



# REPORT

## THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO TO THE PARK AND RECREATION BOARD

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DATE ISSUED: March 11, 2010

REPORT NO: 101

ATTENTION: Park and Recreation Board  
Agenda of March 18, 2010

SUBJECT: Trail Policies Amendments to the General Plan

### SUMMARY

Issue – Should the Park and Recreation Board recommend approval to the City Council of the proposed amendments to the General Plan Recreation Element and Glossary regarding trail policies?

Director's Recommendation – Recommend approval of the proposed amendments to the General Plan Recreation Element and Glossary regarding trail policies.

Other Recommendations – None.

Fiscal Impact – The proposed amendments to the General Plan Recreation Element and Glossary regarding trail policies will be processed with existing staff. There is no fiscal impact.

Water and Energy Conservation Status – The proposed amendments to the General Plan regarding trail policies comply with all water and energy conservation guidelines contained in Council Policy 200-14.

Environmental – A Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) - Project NO. 104495; SCH No. 2006091032, was prepared for the General Plan, adopted in 2008. It has not yet been determined whether the proposed General Plan amendments fall under the scope of this PEIR.

### BACKGROUND

The City of San Diego General Plan was adopted in March 2008. The Recreation Element contains language which recommends adoption of a citywide Trails Master Plan, in addition to a citywide Parks Master Plan. The Park and Recreation Department has been working on draft portions of a Trails Master Plan, trail design guidelines and management directives for trails over the past couple of years. The Park and Recreation Department desires to ultimately have a document that can be used to implement trail creation, trail closures, trail maintenance and

rehabilitation, and restoration/remediation. The type of comprehensive document that the Park and Recreation Department desires to prepare and would need in order to effectively plan, construct and manage trails requires considerable additional staff or consultant time, as well as a Master Development Permit and environmental review in the form of an EIR. Due to budget constraints currently and into the foreseeable future, funding has not been identified for the continued planning effort, including the permitting process and environmental review.

## DISCUSSION

The adopted General Plan contains several policies relating to trails, but relies on an anticipated Trails Master Plan to provide additional guidance. Given that budget constraints have delayed adoption of such a master plan, staff has proposed that trails policies be advanced through a multi-tiered effort including:

- Amend the General Plan to provide more specific citywide trails policies and definitions;
- Incorporate more technical trail design and construction guidelines into the City's Consultant's Guide for Park Design & Development; and
- Identify key trails and access points as parts of community plan updates, discretionary permit reviews, and other applicable land use and park planning documents.

The proposed General Plan amendments are provided as the Attachment to this report. In addition to the specific language relating to trails, the proposed amendments also propose modifications to existing Recreation Element policies that recommend preparation of both a citywide Trails Master Plan and a citywide Parks Master Plan, to instead allow for trails to be addressed as a part of a comprehensive Parks Master Plan. This modification is recommended as the policies, recommendations and guidelines that would be addressed in a Trails Master Plan could be incorporated into the future Parks Master Plan. This cost-effective approach would be more efficient and concise, and eliminate the redundancy of creating two documents. However, staff would consider completing a citywide Trails Master Plan effort, if funding for that effort is identified prior to the identification of sufficient funding required to complete a comprehensive Parks Master Plan.

In addition to addressing citywide park planning, the future Parks Master Plan would contain the trail goals and recommendations for all communities, including the communities already updated, in the form of an element or an appendix of the master plan. The City Planning & Community Investment Department will provide the staff for the ongoing and planned community plan updates. It is anticipated that the future Parks Master Plan effort would require the services of a consultant and contributions from both City Planning & Community Investment Department and Park and Recreation Department staff. Design guidelines for trails have been developed by Park and Recreation Department staff and will be included in the Consultant's Guide to Park Design and Development update currently underway. Trails management would be handled in the form of Park and Recreation Department Directives.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve the proposed amendments to the General Plan Recreation Element and Glossary regarding trail policies with modifications.
2. Do not approve the proposed amendments to the General Plan Recreation Element and Glossary regarding trail policies.

Respectfully submitted,

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Bennur Koksuz  
Deputy Director, Urban Form Division

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Prepared by: Howard Greenstein  
Park Designer, Urban Form Division

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Attachment: Proposed draft General Plan Recreation Element and Glossary amendments regarding trail policies.

cc: Council Districts 1-8  
Los Penasquitos Canyon Preserve Task Force  
Mission Trails Regional Park Task Force  
Otay Valley Regional Park Policy Committee  
Black Mountain Park Citizens' Advisory Committee  
Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve Citizens' Advisory Committee  
Mission Trails Regional Park Citizens' Advisory Committee  
Open Space Canyons Advisory Committee  
Otay Valley Regional Park Citizens' Advisory Committee  
Tecolote Canyon Natural Park Citizens' Advisory Committee  
Marian Bear Recreation Council  
Rose Canyon Recreation Council  
Sunset Cliffs Natural Park Recreation Council  
Nancy Bragado, Principal Planner, City Planning & Community Investment Department  
File

# Proposed General Plan Amendments Related to Trails

## Recreation Element

### D. Accessibility

*Starting with 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph under “Discussion:”*

Recreation opportunity addresses the need for facilities to be accessible to the broadest population possible. This means facilities should be optimally located and designed to address people with special needs. They should be located along transit routes that provide access for the disabled, elderly, teens, and the economically disadvantaged. They should be designed as open facilities that can be easily navigated by seniors and persons with disabilities. Outdoor recreational opportunities should also be available to the diverse population within the City’s open space and resource-based parks. This can be accomplished through development of accessible overlooks and trails, where feasible, and interpretive and directional signs (see also RE-F.7).

Many people enjoy the use of trails for the outdoor experience, opportunity for exercise, and linkages they offer. When improving existing trails or designing new ones, it is important to provide for the protection of natural and cultural resources, as well as to address water management, user safety, and maintenance needs. The development of a proposed city-wide Trails Master Plan, or the incorporation of trails master planning into a city-wide Parks Master Plan, will assist in planning for, and the adoption of, a city-wide trails system, within and connecting the City’s and region’s open space areas, parks and [recreation](#) amenities. Until the adoption of a Trails Master Plan or Parks Master Plan which incorporates trails master planning, the City’s trail standards, can be found as an appendix to the Consultant’s Guide to Park Design and Development, which provides guidelines for new trail construction and for improvements to existing trails. Basic trail definitions are included in the Glossary, and the Mobility and Conservation Elements provide additional recommendations regarding access (see also Mobility Element, Policies ME-A.6.b and CE-B.5).

- RE-D.2 Provide barrier-free trails and outdoor experiences and opportunities for persons with disabilities where feasible.
- RE-D.6. Provide safe and convenient linkages to, and within, park and recreation facilities and open space areas.
  - a. Provide pedestrian and bicycle paths between recreation facilities and residential development.
  - b. Designate pedestrian and bicycle corridors, and equestrian corridors where appropriate, that link residential neighborhoods with park and recreation facilities, trails, and open spaces.

- c. Improve public access through development of, and improvements to, multi-use trails within urban canyons and other open space areas.
  - d. Coordinate efforts with the City’s Pedestrian Master Plan, the anticipated Park Master Plan which incorporates trails master planning or a Trails Master Plan, and the County’s trail system to provide safe and convenient linkages between areas (see also Mobility Element, Section A).
  - e. Coordinate with the county, state, and federal governments to ensure planning for and connectivity to trail systems outside of the City such as the Trans-County Trail Plan, San Diego River trails, Sweetwater River trails, Otay Valley trails, the California Coastal Trail, the Pacific Crest Trail and the California Riding and Hiking Trail.
  - f. Identify key trails and access points as a part of community plan updates, discretionary permit reviews, and other applicable land use and park planning documents.
- RE-E.6. Use of underutilized or unnecessary City rights-of-way and utility easements to help meet recreational needs, where appropriate.
- a. Develop and maintain an inventory of underutilized or unnecessary rights-of-way, including underlying ownership.
  - b. Develop criteria to determine potential value of underutilized or unnecessary rights-of-way and utility easements for recreational use, including bike, pedestrian, and equestrian linkages for trail access to parks and open space (and canyons), and as overlooks into open space or beaches.
- RE.F-7. Create or enhance open space multi-use trails to accommodate, where appropriate, pedestrians/hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians.
- a. Develop, adopt and maintain updates of a citywide Trails Master Plan or Parks Master Plan which incorporates trails master planning to guide the provision and enhancement of open space multi-purpose trails.
  - b. Enhance public access to public open space by clearly identifying trailheads and trail alignments which are consistent with MSCP preservation goals.
  - c. Locate canyon and other open space trails to take advantage of existing pathways and maintenance easements where possible and appropriate.
  - d. Design and construct new trails so that they provide for safe and enjoyable use, are sustainable in terms of water use and maintenance needs, and protect and preserve sensitive natural and cultural resources. See also Policy RE-D.2.
  - e. Identify and repair hazards on existing trails, and strive for sustainability and “barrier-free” design using current best management practices for trail construction, maintenance, and management.

- f. Ensure that trails that are considered to be a part of the City’s trail system meet one or more of the City’s definitions of what constitutes a trail (see Glossary).
- g. Allow for the closure of existing public trails where such trails are unsafe, unsustainable, redundant, serve only a single private property, lack legal public access, and/or unnecessarily impact environmentally sensitive areas.

## Glossary

Trails: Trails that are approved as a part of the City’s system of public trails are defined as:

- **Loop Trail:** A single trail that provides a loop. This type of trail will usually have scenic or other characteristics, but may also be a short exercise trail.
- **Destination Oriented:** A trail designed to go to a specific destination. This destination may be scenic, educational, or activity-based and may provide a specific point to terminate the trail; alternatively, the length of the trail itself and surrounding area may be the destination. The trail terminus will usually include interpretive signage or other information. This may also include locally used trails that have no outlet but that provide educational and recreational activities.
- **Connector Trail:** A trail that connects or links to another trail or trail system. This type of trail could also be part of a larger “loop trail” or “destination oriented trail”, or may be the start or ending of an alternate transportation route.

**Table RE-4 Eligible Population-Based Park Equivalencies**

Category	Facility Type	Guidelines for Equivalencies Credit	Typical Components and examples
<b>Equivalencies</b>	All (as shown below)	<p><u>The following guidelines apply to all categories:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determined case by case by evaluation of use and function</li> <li>• Easily accessed by the public</li> <li>• Consistent with the General Plan, Parks Master Plan, individual park master plans, applicable community plans and other applicable land use plans</li> <li>• Includes typical population-based park components and facilities as appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Picnic areas</li> <li>• Children’s play areas</li> <li>• Multi-purpose turf areas</li> <li>• Multi-purpose courts</li> <li>• Sports fields</li> <li>• Comfort Station</li> <li>• Security Lighting</li> <li>• Walkways</li> <li>• Landscaping</li> <li>• Parking</li> </ul>
	Joint Use Facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires an executed long-term joint-use agreement</li> <li>• Property owner could be City or partner agency/entity (school districts, other public agencies, not-for-profit private entities)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children’s play areas</li> <li>• Multi-purpose turf areas</li> <li>• Multi-purpose courts</li> <li>• Sports Field</li> <li>• Parking</li> </ul>
	Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could include portions of, and areas adjacent to, greenways or linear parks</li> <li>• Consistent with the Trails Master Plan <u>or trail policies within the Parks Master Plan, community plans and other applicable land use documents</u></li> <li>• Provides linkage between parks, or parks and open space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scenic overlooks or viewpoints</li> <li>• Staging Areas</li> </ul>
	Portion of Resource-Based Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent with applicable Resource-Based park master plans (e.g. Balboa Park Master Plan, Mission Bay Park Master Plan) and community plans</li> <li>• Typically contiguous to the community it serves</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community and Neighborhood Park components (Table RE-2)</li> <li>• Recreation Facilities components (Table RE-3)</li> </ul>
	Privately-owned Park Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires agreements, public use easements, and/or other applicable legal instruments that remain in effect in perpetuity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sites within residential, commercial/industrial, or mixed-use developments</li> </ul>
	Non-Traditional Park Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes atypical sites such as rooftops, interior space of non-park buildings, and portions of other publicly-owned property</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rooftop or indoor basketball or tennis court</li> <li>• Green streets or linear street parks</li> </ul>
	Facility or Building Expansion or Upgrade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes physical improvements that expand or increase the intensity of use or range of users available at an existing City owned or controlled park or recreation facility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expansion or upgrades to children’s play areas or multi-purpose courts</li> <li>• Building additions</li> <li>• Aquatics complex additions</li> <li>• Specialty-use room improvements (dance, weight/fitness, arts &amp; crafts, commercial-grade kitchen)</li> </ul>