



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
TO THE PARK AND RECREATION BOARD

DATE ISSUED: May 21, 2020 REPORT NO. 201

ATTENTION: Park and Recreation Board
Agenda of May 21, 2020

SUBJECT: COMPLETE COMMUNITIES: PLAY EVERYWHERE – CITY OF SAN
DIEGO PARKS MASTER PLAN UPDATE AND GENERAL PLAN
RECREATION ELEMENT AMENDMENT

SUMMARY

Issue: Should the Park and Recreation Board recommend approval of Parks Master Plan and General Plan Recreation Element Amendment?

Director's Recommendation: Recommend approval of Parks Master Plan and General Plan Recreation Element Amendment.

Other Recommendations: None

Fiscal Impact: Not applicable

Water and Energy Conservation Status: Not applicable

Environmental: The City of San Diego has prepared an Addendum to the General Plan Environmental Impact Report, Project No. 104495/SCH No. 2006091032

BACKGROUND

The 2008 General Plan Recreation Element identified the need for a comprehensive Parks Master Plan. A draft Parks Master Plan and General Plan Recreation Element Amendment 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 PMP.

DISCUSSION

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 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.

Public Input

The Planning Department, along with the Parks and Recreation Department, has conducted major public input activities as part of the initial information gathering phase, including 10 regional workshops in each Council District and Downtown, 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.

Plan Highlights

The draft Parks Master Plan includes the following highlights to plan for the delivery of accessible and successful parks to everyone in San Diego.

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.

A New Park Standard Focused on Delivering More Recreation Sooner

A critical first step in transforming our parks system is to understand how the City's recreational needs are being met and preparing for growth and change. 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 in 2020 met the previous acreage standard of 2.8 acres per 1,000 residents. 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.

Achieving a 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 policies 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.

Reforming Citywide Development Impact Fees for Parks

The City currently sets and collects fees on a community planning area level. Fees must be spent within the community it was 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.

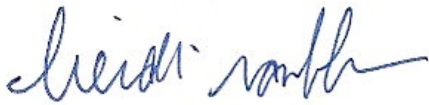
The development and transition to a Citywide Park Development Impact Fee will allow the future fees collected to be invested throughout the City and would allow the City to focus its investments in the areas with greatest needs and ensuring an equitable and balanced Citywide parks system. The fee will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

more recreational assets.

General Plan Recreation Element Amendment

The proposed amendment to the General Plan Recreation Element changes the metric on how the City analyzes its parks and recreation needs, as described above. The Amendment includes other changes that reflect the adoption of a new Parks Master Plan. The current Recreation Element uses a population-based acreage metric to determine the size and location of parks.

Respectfully submitted,



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(HKV/ja)

Attachment: 1. Draft Parks Master Plan
 2. General Plan Recreation Element Amendment
 3. Addendum to the General Plan Environmental Impact Report,
 Project No. 104495/SCH No. 2006091032

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