;

- Universal and multi-generational design of parks and recreation facilities to foster inclusion;

- Programming to expand access to varied recreational experiences and opportunities for children; and

- Consistency in treatment of park and open space uses by Community Plans, Specific Plans, and funding mechanisms between communities and neighborhoods.

Operations and Maintenance

- Priority on improving and invigorating existing parks and recreation facilities;

- Emphasis on security lighting and improved maintenance to make parks feel more secure;

- Enhanced sense of security and comfort in parks;

- More efficient operational design of parks; and

- Application of smart city technology in parks and public spaces.

Governance / Financing

- Priority on addressing existing parks deficiencies;

- More efficient design of parks to reduce impact fee burden on housing affordability;

- Strategies to expand, diversify, and dedicate revenue stream;

- Dedicated CIP source; and

- Governance and management models that address the unique security, operational, and maintenance needs of the City's regional and urban parks, including Balboa Park.

Land and Capital

- More nimble and proactive City land acquisition process; and

- Internal coordination with other major City infrastructure projects for opportunities to incorporate park / open space components.

Partnerships and Collaboration

- Coordinated, comprehensive outreach strategies to engage people experiencing homelessness;

- Promotion of ecotourism and integrated recreational opportunities;

- Framework to facilitate efforts to supplement funding and operations, including increase private volunteerism, advocacy, and philanthropy;

- Streamlined approval and permitting processes to encourage partnerships with non-profit groups;

- Partnerships with other public entities, non-government organizations, and private service providers to expand opportunities for programming, park space, and connectivity;

- Public-private partnerships; and

- Clear policy framework for accepting land for park and open space dedications.