



Chollas Creek Watershed

Regional Park Master Plan Framework

June 2023



Equity Forward is a comprehensive approach to creating a more equitable, healthy, and enjoyable place for all San Diegans. The evolving policies, plans, and processes under Equity Forward will create more equitable opportunities and investments in San Diego. By acknowledging the effects of policy decisions that have resulted in inequitable outcomes, Equity Forward will leverage the diversity of voices in our city to benefit all San Diegans. For more information, visit: www.sandiego.gov/equity-forward



Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI) is a non-profit design and community development organization, working with the City of San Diego and community members to craft the Chollas Creek Watershed Regional Park Master Plan. We partner with under-resourced communities to advance equity and activate the unrealized potential in neighborhoods and cities, and in conjunction with the organizations listed below, will be formulating the Chollas Creek Master Plan, anticipated to be completed by mid-2024.





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Introduction

Towards a Healthy and Vibrant Chollas Creek

The Chollas Creek Master Plan will be a long-term planning document developed by the City of San Diego in partnership with various stakeholders and community members to guide the sustainable future of the Chollas Creek Watershed as a regional park. The goals of the Master Plan are to protect and enhance the Chollas Creek Watershed’s ecology; improve the watershed’s sustainability and resilience to the impacts of climate change; increase recreational opportunities; improve walking/rolling and biking within the watershed and adjacent to neighborhoods; and foster a sense of ownership and connection to the Creek among community members. By working hand-in-hand with the diverse communities within the watershed, the Chollas Creek Master Plan will address the needs and aspirations of the community members while creating a sustainable and resilient watershed.



What is a Master Plan?

A regional park master plan is a comprehensive and strategic document that outlines the long-term vision, goals, and guidelines for developing, managing, and enhancing a designated area. Incorporating the community’s vision, it serves as an actionable roadmap for future improvements, amenities, expansions, and park programming.

Goals for the Chollas Creek Regional Park

These goals outline a holistic strategy designed to transform Chollas Creek into a vibrant natural resource and regional park that effectively meets the multifaceted needs of the community. As we journey through the master planning process, these goals will be continually enhanced and refined, taking into account valuable input from stakeholders and residents within the watershed.

1.

Develop a high-quality network of parks, trails, and open spaces along Chollas Creek, prioritizing historically under-served communities.

2.

Enhance opportunities to access park areas and surrounding neighborhoods safely and conveniently, especially by walking/rolling and biking, and improve connections and crossings over the creek branches.

3.

Design and program the regional park area to reflect the cultures, languages, and needs of San Diego’s diverse population, strengthening a sense of ownership and connection to Chollas Creek as a cherished regional resource.

4.

Manage and enhance water and habitat conditions throughout the watershed to support the well-being of plants and animals on both land and water, contributing to a healthier ecosystem.



Understanding Chollas Creek

Chollas Creek serves as the central vein of the watershed. Originating from smaller tributaries, it winds its way through diverse neighborhoods of City Heights, Eastern Area, Encanto, Southeastern San Diego, Barrio Logan, Greater Golden Hill, North Park, and Normal Heights. As the primary conduit for surface water flow, the creek navigates varied landscapes, from natural canyons to man-made concrete channels. Operating as an ephemeral creek—meaning that the creek only has flowing water during certain times of the year—it becomes a thriving watercourse during the rainy seasons and nourishes wetlands throughout the watershed, effectively gathering and directing rainwater and runoff towards its ultimate destination, San Diego Bay.



Framework + Process

This Framework outlines both our approach to the Master Plan and the information that the plan will cover. It is intended for this work to be grounded in clear values, vision, and goals that are centered around the needs and priorities set forth by community members.

The plan acknowledges the historical and ongoing efforts of the diverse and active stakeholders in the region who continue to steward the Creek, including the original inhabitants of these areas, the Kumeyaay, and the numerous organizations that form the Chollas Creek Coalition, whose tireless efforts have built deep care and advocacy efforts for the Creek.

Our work will build on top of those efforts while incorporating additional quantitative and qualitative analysis of the Creek to explore new possibilities and reach community members that have not yet engaged with the Creek. Community members will have numerous opportunities to contribute to the plan including through surveys, walk audits, various engagement activities, community events, and a series of workshops. The aim is to create a unified vision for the expansive park network that attends to the unique physical conditions of the Creek as well as the cultural identity and values of the residents. Our process includes the following:

LISTEN

to residents, stakeholders, staff, and experts who have long-term experience working and living around the creek.

STUDY

the creek through intensive qualitative and quantitative analysis utilizing tools such as interactive mapping, site visits, interviews, and surveys.



SHARE

our findings through continued ongoing dialogue with community members to ground-truth their experience, co-creating avenues to learn and grow together.



TRANSLATE

the community's vision, values, and goals combined with on-the-ground possibilities into an actionable planning document for the city.



What will be in the Plan?

- **Creek Identity:** A unified vision and identity for the creek that will guide future development of amenities, habitat restoration, and infrastructure.
- **Recreation Facilities and Programming:** Outline for creating new, and enhancing existing, parks, open space, and trails within Chollas Creek area. This will include opportunities for additional education and stewardship programs and cultural events to offer diverse and engaging experiences for park visitors.
- **Transportation and Access:** Improved pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between the creek, surrounding neighborhoods, and all regional park areas. Opportunities to enhance access points, and integrate a diversity of transportation options to ensure easy and equitable access to the park for all residents.
- **History, Cultural Representation, and Equity:** Celebrate the historical and cultural significance of the area through art and design, promote inclusive community engagement, and ensure equitable distribution of park amenities to honor the diverse communities surrounding the creek.
- **Habitat and Climate Resilience:** Integrate habitat restoration, protection of native species, ecological services and the creation of wildlife corridors to enhance the ecological value of the creek and surrounding areas. The plan will integrate climate-resilient features to enhance the creek's ability to withstand the impacts of climate change.
- **Hydrology:** Address hydrological issues such as stormwater management, erosion control, and water quality improvement measures to protect the creek's watershed and promote sustainable water management practices. Prioritize green infrastructure such as bioswales, rain gardens, and permeable pavements to manage stormwater, improve water quality, and provide additional ecological benefits within the park.
- **Co-Beneficial Public Space:** Explore opportunities to support economic development, social services, and community wellness through design and programs.





Our Process

The project team will host inclusive engagement events that are multilingual, intergenerational, and held at locations around the watershed to include the region's diverse communities. By incorporating participatory planning techniques, we will invite community members to contribute their ideas and visions for the park throughout the planning process in ways that will actively shape the master plan outcomes. We actively seek input from community leaders, local organizations, and grassroots initiatives that represent and advocate for the marginalized communities in the Chollas Creek area. Our engagement efforts will include:



Community Survey: A watershed-wide survey that the City will distribute online and in person to gather community input to guide the development of the Chollas Creek Master Plan

Walk Audit: An on-the-ground look at current creek conditions to discuss opportunities and issues that integrate lived experience with engineering observations.

Stakeholder Meetings: Conversations with broad stakeholders from the environmental sector, community-based organizations, and city agencies to better understand and coordinate all current work happening within and adjacent to the Creek, as well as previous engagement efforts.



Mobile Engagement: The best way to reach folks is to meet them where they are. Mobile engagements are used to engage people at grocery stores, libraries, and other formal and informal community centers. This activity will include a series of deployments throughout the project area to hear from residents firsthand.

Workshops: A series of six workshops to listen to community members about preferences for programming and design of the watershed will occur at key decision-making points in the planning process.

Implementing the Plan

The Chollas Creek Master Plan will consist of goals, programs and design standards that will guide implementation throughout the course of the regional park development. The implementation strategy will offer specific actions and measures to be taken to support the plan and its desired outcomes. The implementation strategies section of the Chollas Creek Master Plan will involve a multi-faceted approach encompassing policies, funding mechanisms, and actionable steps. The plan will include the following to ensure an actionable plan:

POLICIES + DESIGN

Policies provide a high-level approach or direction for achieving goals. Policy implementation will entail developing and adopting guidelines and regulations that align with Chollas Creek Master Plan and other City of San Diego Policy Documents, such as, the Parks Master Plan. The Chollas Creek Master Plan will showcase concept designs that integrate policy and design guidelines.

PHASING

The Chollas Creek Master Plan will propose a phased implementation approach based on factors such as community needs, existing infrastructure, environmental significance, available funding, and potential for immediate impact. A phased approach will be used to focus initially on areas where new park infrastructure and enhancements to existing infrastructure can rapidly benefit underserved communities and environmental health.

FUNDING STRATEGY

The funding strategy section of the plan will discuss various funding sources and opportunities such as government grants and community fundraising to support the execution of critical projects and ongoing maintenance.

IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation section of the plan will identify actionable steps to include the physical implementation of park improvements, such as the construction of trails, amenities, and green infrastructure, as well as the implementation of educational programs, events, and recreational activities that align with the plan's vision.



Summer 2023 - Summer 2024 Community Engagement

Community engagement efforts will span the entirety of this project. It will take a variety of forms throughout the process, including community surveys, walk audits, stakeholder meetings, mobile engagement, and workshops.



Spring 2023

- Master Plan Kick-off
- Framework Report
- Existing Conditions Research

Summer 2023

- Public Engagement Begins
- Existing Conditions Report

Spring - Summer 2023 Existing Conditions Report

Our existing conditions report will be the foundational analysis for identifying opportunities along the Creek for infrastructure improvements and programming. It will:

1. Analyze the physical conditions and infrastructure along the creek way to identify what enhancements are needed and possible.
2. Explore the existing social infrastructure to expand programming and connection between the Creek and the community.
3. Map social and environmental conditions within the watershed to identify high-priority neighborhoods and understand the nexus between health and the environment within the region.
4. Investigate, map, and integrate historic planning efforts around Chollas Creek.

Winter 2023-24

- Public Engagement
- Master Plan Initiation





Timeline + Work Plan

The development of Chollas Creek Master Plan is a comprehensive process to ensure that the social, cultural, and ecological goals of the communities adjacent to the creek are being met. Over the course of Spring 2023 - Summer 2024, the team will analyze existing conditions, conduct community engagement, and compile a list of policies, funding mechanisms, and actionable steps to realize the vision for a healthy, vibrant, and equity-focused Chollas Creek.

Spring 2024

- Public Engagement
- Master Plan Development



Winter 2023 - Summer 2024

Master Plan, Implementation, and Evaluation

This Master Plan will outline policy and design guidelines linked to the existing conditions report and the community input. Likewise, the plan will include implementation and funding strategies per action to follow up on its success. The plan will:

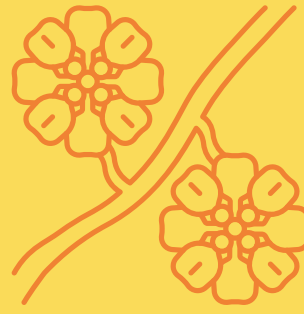
1. Create design and programming recommendations and policy frameworks to guide the regional park projects.
2. Identify and prioritize specific projects within the regional park area
3. Identify funding and implementation strategies



Summer 2024

- Public Engagement
- Master Plan Approval





Get Involved!

We invite all community members, organizations, and stakeholders to actively participate in the collaborative process of developing the Chollas Creek Master Plan! Your valuable input and perspectives are vital to shaping a regional park that truly represents the needs and aspirations of our diverse community. Join us in this important endeavor by attending community meetings, workshops, and sharing your ideas. Stay informed and engaged by visiting our website, where you can find updates, resources, and opportunities to contribute.



<https://tinyurl.com/ms33t5ce>

Scan the QR code to join our interest list and learn more about this project!

Or to learn more visit:
<https://www.sandiego.gov/planning/work/chollas-creek-watershed/>

Together, let's create a vibrant and inclusive Chollas Creek that we can all enjoy and be proud of.

Questions, comments, and requests for information about Chollas Creek Master Plan are welcomed by the project team and can be sent to publicspaces@sandiego.gov