

**TO:** PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

**FROM:** COMMUNITY SERVICES AND PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENTS

**DATE:** June 23, 2015

**SUBJECT:** Parks, Trails, Open Space and Recreation Master Plan

**RECOMMENDATION**

No action to be taken.

**BACKGROUND**

The City of Palo Alto has 37 parks and open space preserves covering approximately 4,165 acres of land, which includes Foothills Park, Pearson Arastradero Preserve, and the Baylands Nature Preserve. A Capital Improvement Project for a Parks, Trails, Open Space, and Recreation Master Plan (Master Plan) was adopted by Council for the 2013 fiscal year. The purpose of this project is to provide the necessary analysis and review of Palo Alto's parks and recreation system for the preparation of a Parks Master Plan. The Parks Master Plan will provide the City with clear guidance regarding future renovations and capital improvement projects aimed at meeting current and future demands on the city's recreational, programming, environmental, and maintenance needs, establishing a prioritized schedule and budget of future park renovations, facility improvements and expansion of recreational programs.

**DISCUSSION**

Discussion and review of the Parks Master Planning process will cover the following:

1. Review revisions made to the plan framework document and principals that were discussed in last month's meeting. Review samples along with the 'Filtering Diagram' of how the framework will be used to establish prioritizations.
2. Review the community study session concerning prioritization and desired feedback and how the feedback will be utilized as a factor for establishing actions.
3. Introduce the criteria for ranking recommendations.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Community/Stakeholder Priority Workshops (Spring 2015)

## **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The proposed CIP recommendations are consistent with Policy C-26 of the Community Services element of the Comprehensive Plan that encourages maintaining park facilities as safe and healthy community assets; and Policy C-22 that encourages new community facilities to have flexible functions to ensure adaptability to the changing needs of the community.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- Summary Memo
- Revised Plan Framework
- Filtering Diagram

## **PREPARED BY**

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City of Palo Alto



# PARKS, TRAILS, OPEN SPACE & RECREATION

**To:** Palo Alto Park and Recreation Commission, Peter Jensen and Elizabeth Ames

**Cc:** Daren Anderson and Rob deGeus

**From:** Ryan Mottau, Lauren Schmitt and Ellie Fiore, MIG

**Re:** Project Update for June PRC Meeting

**Date:** June 17, 2015

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The last several meetings of the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) have helped the planning team to significantly advance the Parks, Trails, Open Space and Recreation Master Plan (Plan). The detailed review of data sources has identified a number of areas of potential improvement to Palo Alto's already excellent park system.

The challenge ahead is to filter the many potential system improvements and shape how this can happen. Ultimately this process results in a prioritized list of recommended actions, which could include physical improvements, new or modified program areas, policy changes or other guidance in managing the system.

At the May PRC meeting, the planning team introduced a plan framework of seven principles drawn from the input of the community, staff and partners. Based on PRC feedback we have revised these principles, refining them to more clearly set the direction for the development of recommendations (please see Plan Framework 6/17/15 included in your meeting package). With these revised principles, the process can continue towards the next phase of community input. The filtering process will use the principles as well as a set of prioritization criteria to first shape, and then sort, a list of recommendations based on the findings of the data/needs summary (which in turn represents the summary of the extensive work to date). The filtering diagram attached to this update memo illustrates this process, using a selection of findings from the matrix column L.

## Preliminary Criteria

The planning process also includes a prioritization step that involves applying criteria to the recommended actions to sort them into an action plan. These criteria will include practical matters such as cost and funding availability as well as community preference. The action plan will detail where the City should be focusing in the short, medium and long-term, while allowing for some flexibility to respond to opportunities and urgent needs. **Draft criteria are below, for you to consider ahead of the meeting.** Final prioritization criteria will be used by staff, the planning team and the PRC to create the action plan following the community prioritization effort in the fall.

- Time to completion, projects that can be done quickly
- Cost to build, including off-setting deferred investment
- Maintenance impact, projects that will decrease or stabilize long-term maintenance costs
- Community priority, highly ranked category of projects
- Reach/impact, projects that serve the most people or an identified target audience
- Partner or funding availability, projects that have a ready partner or are uniquely suited to an available funding source score higher
- Urgent need, projects that have a legal mandate or address a pressing and time-sensitive concern (such as drought)

## Community Prioritization

It is important that the community, including the stakeholder advisory group, be given an additional opportunity to weigh in with their priorities as the recommendations are developed. This outreach will to happen in parallel to the planning team development of recommended actions.

The level of detail for this input opportunity is very important. Too little detail and the community will not see the connection to improvements in the system. Too much detail will result in an unmanageable list that the public, no matter how well intentioned or well informed, cannot reasonably provide input on. To strike a balance, the planning team is proposing the following areas of focus for both developing recommendations and gauging the community's priorities. These areas of focus would be the items that the community prioritization would provide input on through an interactive sorting exercise. The community priority could then be used as one of the criteria for the final prioritization of the recommended actions (as described above).

## Areas of Focus

The following areas of focus are themes that the planning team has identified from community outreach as well as the results of the data and needs summary.

- Expanding existing parks
- Enhancing capacity of sports fields
- Sustaining/enhancing indoor spaces across the community
- Enhancing comfort and making parks more welcoming
- Ensuring equity of access to park activities and experiences
- Adding more variety of things to do within existing parks
- Diversifying play experiences for all ages and abilities
- Increasing exercise and fitness opportunities in parks
- Improving spaces and increased options for off-leash dogs
- Creating a system of community gardens
- Integrating nature into all Palo Alto parks
- Protecting nature (large scale preserves and creeks/waterways)
- Encouraging art and creativity in parks/programs
- Encouraging active transportation to and from park and recreation activities
- Removing barriers (such as age, ability, cultural relevance and cost) to enjoying the full range of recreation opportunities
- Offering more of existing programs, classes
- Trying out new types of programs, classes, events and activities
- Using programs, signage and art to increase the awareness and use of the system

To make the best use of the input from the community, each recommendation should fit within an area of focus. This will allow the ranking of the appropriate area of focus to be applied as a criterion when considering the recommendations that fall within. **Please review these areas of focus for completeness and to ensure that any potential recommendations you are anticipating would fit within this structure.**

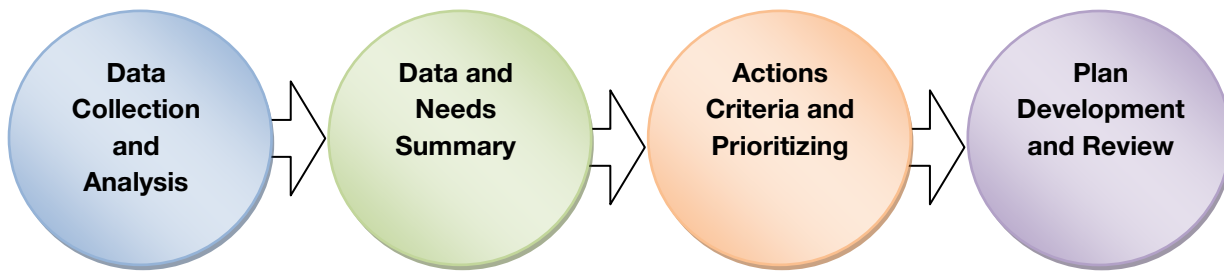


## **PLAN FRAMEWORK 6/17/15**

### **Introduction**

At this point in the PTOSR process, we are moving from the Data and Needs Summary stage to the Actions, Criteria and Prioritizing stage. There are many potential directions that Palo Alto could take in addressing the identified community needs.

*Figure 1: Data to Recommendations Diagram*



The Data and Needs Summary was a systematic process to acquire an accurate, thorough picture of the PTOSR system's strengths and weaknesses, in order to improve it and meet existing and future challenges. The next stage of development of the plan is to identify the actions for addressing needs and advancing the community's desired direction for the Parks, Trails, Open Space and Recreation system.

It should be noted that Palo Alto may opt for actions that do not meet all needs identified in the Data and Needs Summary. A portion of future community needs may be met by other agencies, such as the school district, Santa Clara County or private developers. Recognizing constrained resources, the community may also decide to prioritize some efforts over others and to make compromises about meeting other needs. The provision of parks and facilities will be an ongoing rebalancing based on funding options, land availability, potential partnerships, etc.

## **Background**

Throughout the planning process to date, Palo Alto residents expressed appreciation for and support of the tremendous assets provided by the parks and recreation system that the community currently enjoys. This is consistent with the high level of satisfaction that has been reported in Palo Alto's annual National Citizen Survey for city parks (92% in 2014) and recreation programs (87% in 2014) for many years.

In the context of this high level of support, there are potential improvements that can make the park system and services even better and more responsive to community needs, helping the City adjust to growth, changing demographics and evolving trends and preferences.

## **Draft Plan Framework**

The following framework is drawn from the values and priorities expressed through the community engagement processes, including work with the PRC. The framework is expressed as seven guiding principles intended to serve as the overarching strategic direction for the system of park lands, protected places and recreation programs. These seven principles can be used to guide decision-making as changes occur and new ideas emerge.

Palo Alto's Parks, Trails, Open Space and Recreation system is:

- Playful, inspiring imagination and joy;
- Healthy, supportive of the physical and mental health and well-being of individuals as well as the connectedness and cohesion of the community;
- Sustainable, stewarding natural, economic and social resources for a system that endures;
- Inclusive of the entire Palo Alto community, all ages, abilities, languages, cultures, and levels of income;
- Accessible, easy for all people to use year-round and to get to by all modes of travel;
- Flexible enough to accommodate multiple uses across time with adaptable spaces that can accommodate traditional, emerging and future uses; and
- Balanced between natural spaces and manicured landscapes, historic elements and cutting-edge features, and self-directed and programmed activities.

## Sources of the Framework Principles

As noted, the seven principles were derived from the patterns, themes and priorities that were expressed by the Palo Alto community through the many public engagement activities that have occurred for the PTOSR planning process. Similar to the Data and Needs Summary Matrix, this section contains citations for each principle, linking to specific public engagement results.

- **Playful**
  - Intercept Results (Source 12, page 8)
  - Mapita Results (Source 11, throughout – play is among the most common reasons for using each park)
  - Workshop Results (Source 13, throughout, including comments to the visual preference survey)
- **Healthy**
  - Community Survey (Source 14, pages 4-5, 9-15)
  - Intercept Results (Source 12, page 8)
- **Sustainable**
  - Community Survey (Source 14, pages 6-8)
  - Workshop Results (Source 13, pages 14-16)
  - Stakeholder Meeting (Source 16)
- **Inclusive**
  - Community Survey (Source 14, pages 12-15, 20-25)
  - Workshop Results (Source 13, page 14-16)
- **Accessible**
  - Community Survey (Source 14, pages 20-22)
  - Additional Meetings (Source 17, particularly referencing older adults and children with disabilities)
  - Workshop Results (Source 13, page 15)
- **Flexible**
  - Community Survey (Source 14, pages 8-17)
  - Additional Meetings (Source 17)
- **Balanced**
  - Intercept Results (Source 12, page 8)
  - Community Survey (Source 14, page 4)
  - Workshop Results (Source 13, pages 14-16)



## Applying the Principles

The principles are a tool for decision-making as we begin identifying actions and recommendations for the plan. The table below presents screening questions to consider in weighting alternative approaches to meeting a particular need and to prioritize actions.

Principle	Does the action/project/idea:
Playful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open up opportunities for creative use of the space?</li> <li>• Introduce imagination, whimsy and the unexpected?</li> <li>• Encourage unstructured free-play opportunities?</li> </ul>
Healthy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create and encourage everyday physical activity?</li> <li>• Provide a place to unwind?</li> <li>• Create spaces where families, neighbors and meet and interact?</li> </ul>
Sustainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlight and enhance unique ecosystems, habitats or natural features?</li> <li>• Minimize ongoing maintenance costs to achieve quality experiences?</li> <li>• Adapt the system to climate change, drought, sea level rise, and other future challenges?</li> <li>• Consider existing facilities, providers or places before building new?</li> </ul>
Inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appeal to an underrepresented user group?</li> <li>• Respond to the unique character of neighborhoods and areas of Palo Alto?</li> </ul>
Accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce or remove barriers to participation/enjoyment based on physical or mental ability?</li> <li>• Fill holes in close to home access to an essential activity?</li> <li>• Extend the recreation experience or activity to a new audience or user group in Palo Alto?</li> <li>• Support bike and pedestrian networks or connections to nearby facilities?</li> </ul>
Flexible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support new types of activities on a site or in the system without eliminating existing popular activities?</li> <li>• Make it easier to adapt to a new trend?</li> <li>• Avoid dedicating a significant area to a single use?</li> </ul>
Balanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the balance that already exists system-wide?</li> <li>• Result in a better balance at an individual site or cluster of sites?</li> </ul>

