



REPORT

THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO TO THE PARK AND RECREATION BOARD

DATE ISSUED: June 11, 2013 REPORT NO. 201

ATTENTION: Park and Recreation Board
Agenda of June 20, 2013

SUBJECT: Ocean Beach Community Plan Update – Recreation Element

SUMMARY THIS IS A WORKSHOP ITEM ONLY. BOARD INPUT IS REQUESTED

BACKGROUND

The City of San Diego has completed the draft update to the 1975 Ocean Beach Community Plan and Local Coastal Program. As part of the plan update effort, the Ocean Beach Planning Board formed a Recreation Subcommittee to provide guidance and community input. The Recreation Subcommittee and City staff met on a regular basis to create the Recreation Element that is now within the draft Ocean Beach Community Plan and Local Coastal Program.

DISCUSSION

The draft Ocean Beach Recreation Element includes specific goals and policy recommendations for addressing population-based park and recreation facilities, preservation, protection and enhancement of those facilities, accessibility to the facilities, and open space lands. These recommendations, along with goals and policies of the General Plan, (see Attachment 1 – Recreation Element RE 10-11 and RE 15-18) provide a comprehensive parks strategy intended to serve the recreational needs of the community through the next twenty years. Due to the scarcity of park amenities and limited land availability in Ocean Beach, the Recreation Element includes park equivalencies, such as portions of resource-based parks, trails, and joint use facilities, as allowed for in the General Plan (see Attachment 2 – Draft Ocean Beach Recreation Element).

The General Plan standard of a minimum of 2.8 usable acres per 1,000 residents would result in the need for 42.20 acres of population-based park land for full community development in 2030. Currently, the Ocean Beach Community has 1.43 acres of population-based parks, and through the update process has identified an additional 21.92 acres of park equivalencies for a total of 23.35 acres of population-based parks. This results in an 18.85 acre population-based park deficit that will need to be fulfilled in the future by land acquisitions/donations or future park

equivalencies identified by the City and the community. Through the Ocean Beach Community Plan Update process, the community and City staff evaluated potential park equivalency sites. The General Plan lists the following six park equivalency categories; Joint Use Facilities, Trail, Portion of Resource-based Park, Privately-owned Park Sites and Facility or Building Expansion or Upgrade. Per the General Plan, park equivalencies can be identified through a development of a parks master plan, a community plan update or a community plan amendment process.

The draft Ocean Beach Recreation Element also includes a section on the importance of preservation of existing park land and programs, as well as recommends how to achieve this. The Accessibility Section discusses that all facilities should be located within walking distance of neighborhoods and employment centers, that facilities should be accessible to the broadest population possible, and that facilities should be open for use by the general public with a balance between programmed and non-programmed activities. The last section of the Recreation Element is Open Space Land and Resource-based Parks. This section provides recommendations on how to protect and enhance natural resources, such as Famosa Slough Open Space, as well as how to protect areas from storm water and urban run-off.

Park Equivalencies

In the Ocean Beach community, several park equivalencies within resource-based parks were identified by the subcommittee. These include three pocket park sites within Ocean Beach Park; Brighton Avenue Park, Saratoga Park and Veterans Park, as well as three areas of Mission Bay Park; Dog Beach, Dusty Rhodes Park and Robb Field Park. Each of these new park equivalency sites meets the intent of the General Plan guidelines by providing new recreation amenities that are directly contiguous, or in close proximity to the Ocean Beach Community, accessible, and do not detract or negatively impact the distinctive features of the resource-based park.

Another park equivalency selected by the community is a trail within Famosa Slough. This trail provides a path of travel for pedestrians, bicyclists and equestrians outside the improved, public street right-of-way within City-owned open space lands. To qualify as a park equivalency, staff recommends that the trail provide recreation amenities, be accessible to the general public during typical park hours, and provide a landscape buffer. Credit is based on how accessible the trail is, how many park amenities are provided, and if there are any limitations to the trail use, such as restricted use in the City's Multiple Habitat Planning Area (MHPA). The trail was selected due to its current use by the community and the need for improvements so that more of the community can use and enjoy the trail. Park amenities would include an accessible pathway, interpretive signs, benches, and a landscape buffer of native plant materials.

The last park equivalency proposed for use in the Ocean Beach community is Joint Use Facilities. Joint use agreements have been used to enhance park and recreational opportunities in communities for many years prior to concept of equivalencies being added to the 2008 General Plan. Staff recommends that joint use agreements be considered as an equivalency when recreation amenities are provided on non-City-owned property or City-owned property whose main purpose is not park and recreation. To qualify, the joint use facility must provide population-based amenities, provide for public access, have an executed long-term joint use agreement, be upgraded to meet City standards if the area is to be maintained by the City, and provide direct access and minimal impediments to the recreation amenities. Two sites in Ocean

Beach were identified in this category; Ocean Beach Elementary School and the Barnes Junior Family Tennis Center (Barnes Tennis Center). The Ocean Beach Elementary School site provides a turf area for multi-purpose use and currently has a joint use agreement that expires in approximately 2039. The other site is the City-owned property, managed by the Real Estate Assets Department that is leased to the Barnes Tennis Facility. This leasehold has three acres of undeveloped land. The Recreation Subcommittee would like this site to be improved as a passive neighborhood park that could provide lawn areas, children's play areas, a community garden, picnic areas or basketball courts, or other amenities. In order to implement this equivalency, there may need to be an amendment to the existing lease agreement to allow the joint use of the facilities and sharing of the existing parking lot.

Other park equivalency categories that were reviewed by the Recreation Subcommittee included: 1) Privately-owned Park sites; 2) Non-traditional Park Sites (such as rooftops or storm water facilities); and 3) Recreation Facility Addition or Expansion. Privately-owned park sites are difficult to determine in a community plan update and will be identified during discretionary reviews of proposed private development requiring a community plan amendment. These types of sites will remain in private ownership, but will be required to have a Recreation Easement recorded on the site to assure public access. Hours of public access and use would be consistent with typical or similar publically-owned and operated parks and recreation facilities.

Non-traditional Park Sites include parks built on top of structures, such as parking structures, private or public buildings, freeway decking, enclosed reservoirs or subterranean structures, such as water storage facilities. These parks should provide park amenities typical of population-based parks, or could be designed as a special activity park. Non-traditional Park Sites also include linear parks and parks that are part of a low impact design storm water facility. Linear parks are typically found along street rights-of-way, rivers, utility easements, and adjacent to highways and shorelines. These types of park should link public facilities such as schools, libraries, and other parks to each other and to surrounding residential neighborhoods, through non-motorized travel. Parks that contains storm water facilities should be designed with low impact development in accordance with the City's Storm Water Standards and shall not compromise or impair the intended park and recreation uses.

The last category, Recreation Facility Addition or Expansion, is an equivalency that provides physical improvements that expand square footage and/or hours of recreation use, or increases the intensity and/or range of uses available at an existing park facility. This category does not add or increase park acreage, but instead expands the use beyond the General Plan standard. For example, the physical improvements could include the expansion of the square footage of a recreation center beyond what is required for that community, installation of lights to expand the hours of use, or installation of synthetic turf to a sports field to expand the usability during the year. Although the Recreation Subcommittee researched areas in Ocean Beach to apply these last three park equivalency categories, sites were not identified and were not included in this community plan update.

The Recreation Subcommittee supports counting 21.92 useable acres of park equivalencies toward meeting the community's park needs. These park equivalencies will also be identified in the Ocean Beach Public Facilities Financing Plan (PFFP) as future park projects that are

anticipated to be eligible to receive Development Impact Fees (DIF), park ad-hoc fees or other funding to design and build the park amenities. By identifying and accepting these park equivalencies, the community is able to address how to provide population-based park land in their built-out community and provide a new funding source for the park improvements.

Park Standards and Future Funding

Even with the use of equivalencies, the Ocean Beach community will continue to face a park acreage deficit of approximately 18.85 acres. In order to continue to make progress toward meeting the General Plan park standard, the draft Ocean Beach Community Plan has policies in place to take advantage of opportunities as they arise. For example, a well-situated parcel could become available for sale that was not anticipated at the time of the community plan update. However, there will still be the challenge of identifying future funding sources in order to move forward with acquisition and development. One funding mechanism which could provide a portion of funding is DIF.

The inclusion of a specific number of acres of parks and park-related projects in the PFFP would be necessary in order to bring the community into compliance with the guidelines for park standards specified in the City's General Plan Recreation Element. However, only a small percentage of park funding may be through DIF since:

- new development may not be charged for existing park deficiencies;
- park DIF, to date, is only charged for residential development; and
- given the fact that Ocean Beach is almost fully developed, the full costs of future parks cannot be collected since the remaining residential development represents only a small percentage of the total development.

Therefore, the balance of funding needs to be identified from other sources.

It will be important for the City to continue to explore other potential sources of funding for parks such as: ad hoc fees, grants, State and Federal funding, developer contributions, donations of land or funds, bond measures, and private/public partnerships. Having a plan with needs identified and possibilities outlined is an important step in becoming eligible for various potential funding sources.

In the absence of a Parks Master Plan, the City is addressing park strategies through the community plan update process. This strategy was discussed with the Planning Commission and the Park and Recreation Board in 2011 as a part of the Barrio Logan Community Plan update presentation. As shown through our discussion on equivalencies, the City is looking for new ways to address park and recreation needs when there is limited land available for new parks. However, some benefits that could result from a Parks Master Plan process, such as determining broader areas of benefit from multiple communities and identifying a financing strategy, are not fully addressed in a community plan update process.

The City of San Diego is not alone in facing challenges of providing parks for a growing population. There is a growing recognition of the value of parks for the multiple quality of life, environmental, public health, and community development benefits they offer. Cities are looking for new strategies that balance acreage and access goals. For example, Los Angeles is facing a park deficit in urban neighborhoods along with an inequitable distribution of parks

throughout the city. To address these issues Los Angeles has undertaken an initiative to acquire land for the development of at least 50 new public parks in densely populated neighborhoods that lack sufficient open space and parks. The majority of these parcels are less than half an acre in size. The plan is to collaborate with other city departments, non-profit organizations, and private individuals and foundations to locate park land and funding. The Department of Park and Recreation (RAP) has analyzed key community demographic statistics, and existing park facilities, parkland, and open space, in order to identify high priority areas where funding and resources could be focused to make the greatest impact. In each of these areas staff has worked to identify publicly owned and privately owned sites and determined which could be acquired, either via purchase or lease, and developed into new parks. The keys to the successful implementation of each park site will be (1) the establishment of local partnerships; (2) the use of a community driven design process; and (3) the strict use of low maintenance design standards. To date, 14 sites are in the process of being purchased, leased or transferred to RAP. The citizens of Los Angeles have also approved ballot measures to tax themselves to provide urban parks and for the first time in the last fifty years the region has been able to identify and designate pieces of land for park space.

Across the country in Miami-Dade County, the Recreation Department completed their Parks and Open Space System Master Plan in 2007, an eighteen month long planning process involving staff, residents, and elected officials. Miami-Dade is expected to increase by 3 million people in 2025 and faces issues of a diminished quality of life, increased congestion, declining recreation and conservation of open space. The Master Plan guiding principles for their park system are seamlessness, beauty, access, equity, sustainability and multiple benefits. Park components include Great Parks, Great Public Spaces, Great Natural and Cultural Places, Great Greenways, Trails, and Water Trails and Great Streets. Each of these components is defined, contains design criteria and possible site locations. With a Master Plan in hand, the County has a unified, physical vision for a connected regional system.

NEXT STEPS

Over the next several months, staff will work with the community planning group on incorporating their final comments, as well as the comments from the Planning Commission and the Park and Recreation Board, into the final draft Ocean Beach Community Plan Recreation Element. Staff will also continue to provide additional examples of the application of equivalencies through ongoing community plan updates and discretionary project review. The environmental review team is currently preparing the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and staff anticipates the draft EIR to be released for public review and comment in the summer of 2013. Once the draft EIR is released, the finalized draft Recreation Element of the proposed community plan will return to the Park and Recreation Board for a recommendation to City Council.

CONCLUSION

The Ocean Beach Community Plan Update is significant and precedent-setting in that it is the second community plan update to specifically recommend the inclusion of park equivalencies which will be counted towards meeting population-based park and recreation standards, and tracked in the community's park inventory in accordance with General Plan guidelines. Currently, there are seven community plan updates underway which could also propose park equivalencies. In order to assist staff in finalizing the draft Recreation Element for the Ocean Beach Community Plan Update Plan, input from the Park and Recreation Board, and the public, is requested and welcomed.

Respectfully submitted,


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(RS/rs)

Attachments: 1. General Plan Recreation Element, RE-10 – RE-18
2. Draft Ocean Beach Recreation Element