



The City of San Diego

Staff Report

DATE ISSUED: June 8, 2020 REPORT NO. PC-20-037

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Planning Department

SUBJECT: Complete Communities: Play Everywhere – City of San Diego Parks Master Plan and Amendment to the General Plan Recreation Element

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Council District(s): Citywide

OVERVIEW:

This action requests a recommendation to adopt the Planning Department's Complete Communities: Play Everywhere – City of San Diego Parks Master Plan and amendment to the General Plan Recreation Element.

The 2008 General Plan Recreation Element identified the need for a comprehensive Parks Master Plan. A draft Parks Master Plan and an amendment to the General Plan Recreation Element were released for public review on April 24, 2020. The draft Parks Master Plan envisions an interconnected Citywide parks system with opportunities for everyone to get outside and play while fostering social interactions, cultural, activities, and exercise, as well as providing urban respite, enjoyable transportation options, and an increased tree canopy cover.

Ensuring equity in the City's parks system is a key component of this plan, with access-based goals that focus on investments with the greatest park standard and service gaps.

The plan also focuses on ensuring access to all the City's great recreational resources, including the beaches and shorelines and regional parks, for all San Diegans. This equity-driven framework will prioritize capital investments to identified communities of concern.

The draft plan also focuses on a framework for delivering a wide range of park and recreational amenities sooner. An updated framework that reflects the City's existing and future needs, based on new patterns of development, is critical to delivering needed parks across the City. The plan allows for innovation and flexibility to meet the present and changing recreational needs of the City's residents and visitors.

The plan includes policies and strategies to achieve the vision of providing opportunities for everyone to play everywhere. The proposed amendment to the General Plan Recreation Element includes amendments to reflect the new policies in the Parks Master Plan.

The CEQA and Environmental Policy Section of the Planning Department has prepared an addendum to the 2008 General Plan Environmental Impact Report No. 104495 EIR (SCH # 2006091032), certified on March 10, 2008. The General Plan EIR Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) applies to the addendum. The General Plan Program EIR MMRP can be viewed at <https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/legacy//planning/genplan/pdf/peir/mmrp.pdf>. The information contained in the addendum reflects the independent judgement of the City of San Diego as the Lead Agency.

PROPOSED ACTIONS:

RECOMMEND APPROVAL of the Addendum to the 2008 General Plan Environmental Impact Report No. 104495 EIR (SCH # 2006091032).

RECOMMEND ADOPTION of a resolution approving an amendment to the General Plan Recreation Element.

RECOMMEND ADOPTION of a resolution adopting the City of San Diego Parks Master Plan.

DISCUSSION:

A. What is Complete Communities?

Complete Communities is a multifaceted initiative aimed to facilitate equitable, healthy, and sustainable neighborhoods across San Diego. It will help shape a future that works for all San Diegans with a focus on four key areas: housing, mobility, parks, and infrastructure. Complete Communities includes planning strategies that work together to create incentives to build homes near transit, offer more mobility choices, and provide new opportunities for people to walk, bike, relax, and play.

These efforts will provide all residents access to the resources and opportunities necessary to improve the quality of their lives. These thoughtful and inclusive planning initiatives and programs will create a healthy environment and thriving communities that will serve to enhance the quality of life for all residents, regardless of their background and identity.

B. What is Complete Communities: Play Everywhere – City of San Diego Parks Master Plan and Amendment to General Plan Recreation Element?

Complete Communities: Play Everywhere – City of San Diego Parks Master Plan and amendment to the General Plan Recreation Element is comprised of two initiatives. The first is the development of a new Parks Master Plan to replace the plan adopted by the City in 1956. The second initiative is the proposed amendment to the General Plan Recreation Element which aligns the General Plan with the Parks Master Plan.

Relevant parks and recreational programs should meet the changing needs and priorities of residents, both now and in the future. The system should offer safe, convenient access to a park space or recreation program for every resident. Parks should be iconic, reflecting the unique qualities of their settings. The system should be sustainable. Park improvements, programs, and management strategies should contribute to economic, social, and environmental well-being. Equity is a central value of the City's parks system. Park planning, and investments should address long-standing inequities in the City's parks system experienced by people that live in communities of concern by ensuring equal access to meaningful recreational opportunities.

The City's park and recreation needs have evolved, influenced by changes in population and development patterns. Communities vary in the quality and availability of park spaces due to patterns of historical growth. Prior development patterns have also left parts of the City with fewer connections to parks and natural areas. More growth located in existing neighborhoods increases demand for parks that meet the unique needs of these developed areas that contain limited land for new park spaces.

The Parks Master Plan's vision is to bring the many benefits of great parks and recreational opportunities to all City residents and visitors. Great parks feature quality recreational amenities and programs for diverse interests, ages, and abilities. These parks are comfortable, active, safe spaces for social connections. Meaningful parks celebrate the history and identity of surrounding communities. They also protect and promote the health of sensitive natural resources and habitats. In a great system, parks join with lively public spaces, active streets, cultural amenities, trails, and conserved natural lands to make up a connected and accessible network of recreational experiences for everyone.

The proposed General Plan Recreation Element Amendment identifies various methods by which the City can sustain, connect, and expand its parks and recreational opportunities through the implementation of the Parks Master Plan.

B.1 How will the Parks Master Plan and Amendment to the General Plan Recreation Element help San Diego achieve its climate goals?

The Climate Action Plan (CAP), adopted in 2015, is a fundamental citywide plan to achieve greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions through local policy and action. The CAP implementation is dependent upon adoption of additional ordinances, policies, and programs to implement the strategies and goals set forth in the CAP. The CAP identifies five primary strategies that collectively will meet State GHG reduction targets. The Parks Master Plan and amendment to the General Plan Recreation Element will help the City implement Strategies 3 and 5 of the CAP.

With respect to Strategy 3 both documents increase active transportation and transit mode shares and encourage a majority of new development to occur in urbanized areas near transit. Under the new Park Standard parks are awarded points for proximity to transit, links to C1 bike lanes, and connections to other civic use or the public realm.

To implement the goal of increasing the urban tree canopy found in Strategy 5, the Parks Master Plan establishes policy CRS4 which encourages the development of a shade cover standard within parks through coordination with the City Forester.

B.2 How will the Parks Master Plan and Amendment to the General Plan Recreation Element help invest equitably and improve access in all San Diego neighborhoods?

Complete Communities: Play Everywhere – City of San Diego Parks Master Plan and Amendment to General Plan Recreation Element will help the City invest equitably throughout all neighborhoods by establishing a travel time goal for reaching a meaningful recreational opportunity and using measurable criteria to prioritize future capital investments. The measurable criteria can include the City's Climate Equity Index, the age and condition of existing parks, park capacity and recreational value relative to surrounding population density, and walking, bicycling, and transit accessibility to prioritize future capital investments.

10-20-30-40 Access Goals

Access goals examine how easily people can travel to a park or recreation facility. Everyone should be able to get to an enjoyable recreational experience along a safe, enjoyable, and active route. The City has set a 10-20-30-40 access and activation goal: a 10-minute walk, 20-minute bike ride, and 30-minute transit ride to a park or recreation facility that will be enjoyed for *at least* 40 minutes. In addition to walking, biking and taking transit can increase the range and types of recreational opportunities that each resident can access. Focusing on activation within public park spaces is important to ensuring that access to meaningful and enjoyable recreational opportunities.

Gaps in the access network highlight opportunities to plan for new park space near communities with limited access or enhance pedestrian, bike, and transit links that make it easier to get to parks.

An Equitable Parks System

An equity-based approach recognizes that certain areas of a city are likelier to have fewer, quality recreational opportunities due to factors such as the era of community development and historical levels of investment. Equity also considers the social and economic characteristics of communities, highlighting areas where residents may have a greater need for the benefits of public parks and programming based on criteria such as age and income.

Equity-driven frameworks guide capital investment to communities of concern to reduce the parks gap and contribute to healthier, more vibrant neighborhoods. Specific prioritization criteria will incorporate the Climate Equity Index, Park Condition Index, and Park Pressure. Equity goals go hand-in-hand with the plan's access goals toward achieving access to meaningful recreational experiences for everyone.

The Parks Master Plan's vision for an interconnected parks system, where everyone has opportunities to access and enjoy a wide variety of recreational resources, regardless of where each individual lives, contributes to the City's ability to deliver parks sooner (see Section B.4). Prioritized investments in Communities of Concern and other areas that have park deficiencies are investments not just in those specific communities, but an investment for the entirety of the Citywide parks system.

B.3 How will the Parks Master Plan and Amendment to the General Plan Recreation Element change the way the City plans and evaluates parks?

A New Park Standard Focused on Delivering More Parks and Recreational Resources Faster

As the City continues to grow through more infill development located near transit, limited open land and rising acquisition costs make it increasingly difficult to meet the General Plan's current acreage-based park standard.

The plan identifies a new standard to allow for the City to deliver more recreational opportunities in more places sooner – for everyone. This new standard is based on recreational value; size factors into recreational value, but value is recognized for many other factors as well. The new value-based standard establishes a point value to represent recreational opportunities within parks. Recreational value emphasizes the activities and experiences that residents can enjoy, rather than the parkland in a given area. The Value Standard is based on four communities that met the previous acreage standard of 2.8 acres per 1,000 residents in 2020. These communities' recreational amenities were scored, yielding a recreation value of 12 points per 1,000 people that is now proposed to be applied Citywide.

The new standard measures the inherent benefits of park spaces – their ability to support active recreation and exercise; encourage socializing; link to transit, bike facilities, trails, and active public areas; and invite activity throughout the day. Since this standard stresses the value of amenities and features within a space, rather than its size alone, the standard recognizes the value of parks appropriate for diverse communities, from a large field park for active recreation to trails within a regional park or a small, lively urban gathering space. A focus on value also rewards efforts to upgrade existing parks by adding amenities, pursuing joint use partnerships, and introducing new recreational activities.

A recreational value of 12 points per 1,000 people represents a range of recreation experiences comparable to the opportunities available to residents in communities that previously achieved the acreage-based standard. Allowing for flexibility is important to allow the City to deliver new parks and amenities to all of the City's communities, regardless of available land. Under the draft plan, communities that have previously been overlooked for new park investments due to a lack of available land, would become eligible for investments in existing spaces to enhance the overall value of those parks to the neighborhood and City. See pages 57-58 and Appendix D of the draft plan for more detail regarding recreational value scoring

B.4 How will the Parks Master Plan and Amendment to the General Plan Recreation Element fund future park development and investment?

The City currently sets and collects fees on a community planning area level. Fees must be spent within the community they were collected from and on

facilities already identified. These fees vary widely between communities and the funds are not always spent on park related expenses. This model restricts the City's ability to deliver parks sooner even when money is otherwise available.

The Parks Master Plan sets the framework to allow the City to transition to a Citywide Park Development Impact Fee, which will allow the future fees collected to be invested throughout the City, and will allow the City to focus its investments in the areas with greatest needs and ensuring an equitable and balanced Citywide parks system. The fee will enable faster and greater delivery of parks and recreation facilities, and more efficient use of land to provide more recreational assets.

B.5 How will the Parks Master Plan and Amendment to the General Plan Recreation Element implement its vision?

Achieving the vision of Play Everywhere for Everyone will take time, committed resources, and coordinated investments. Transforming the parks system that the City has today into the system that the City wants will require innovative delivery strategies, sustainable funding approaches, and a continued focus on creating great places across the City.

The implementation framework for the plan consists of goals and policies in 12 categories. Together, this mix of programs, tools, and partnerships outlines a sustainable strategy to expand and upgrade the City's parks into the envisioned world-class parks system for all.

These 12 policy categories are:

- Parks + Programming - Opportunities for everyone to play, explore, learn, and interact.
- Equity and Access - Access within a 10-minute walk, 20-minute bike ride, and 30-minute transit ride for everyone to a park or recreational experience that can be enjoyed for at least 40 minutes.
- Activation - Safe and inviting public spaces that support positive experiences for everyone and that further equity and access goals.
- Co-Benefits - Multi-purpose park spaces that improve overall quality of life.
- Community Building - Parks that are the focal points of our communities.
- Mobility as Recreation - A Citywide network of safe, active recreational links that connects people with parks and public spaces.
- Arts and Culture - Parks that express the unique identities of our communities and connect people to arts and cultural experiences.

- Conservation, Sustainability, and Resilience - A parks system that preserves and enhances our natural landscape, while making the City more active and resilient.
- Partnerships - A collaborative network of partners and resources that improves and expands recreational opportunities throughout the City.
- Operations and Maintenance - An efficient, durable, and well-maintained parks system that provides consistent, long-term quality to everyone.
- Regional Parks - Well-maintained and accessible regional parks that showcase unique scenic, natural, historical or cultural resources, while offering everyday recreation.
- Funding - Sustainable, equitable, and dedicated funding sources to invest in the City's parks system.

City Strategic Plan Goal(s)/Objective(s):

Goal #1: Provide high quality public service

Objective #1: Promote a customer-focused culture that prizes accessible, consistent, and predictable delivery of services

Objective #2: Improve external and internal coordination and communication

Objective #4: Ensure equipment and technology are in place so that employees can achieve high quality public service

Goal #2: Work in partnership with all of our communities to achieve safe and livable neighborhoods

Objective #2 Reduce and prevent crime

Objective #3 Invest in quality infrastructure

Objective #4 Foster services that improve quality of life

Objective #5: Cultivate civic engagement and participation

Objective #6: Decrease unsheltered homelessness

Goal #3: Create and sustain a resilient and economically prosperous City

Objective #1: Create dynamic neighborhoods that incorporate mobility, connectivity, and sustainability

Objective #2: Increase water independence

Objective #4: Prepare and respond to climate change

Fiscal Considerations:

There is no immediate fiscal impact; however future funding will be needed to achieve the Parks Master Plan's vision.

Environmental Impact:

The CEQA and Environmental Policy Section of the Planning Department has prepared an addendum to the 2008 General Plan Environmental Impact Report No.

104495 EIR (SCH # 2006091032), certified on March 10, 2008. The information contained in the addendum reflects the independent judgement of the City of San Diego as the Lead Agency.

Equal Opportunity Contracting Information (if applicable): N/A

Previous Council and/or Committee Actions:

On March 15, 2018, the Parks Master Plan work plan was presented as an information item to the Planning Commission.

On March 21, 2018, the Parks Master Plan work plan was presented as an information item to the Public Safety and Livable Neighborhood Committee.

On May 15, 2018, The Parks Master Plan work plan was presented as an information item to the City Council.

On October 23, 2018, the Parks Master Plan was presented as an information item to the Community Planners Committee to solicit input.

On October 2, 2019, the Parks Master Plan was presented as an information item to the Active Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to solicit input.

On October 9, 2019, the Parks Master Plan was presented as an information item to the Community Forest Advisory Board to solicit input.

On November 21, 2019, the Parks Master Plan was presented as an information item to the Park and Recreation Board to solicit input.

On June 1, 2020, the Parks and Recreation Board voted unanimously to recommend approval of the Parks Master Plan and General Plan Recreation Element Amendment.

Key Stakeholders and Community Outreach Efforts:

The Planning Department, along with the Parks and Recreation Department, has conducted major public input activities as part of the initial information gathering phase, regional workshops in each Council District and Downtown for a total of 10 workshops, three Citywide visioning workshops, two online engagement activities, pop-up community events, and stakeholder interviews with representatives of other jurisdictional entities and non-profit organizations. The feedback has been integrated into the benchmarking and technical analyses to identify needs and priorities across the City's parks and recreation system.

A statistically valid survey of more than 1,800 randomly selected residents was also conducted to gauge recreational use, interests, and needs. The results identified priorities

for park, facilities and programming investments. The top priorities were similar across all City Council Districts. The top recreation facility priorities included beaches and shoreline parks, small pocket or neighborhood parks, open spaces and trails, off-leash dog parks, and aquatic complexes. Priorities were focused on upgrades to existing City parks, 95% of respondents found upgrades to existing public parks very important or somewhat important. Just over two-thirds (67%) of residents were satisfied or very satisfied with the City's existing Parks and Recreation facilities and programs.

Public outreach included the following:

1. Ten Regional Open House Workshops were held to discuss the Parks Master Plan, the dates and locations are listed below. Regional workshops were used to inform the public on the planning process, existing conditions of parks and recreation facilities and to obtain needs and priorities for the future.
 - Council District 1 Regional Open House Workshop at the Standley Recreation Center on 06/21/18
 - Council District 2 Regional Open House Workshop at Robb Field on 06/11/18
 - Council District 3 Regional Open House Workshop at the Golden Hill Recreation Center on 06/25/18
 - Council District 4 Regional Open House Workshop at the Skyline Hills Recreation Center on 06/19/18
 - Council District 5 Regional Open House Workshop at Black Mountain Middle School on 06/14/18
 - Council District 6 Regional Open House Workshop at the Canyonside Recreation Center on 06/20/18
 - Council District 7 Regional Open House Workshop at the Linda Vista Recreation Center on 06/06/18
 - Council District 8 Regional Open House Workshop at the San Ysidro Community Activity Center on 06/27/18
 - Council District 9 Regional Open House Workshop at the Mid-City Gym on 06/18/18
 - Downtown Regional Open House Workshop at the Downtown Central Library on 06/12/18

2. Three Visioning Workshops were held to discuss the Parks Master Plan, the dates and locations are listed below. Visioning Open House Workshops were used to understand existing conditions for parks, recreation facilities and programs, identify goals and policies for the parks and recreation system, and develop park and facility improvement priorities and recommendations
 - Visioning Open House Workshop in San Ysidro on 04/27/19
 - Visioning Open House Workshop at Balboa Park on 04/23/19
 - Visioning Open House Workshop in Carmel Valley on 05/04/19

3. City Staff attended two community events to inform the public on the status of the Parks Master plan and solicit input and gather information on needs and priorities. These events are listed below.

- Clean Air Day at the Boys & Girls Club in Encanto on 10/05/19
- CiclosDias at Fair@44 in City Heights on 10/27/19

Additionally, staff promoted the Parks Master Plan through a variety of media outlets including social media posts on Facebook and Instagram. Staff has provided regular updates on the Parks Master Plan through the Planning Department website and presented to various stakeholder groups throughout the planning process.

Mike Hansen

Department Director

Erik Caldwell

Deputy Chief Operating Officer

Attachments:

Attachment A: Draft Parks Master Plan

Attachment B: Draft Amendment to General Plan Recreation Element

Attachment C: Addendum to the 2008 General Plan Environmental Impact Report No. 104495 EIR (SCH # 2006091032)

Attachment D: Draft City Council Resolution adopting the Parks Master Plan

Attachment E: Draft City Council Resolution Adopting Amendments to the General Plan Recreation Element

Attachment F: Draft City Council Resolution Certifying an Addendum to Program Environmental Impact Report No. 104495/Sch. No. 200609103 for Amendments to the General Plan Recreation Element and Parks Master Plan

Attachment G: Parks Master Plan Workplan

Attachment H: Parks Master Plan Existing Conditions Report

Attachment I: Parks Master Plan Community Survey Report

Attachment J: Parks Master Plan Needs and Priorities Report

