



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

**DATE ISSUED:** May 2, 2014

**REPORT NO. PC - 14-029**

**PARK BOARD REPORT NO. #301**

**ATTENTION:** Planning Commission, Agenda of May 15, 2014  
Park and Recreation Board, Agenda of May 15, 2014

**SUBJECT:** POPULATION-BASED PARK EQUIVALENCIES

### **SUMMARY**

Issue – THIS IS A JOINT WORKSHOP ITEM; NO ACTION IS REQUIRED BY EITHER BOARD OR COMMISSION AT THIS TIME.

### **BACKGROUND**

Over the past 30 years, the City of San Diego has had park and recreation standards called out in the Recreation Element of the General Plan and the Municipal Code which has served us well in the newer communities to the north and south (e.g., Carmel Valley, Scripps Ranch, and Otay Mesa). However, we have struggled to meet those standards in the older urbanized communities, for several reasons, including the following:

- Developed prior to specific standards or guidelines in place, or park fees established
- Limited land readily available for park development, and the competing needs of housing and other public facilities for that land
- Large resource-based parks have not been given credit for contributing to the park and recreational needs of adjacent communities
- Lack of funding strategies and resources to enable planned and opportunistic land acquisitions and development
- Continued housing development which further adds to the need for population-based parks

In 2008, the City General Plan Update was approved, including an updated Recreation Element (Attachment 1). The Recreation Element addresses park and recreation

standards and needs for the current and future population and recommends the preparation of a citywide Parks Master Plan to define how our city's park system should look, feel and operate in the next 20+ years. It establishes updated population-based park acreage and recreation facilities standards, as well as the concept of "park equivalencies" as a means of meeting population-based park and recreation standards in non-traditional ways.

## **DISCUSSION**

The proposed Parks Master Plan is the mechanism to comprehensively explore options and alternatives for meeting park and recreation needs on a community-by-community basis; however, General Plan Policy RE-A-9d also allows the application of park equivalencies at the time of updating or amending community plans (in recognition that the Parks Master Plan may not be realized until sometime in the future and we would miss many opportunities in the interim). Generally, community plan updates are initiated by the City, while community plan amendments are typically initiated through private development proposals. Therefore, as community plan updates and amendments are initiated, Park Planning staff has taken the opportunity to evaluate whether a community could benefit from the inclusion of park equivalencies. Those equivalencies agreed upon by community members and advisory bodies, or recommended by Park Planning staff through the discretionary review process, have been, or would be, included in the community plan update or amendment, and in the associated public facilities financing plan.

In the absence of a citywide Parks Master Plan, the proposed Draft Equivalency Toolbox (Attachment 2) and the Draft Park Equivalencies Criteria (Attachment 3) creates the framework for implementation of the General Plan policies while allowing for flexibility in meeting the current population-based park acreage standard of 2.8 useable acres per 1,000 residents and the current recreation facilities standards identified in 'Table RE-2 and 3 Park Guidelines' of the Recreation Element. The Park Equivalency Criteria provides the safeguards to identify the use of "equivalencies" and to apply appropriate credit in order to meet population-based park and recreation guidelines and standards consistent with General Plan policies and Table RE-4 of the Recreation Element. It promotes the linkage of neighborhoods, parks and open spaces, and provides for diverse recreational opportunities for a diverse population.

The Park Equivalency Criteria includes sections on Background, Purpose, Definitions, General Criteria, Specific Criteria and Implementation. The Background and Purpose provide the General Plan Policies for Park Equivalencies. Definitions are provided to provide clear and concise definitions of words and phrase that have specific meaning related to the Criteria. The General Criteria provides direction on all Park Equivalencies and reinforces the requirement of Council Policy 600-33 for public input on the design of parks. The Specific Criteria provides detailed information on each the park equivalencies category listed in the General Plan; Joint Use Facility, Trails, Portion of

Resource-based Park, Privately-owned Park Site, Non-Traditional Park Sites and Facility or Building Expansion or Upgrade. Within each category is a description, qualifying criteria and the equivalency credit. This information provides staff, the community and applicants a clear understanding of what park equivalencies are and how they receive credit towards population-based parks. The Implementation Section is provided to ensure an appropriate process to identify park equivalencies through staff and community input. This section provides a process for Community Plan Updates and Community Plan Amendments. All park equivalencies, once approved will be documented in the Population-based Park Inventory for each community plan area (see examples, Attachment 4 and 5).

The Park Equivalency Criteria provides flexibility for revisions as may be periodically necessary for purposes of ease and equity in application of the Criteria.

## **CONCLUSION**

Staff recognizes that the proposed use of Park Equivalencies to help satisfy population-based park requirements is controversial and that there are pros and cons to this approach. During the last five years staff has worked on the draft Equivalency Criteria to future define the definitions, criteria and implementation based on the recent effort to update the following Community Plan Updates: Barrio Logan, Otay Mesa, Ocean Beach, Encanto Neighborhoods, Golden Hill, North Park, Uptown, Mid Way Pacific, Old Town and San Ysidro. Though this effort, staff has met with various community planning groups presenting the draft Criteria and how it would provide for population-based parks in these very urban areas. Two updates, Barrio Logan and Otay Mesa, have been adopted by City Council and contain the first new park equivalencies.

Ultimately, the Parks Master Plan will provide the comprehensive blueprint needed to ensure that population-based parks and facilities are equitably distributed citywide, and further refine the application criteria for Park Equivalencies.

Staff is seeking your input on the process being used to establish Park Equivalencies and any innovations related to Park Equivalencies.

Respectfully submitted,

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## WINTERROWD/RS

### Attachments:

1. General Plan Recreation Element Policies RE-A.1 – RE-A.9  
General Plan Recreation Element –  
Table RE-4 Eligible Population-Based Park Equivalencies
2. Draft Equivalency Toolbox
3. Draft Park Equivalency Criteria
4. Draft Barrio Logan Population-based Park Acreage Inventory (example)\*
5. Draft Ocean Beach Population-based Park Acreage Inventory (example)\*

\*These attachments are draft examples for discussion and illustrative purposes only, and are subject to revisions per SANDAG information updates and the Community Plan Update approval process.