

**TO:** PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

**FROM:** KRISTEN O'KANE, COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

**DATE:** SEPTEMBER 27, 2016

**SUBJECT:** PARKS, TRAILS, NATURAL OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff requests that the Parks and Recreation Commission provide feedback on the Revised Draft Chapter Three and Draft Chapter Five of the Parks, Trails, Natural Open Space and Recreation Master Plan.

### **BACKGROUND**

The City of Palo Alto has 36 parks and open space preserves covering approximately 4,165 acres of land, which includes Foothills Park, Pearson Arastradero Preserve, Esther Clark Park, and the Baylands Nature Preserve. A Capital Improvement Project for a Parks, Trails, Natural Open Space and Recreation Master Plan (Master Plan) was adopted by Council for the 2013 fiscal year. The purpose of this effort is to provide the necessary analysis and review of Palo Alto's parks and recreation system for the preparation of a long-range (20-year) Master Plan. The Master Plan will provide the City with clear guidance regarding future capital improvement projects and program enhancements aimed at meeting current and future demands on the city's parks and recreation facilities, recreation programming, the natural environment and facility maintenance. The Master Plan will also include an implementation guide including funding and maintenance needs for the near, mid, and long-term.

The Master Plan process consists of three phases:

1. **Phase 1: Specific Site and Program Analysis and Community Engagement (complete):** Development of a comprehensive inventory and analysis of all Palo Alto parks, trails, developed natural open space areas (picnic areas, parking lots) and recreational facilities and programs; analysis of current and forecasted demographic and recreation trends, and analysis of community recreation needs. Identify community and stakeholder needs, interests and preferences for system enhancements using a proactive community engagement process.
2. **Phase 2: Developing and Prioritizing Project and Program Opportunities (complete/ongoing):** Preparation of goals, policies, and programs; identification of capital projects, needed renovations and other improvements; and identification of the highest priority projects and programs.
3. **Phase 3: Drafting of the Master Plan, Review and Adoption (ongoing):** Community, Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC), and Council review; and Council approval to adopt the Master Plan.

Phase 1, which includes technical assessment and community and stakeholder engagement activities, is complete. The goals, policies and programs in Phase 2 have been developed and were reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) and City Council. Staff and the consultant continue to develop and refine the individual chapters of the Master Plan. At the August 23<sup>rd</sup> PRC meeting, staff provided drafts of Chapters 1 – 5 as they were defined at the time. Two additional chapters (6 – Site Concept Plans and 7- Implementation) had not been drafted. Subsequent to the PRC meeting, the seven chapters were consolidated into five. The chapters of the Master Plan have been reduced to five chapters through consolidation of the previous Chapter 4- Our Desired Future into Chapter 3- Analysis and Assessment and

Chapter 5-Goals, Policies and Program. Additionally, the Site Concept Plans (Chapter 6) have been eliminated from the Master Plan.

Previous Outline of Master Plan Chapters:

1. Introduction
2. Elements of Palo Alto's Parks, Trails, Natural Open Spaces and Recreation
3. Needs and Opportunities
4. Our Desired Future
5. Goals, Policies and Programs
6. Site Concept Plans
7. Implementation

Revised Outline of Master Plan Chapters:

1. Introduction
2. Elements of Palo Alto's Parks, Trails, Natural Open Spaces and Recreation
3. Analysis and Assessment
4. Goals, Policies and Programs
5. Implementation

## **DISCUSSION**

A Council Study Session was held on September 6, 2016 to review progress to date and obtain Council feedback on Chapters 1-4 of the Master Plan. Since the Study Session, revisions have been made to Chapter 3: Analysis and Assessment and a draft of Chapter 5: Implementation has been completed. Staff is requesting feedback from the Commission on the revised Chapter 3 and the initial draft of Chapter 5.

### **Chapter 3: Analysis and Assessment**

Previously titled "Needs and Opportunities", this chapter was shared with the Commission at the August 23<sup>rd</sup> PRC meeting. In response to the discussion and comments received on Chapter 3, revisions were made to address many of the comments prior to the September 6, 2016 Council Study Session. Since then, staff and the PRC's Master Plan Ad Hoc convened a meeting to review and develop a plan for revising the chapter further. A revised chapter, now titled "Analysis and Assessment" was drafted by the Ad Hoc and staff and is included as Attachment A.

### **Chapter 5: Implementation**

The implementation chapter is still under development and will continue to be refined. An initial draft is being provided to show progress made and obtain initial feedback from the PRC. Included in this chapter are the top 15 projects and programs that are considered priorities for Palo Alto based on what is known today. These priorities arose from the data analysis and community engagement process, as well as PRC and staff input. Staff is requesting feedback from the PRC on these priorities and will focus discussion on refining this list (Attachment B).

## **NEXT STEPS**

Staff and the Consultant will continue to refine the Draft Master Plan and anticipates presenting a Draft Master Plan to the PRC in October or November 2016. The community will have an opportunity to provide input on the draft plan during this time.

It has been determined that California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance will require completion of an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) prior to City Council adoption of the Master Plan. While the Final Master Plan is expected to be complete in December 2016, final adoption may be extended to early 2017 to allow for completion of the IS/MND.

## **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**

- A. REVISED DRAFT Chapter 3 - Analysis and Assessment of Parks, Trails, Natural Open Space and Recreation Master Plan
- B. DRAFT Chapter 5 – Implementation of Parks, Trails, Natural Open Space and Recreation Master Plan

### **Chapter Title Page Summary Statement:**

Residents want a high quality, resilient parks and recreation system that embraces and protects the natural environment, adapts to changing needs, and serves a growing variety of interests.

## **Introduction**

The Master Plan was developed through a comprehensive, data-driven and community focused process and includes an array of assessment, analysis and outreach strategies. The results of the process provides a detailed understanding of Palo Alto’s current system of parks, trails, natural open spaces, recreation facilities and recreation programs and services. In addition, the process identifies current and future needs of the community it serves and opportunities for system enhancement.

The identified needs and possible opportunities to enhance the parks and recreation system is based on three types of data and analyses:

- 1) Demographic and Recreation Trends - Quantitative forecasts of previously published data on growth trends in areas such as overall population, and growth of key demographic segments.
- 2) System Analysis - Park, facility and program inventory data including the quantity and location of parks; field, pool and other facility usage program registration and other similar inventory data.
- 3) Community Engagement Results - Qualitative data compiled from the input of citizens and stakeholders through a multitude of outreach tools.

Ultimately these data sources resulted in the “findings” summarized in this chapter. The findings address the most notable population-based shifts supported by population and demographic growth forecasts that the City will need to accommodate and respond to in the next ten to twenty years. Conclusions drawn from the system analysis identified needs currently not being met or that will not be met in future years and are considered gaps in the system, or “needs” for the City. Community preferences identified in the community engagement and outreach phase identified areas that the City can evaluate and implement to address citizens’ “votes” in various forums provided during this study. These are community “wants” versus demonstrated gaps or needs.

The following sections describe the analysis completed and key findings from the process. More detailed versions of the reports and work products summarized here can be found in the Technical Supplement on the City website.

## **Demographic and Recreation Trends**

The project team evaluated the existing demographic profile of Palo Alto including population, household characteristics and transportation behavior, to identify patterns and trends that influence recreation needs and preferences. In addition, this analysis evaluated regional and national trends in health, sports, socializing, recreation, family and urban form for their potential to affect the direction of the Master Plan.

## **KEY DEMOGRAPHIC DATA AND TRENDS:**

### **Population**

Over the past five years, Palo Alto has grown faster than projected with an average annual growth rate of 1.3%. The population of Palo Alto in 2015, as estimated by the U.S. Census Bureau was 66,853. Additionally, the City's Comprehensive Plan Update (Draft Environmental Impact Report, 2016) contemplates housing scenarios that would exceed current total population projections, indicating potential for an even greater rate of growth over the life of this Master Plan. Meeting the demands of Palo Alto's growing population without compromising the level of service will require significant investment in park and recreation facilities, maintenance and programming.

Roughly 60,000 commuters come to Palo Alto to work, resulting in a daytime population well in excess of the City's resident population. Efforts to better understand the park and recreation use patterns of this sizable group should inform strategic planning around facilities, maintenance and programming.

### **Housing and Income**

Over half (57.5%) of Palo Alto residents live in single-family detached homes, while over one third (37.9%) live in multifamily units. As Palo Alto expands its housing stock, the City anticipates that the vast majority of new housing will be multi-family units (Comprehensive Plan Update Draft EIR, 2016). This shift to a housing type that lacks the private open space typical of a single family home will create an increasing need for publicly accessible outdoor space and recreation opportunities.

Median household income in Palo Alto grew by 73% between 1990 and 2012, to \$118,936 per household. However, housing costs have also increased dramatically. The median home sales price in Palo Alto in 2013 was more than two and a half times that of the County median price and rental prices in 2014 were more than double County-wide fair market rental prices (Comprehensive Plan Update Draft EIR, 2016). Palo Alto's high median income conceals the economic challenges faced by many residents spending an increasing amount on housing. Recreation is a crucial quality of life asset and people with less disposable income rely more heavily on public recreation facilities. Planning for parks and recreation should reflect the unique local economic conditions in Palo Alto and not rely heavily on statewide or regional data to determine income-based trends or demand.

### **Transportation**

The city has a significant share of commuters who travel by bike (11%) and has seen a sizable increase in student ridership, with approximately 40% of high school students bicycling to school. Palo Alto can support and expand this popular mode choice by providing safe routes to parks and recreation facilities. In addition to providing safe bike routes, encouraging users to use alternative modes of transportation can be accomplished through limiting parking at parks and recreation facilities.

### **Demographic Groups**

National and regional recreation trends emphasize an outdoor lifestyle, physical and mental health, and diverse options for older adults at multiple stages of life, universal design and access for people

of all abilities, and a movement to connect children with nature. These trends point to several specific segments within the population that require special consideration in this plan.

While the average age of residents is increasing, the city has a sizable population of children under 18 years of age. Seniors and children represent the largest growth segments in Palo Alto since 1980 and stand at 17% and 23%, respectively, of the City’s total population. These age groups are, anecdotally, high users of parks and recreation facilities and services in Palo Alto and are the most likely to access facilities by walking or biking.

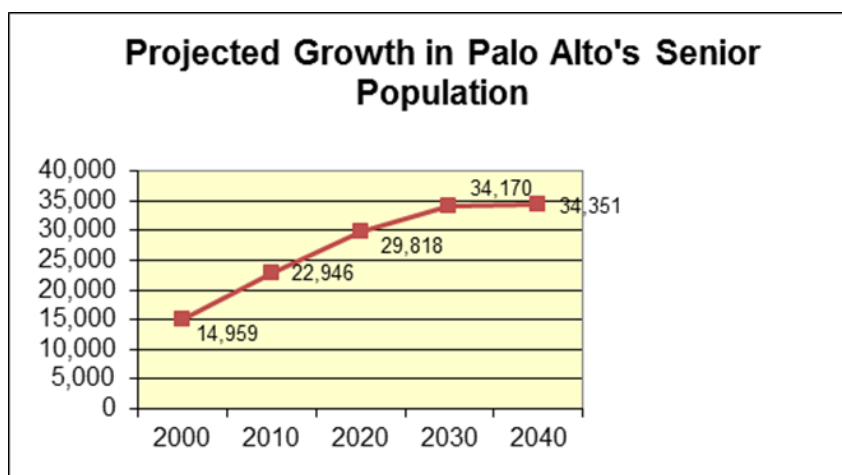
*Youth and Teens*

Palo Alto’s under 18 population has grown steadily over the past 25 years, representing the City’s fastest growing age segment (totaling 15,019 in 2010). However, PAUSD projects a downward trend in school enrollment beginning in year 2020. Currently, PAUSD assumptions about future new housing types and volume differ from those used in the City’s Comprehensive Plan Update analysis, leading to inconsistent projections regarding the future size of Palo Alto’s student population. Once the updated Comprehensive Plan is completed it will be important to coordinate assumptions about housing growth and student generation rates in order to plan appropriately to serve this large segment of the population.

Efforts have grown in recent years to build stronger community connections for area teens. Innovative programs such as Maker Space and Bryant Street Garage teen grants are gaining popularity. Additional programs such as The Drop teen center and LEAP (Learning Enrichment After School Program) are also well attended. Additional teen programs are needed to better tailor offerings to attract broader teen participation consistent with the goals of Project Safety Net.

*Seniors*

The senior population is large and rapidly increasing. One-half of all Palo Alto residents are expected to be age 55 or above by 2030. In 2000, it was projected that the senior population for Palo Alto and surrounding cities will double between 2000 and 2020 and will continue to grow until 2040 (Avenidas). As more seniors choose to “age in place,” programming and services must evolve to address new demands.



### *Special Needs*

The majority of Palo Alto residents with disabilities are 65 or older (2,842 people) while our community is also home to an unusually high number of special needs students (1,100 students in PAUSD as of September 2014). These two growing population segments call for expanded inclusion efforts related to facilities, services and programming.

### *Ethnicity and culture*

Palo Alto's cultural and ethnic diversity is steadily expanding. In the past decade, the City's Asian population alone grew by 10%. Of all Palo Altans, 31% are foreign-born and 38% speak a language other than English at home. PAUSD data reveals that the City's minority population is young, with a higher rate of Hispanic/Latinos and Asians in the school system (11% Hispanic/Latino and 39% Asian) than in the general population of Palo Alto. Sensitivity and attention to the needs of this growing and significant segment of the population will require expanded outreach, partnership with PAUSD, and targeted efforts at inclusion.

## System Analysis

The analysis of the system began with a site visit to each park, facility, and preserve to document and evaluate existing conditions to develop an accurate and in-depth foundation of baseline information. The observations recorded during these visits are compiled within a set of existing conditions maps. These maps include the history, a summary of features and a description of opportunities and constraints for each site. Each map also incorporates site-specific public input gathered through the community engagement process. For the full set of existing conditions maps, see the Technical Supplement on the City website.

## Geographic Analysis

A geographic analysis of the parks, trails and natural open spaces system evaluated each component's walkability and accessibility. A Geographic Information Systems (GIS) model of the surrounding streets, sidewalks, trails, and pathways was constructed using ESRI Network Analyst software to identify "walksheds" or catchment areas for each park, reflecting the way people move through the city. The analysis used  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile travel distances, reflecting research on the distance a typical person can walk in five and ten minutes, respectively. This analysis refined the understanding of the  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile distance first cited in the 1965 parks plan and aligned with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. The project team also factored in physical barriers that impede access, incorporating feedback from the public engagement process about specific streets and intersections people report as being difficult to cross. Figure 5, on page 38, shows the  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile walksheds for all parks in Palo Alto.

Many communities also analyze park systems using a function-based parks classification scheme (neighborhood parks, community parks, regional parks). However, the parks in Palo Alto serve multiple, and often overlapping functions. Community feedback indicated that people in Palo Alto are looking for the park system to deliver five categories of activities on a widely accessible basis, regardless of how the park is classified functionally. The analysis assessed the community's access to each of these activities by defining criteria for each category and applying the criteria to the geographic analysis model.

The five categories of activity and their analysis criteria are summarized below.

**Relax and Enjoy Outdoors.** Palo Altans place a high value on parks that provide a quiet and calm place to relax and enjoy the outdoors. While most Palo Alto parks support this activity, some parks experience noise from highway/road traffic or from heavy sports use. Comments made by the public on the online interactive map (and confirmed by site visits) also identified parks without quiet areas.

**Play for Children.** Children and youth were regularly cited as one of the most important audiences for the park system. Parks containing a playground, play area or unique play feature (sculpture, nature play, etc.) best support this audience.

**Throw a Ball.** This activity encompasses kicking, hitting, and throwing balls and other objects such as Frisbees, including both self-directed and league-based play. Parks containing open turf areas, sports fields, or courts best support this activity.

**Exercise and Fitness.** Health and wellness has been shown to be important to Palo Alto residents in this and other planning processes. Parks with perimeter or looped paths support both walking and running, which are the top recreation activities both in Palo Alto and in the country. Palo Alto's Rinconada Pool also provides an exercise option for swimmers.

**Gathering.** The Palo Alto park system is an important provider of space for family, friends, and the larger community to gather for picnics, social events, and group activities. Formal picnic areas, shelters, and features such as amphitheaters facilitate this activity.

#### **GEOGRAPHIC NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES:**

The spatial analysis revealed the following:

Most Palo Alto residents have access to a city park within a ¼ and ½ mile. Gaps exist north of the Oregon Expressway near Highway 101 and south of El Camino Real near commercial and institutional land uses. Adding additional parks or park-like lands can improve park accessibility for residents in these areas. Fewer neighborhoods have activity access to all five identified activities within a ½ mile.

Parks that offer exercise and fitness opportunities are more common south of the Oregon Expressway. The addition of exercise opportunities to north Palo Alto parks should be considered.

Dog parks are all located south of the Oregon Expressway. Since dog owners prefer to use dog parks near their residence, adding dog parks to north Palo Alto parks will improve residents' dog exercise opportunities.

Community gardens are currently located entirely north of Oregon Expressway. The addition of Community Gardens in south Palo Alto can improve garden access to those residents.

Palo Alto's only public pool is located north of Oregon Expressway. The addition of a public gymnasium or improving access to other public or private pools should be explored to provide more access during peak times.



Additional geographic analysis evaluated access to experiences, natural open space and recreation facilities that were identified as highly desired by the community during the intercept surveys. These include:

- The experience and preservation of nature;
- Improved ease of access to natural open space preserves (e.g., bike routes and shuttles);
- Community gardening;
- Recreation with dogs; and
- Gymnasiums and swimming pools.

## Recreation Program Analysis

To evaluate the capacity of Palo Alto's facilities and programs to meet demand, the data on reservations, minimum participation, program registrations and waitlists was analyzed along with observations collected from staff and consultants. A crucial performance indicator in recreation programming is enrollment at or above minimum participation, which is the minimum number of participants needed to achieve the cost recovery goals of each class. These goals are set according to the City's cost recovery policy and the individual class budget. This, along with classes indicated as full or with waitlists, provided insight into the capacity and demand for categories and specific types of programs.

### **RECREATION PROGRAM OPPORTUNITIES:**

The highest participation in City programs is in sports (adult and youth), aquatics (youth and teen) and day camps. Continued demand for these program areas is anticipated and program offerings should respond to this demand.

The current policy of "everyone plays" is widely supported for middle school athletics. Since limited gym and field space makes it difficult to expand these programs, the City and PAUSD should consider additional facilities or improved scheduling to maximize student involvement in these popular programs. Furthermore, a shortage of instructors and coaches exacerbates the difficulty to expand. Recruitment, training, and increased pay should be considered to improve the supply of qualified instructors and coaches.

Demand for some classes and programs varies greatly by time of day. The program scheduling should attempt to provide additional classes during the most popular times.

A limited number of gymnasiums available to the public and a lack of a City-owned gym complicates the expansion of most sports programs. Increasing sports facilities, sharing of facilities, and adjusting facility scheduling should be investigated.

Academic support programs offered to youth and teens are typically operating under capacity. Improved marketing and updated offerings should be considered to increase the popularity of these programs or resources should be shifted to other types of teen programming.

Programs offered by the Art Center, the Junior Museum and Zoo and the Children's Theatre serve thousands of additional adults, youth and teens. Many of these programs have waitlists,

partly because of limited space in the specialized buildings associated with these divisions. Adjusting the scheduling of current facilities and developing access to other facilities (such as PAUSD) may increase the number of people that can be served by these popular programs.

## Community Engagement Results

A variety of community engagement efforts, conducted at several stages in the process, collected input from hundreds of residents and. The input of community members and stakeholders guided decisions of where to focus assessment efforts. Resident and stakeholder input highlighted the need to look at walkability and park access, as well as access to those highly desired experiences, such as play for children. In addition, the analysis examined equitable distribution and need of specific facilities, such as restrooms, dog parks and community gardens, as a result of the community interest in these features.

Community feedback largely confirms conclusions drawn from the demographic trends analysis. The following section describes the, key topics and themes that emerged from the Master Plan community engagement process.

### **KEY COMMUNITY TOPICS AND THEMES:**

The following topics and themes were referenced multiple times by the community, City staff, partners and decision makers. The key themes were critical in shaping the overall analysis of the system, and provided direction for the development of the Master Plan principles, goals, policies and recommended actions.

Respondents value, support and appreciate their parks system. They recognize that it is a high-quality system.

Respondents believe that strategic enhancements and improvements are needed to better meet evolving needs and trends, adapt to growth and changing demographics, and to continue to provide world-class experiences to residents.

Limited land availability and high cost is seen as the major limiting factor to pursuing new park opportunities.

Providing accessible and safe active transportation (walking, biking, etc.) routes to natural open spaces, community centers and parks is a high priority.

Enhancing physical and mental well-being is a critical function of parks for Palo Altans. Loop trails, bicycle and pedestrian paths to parks, and places to relax are top priorities, along with exercise equipment or additional classes.

Protection of nature is very important to residents. There is widespread support for the continued protection, enhancement and restoration of open spaces and wildlife habitat.

Residents want to feel connected to nature in their urban parks. There is interest in adding nature play elements and wildlife habitats to more traditional park settings.

There is widespread interest in bringing community gardens, dog parks and aquatic facilities to new areas of the city to improve access to these amenities for all neighborhoods.

Residents strongly support improved and additional restrooms in parks. In addition, there is a clear preference for features and amenities that support comfort, convenience and longer stays at parks, including water fountains and places to sit.

The Palo Alto community strongly supports universal design and access and there is interest in adding inclusive play elements to more parks.

Current policies that prioritize the availability of facilities for Palo Alto residents are widely supported, and stakeholders generally agree that providing services to local residents is a higher priority than providing regional attractions.

Residents would like to see enhancements to parks throughout the city including more types of play experiences and environments. There is also support for smaller, more locally focused events and programs (e.g., movies in the park) that are held in different parks throughout the city.

The community strongly supports the kinds of local and regional partnerships (particularly with the school district) that expand recreation opportunities and services for youth, teens and residents of all ages and abilities.

## Needs and Opportunities Summary

Review of the data from the Technical Assessment and Analysis and the Community and Stakeholder Engagement tied these two tracks of the Master Plan process together in preparation for Developing and Prioritizing Projects. As described in Chapter 1, this process produced a detailed reference matrix (with supporting documentation) identifying needs and opportunities across the system.

The Data and Opportunities Summary Matrix included in the technical supplement synthesizes findings from both the Technical Assessment and Analysis and the Community and Stakeholder Engagement tracks across nine topics:

Current Service/Inventory

Level of Control

Geographic Analysis

Capacity/Bookings

Perception of Quality

Expressed Need

Demographic Trends

Barriers to Access/Participation

Projected Demand

The final step of the process was to summarize opportunities to enhance Palo Alto's system through the addition, distribution or modification of a particular element and component. These actions were prioritized to develop the Master Plan's final recommendations, based on the constraints posed by limited land, staff, funding and other resources in the community.

## Key Findings

The review of the matrix identified groupings of opportunities that had emerged from the many analysis and community input activities. The opportunities were crafted into a set of twelve Areas of Focus, which represent a major development step toward goals for the master plan. The Areas of Focus are:

- Distributing park and recreation activities and experiences across the city
- Improving the accessibility of the full range of park and recreation opportunities
- Exploring new types of programs, classes, events and activities for all ages and abilities
- Improving and enhancing community center and recreation spaces across the community
- Enhancing capacity and quality of sports fields
- Increasing the variety of things to do in existing parks
- Enhancing comfort and making parks more welcoming
- Increasing health and wellness opportunities in parks and programs
- Integrating nature into Palo Alto parks
- Improving spaces and increased options for off-leash dogs
- Expanding the system
- Offering more of the existing programs, classes and events

The community prioritization challenge, a combination of online survey and in-person workshop, reviewed the community's opinions of these areas. Participants were asked to allocate a \$10 budget across each of the areas of focus, with the amounts allocated indicating the priority they place on a particular area.

The analysis of the results reflects the strong interest heard throughout the process for community center space improvements, integrating nature more thoroughly in the park system and making parks more welcoming.

A relatively smaller number of participants placed a very high priority (and resulting larger budget allocation) on improving options for off-leash dogs.

These results of the community prioritization challenge provided additional insight into the community's opinions about the future of Palo Alto's parks and recreation. The full summary is available in the technical supplement.

Figure 6 shows a sample survey question result. Full results are available in the technical supplement.

## Opportunities for the System

Three concept maps (Figures 7-9) illustrate a multi-layered system of park lands and connections that serve both people and natural systems. The maps can also serve as tools for supporting decisions on individual policies, programs and projects.

### **EXPAND THE SYSTEM**

Figure 7 identifies areas of Palo Alto where residents lack access to parks and natural open spaces within ¼ mile of their homes. These "park search areas," labeled A through E for planning purposes, will help

the City focus future park additions in neighborhoods with the greatest need, for example those with the highest density and/or largest population. Meanwhile, public access to school grounds that fall within park search areas (noted in purple) should be maintained and expanded to better support neighborhood park uses and enhance their natural open space value. Other City-owned properties (noted in brown) may represent future park opportunities, but nearly all of these lands fall outside of the park search areas.

### **CONNECT THE SYSTEM**

A selection of Palo Alto's existing and planned bikeways and pedestrian routes can be leveraged to improve park and recreation access. Figure 8 illustrates this potential network of trails and enhanced roadways that connect neighborhoods to local and regional parks, recreation facilities and natural open spaces. These routes are part of the City's adopted Bicycle Pedestrian Transportation Plan.

Recommended enhanced routes, labeled 1 through 3 for planning purposes, provide main north to south travel corridors between Palo Alto's parks and into neighboring communities. Regional trails like the Bay to Ridge and San Francisco Bay trails provide similar travel corridors from Foothills Park and Arastradero Preserve in the southwest to the Baylands Preserve and other shoreline parks and natural open spaces to the northeast. Recommended park connectors complete the network by linking the remaining park sites.

### **CONNECT NATURAL SYSTEMS**

Figure 9 illustrates how the same corridors recommended for bike and pedestrian enhancements can also provide connectivity for natural systems. Landscape design features such as increased urban forest canopy, native species plantings, and stormwater bioswales can create safe paths of travel and provide habitat value for local wildlife. Creek and riparian enhancements, supported by these "pollinator pathways," would improve water quality and habitat connections between regionally significant habitats in the hills and in the bay. New street and park trees would benefit areas that currently have low tree canopy coverage, highlighted in tan.

### **UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY SITES**

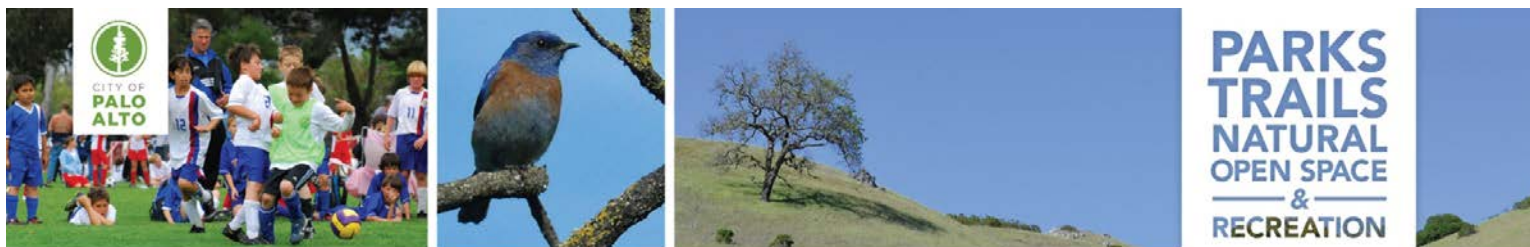
In the overall context of limited land, three properties in Palo Alto represent unique opportunities as are already owned by the City and are not yet designated for a specific use. These three sites each have unique opportunities for park development, but also constraints. The status of each is summarized below:

**Cubberley Community Center:** The City owns 8 of the 35 acres of this former high school campus and has managed leases within the buildings with a number of community organizations and businesses while also scheduling the gym and field space. The City and the Palo Alto Unified School District have agreed to jointly master plan the redevelopment of the site by 2020.

**Foothills Park Expansion:** The City acquired 7.7 acres of land adjacent to Foothills Park and has dedicated it as an expansion of the park. The expansion is cut off from the developed portion of the park by the existing maintenance facility. Discussion of the future of this site is pending the results of the Buckeye Creek hydrology study, which will be completed in summer 2017.

**Baylands Athletic Center Expansion:** As a result of the redesign of the Palo Alto Golf Course, 10.5 acres of land was added to the adjacent Baylands Athletic Center site for future recreation opportunities. Considerations for developing this site include its relative isolation from

residences (and access through a complicated and heavily impacted roadway exchange), its proximity to adjacent park sites, site limitations due to wetland and its location below the mean projected high water line after 3 feet of sea level rise, which could influence the type of recreation opportunities at the site.



# PARKS, TRAILS, NATURAL OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

MANUSCRIPT DRAFT 5

9/21/16

## Manuscript Draft Review Process

This is a manuscript version of the work-in-progress Chapter 5 of the Master Plan. This manuscript follows the outline of Chapter 5 (previously Chapter 6), as described in the August 24, 2016 memo. Some content is still under development. Within this manuscript, areas where content is currently being developed or refined is indicated as follows:

- *IN PROCESS BY CITY STAFF*, for pieces that City staff are taking the lead on; and
- *IN PROCESS BY PROJECT TEAM*, for pieces that both City staff and MIG are developing.
- *SECTION UNDER DEVELOPMENT*, for sections that require more research

The intent of this manuscript deliverable is to provide a snapshot of the progress and provide some framing for the content that is still being developed.

## Chapter 5. Implementation

Over the next twenty years, the implementation of this Master Plan will include an annual process initiated by City staff with guidance and leadership from the Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council. Palo Alto's dedicated community advocates and partner organizations will also play an important role in ensuring the proposed programs and projects align with the needs of the community.

The annual process described in this chapter involves implementing projects and programs described in Chapter 4 through an annual cycle of reviewing, planning, implementing and reporting. These programs have undergone review by the public, staff, Park and Recreation Commission (PRC) and City Council during the development of this Master Plan. The tools in this Chapter are designed to work with Palo Alto's existing budget and capital improvement plan processes and include:

- A prioritization process to create and update the annual action plan;
- An evaluation process to consider new projects or programs proposed in the future; and
- A methodology for measuring the effective and efficient implementation of the Master Plan.

### Prioritization Process and Action Plan

#### *Prioritization Process*

The prioritization process applies a set of criteria drawn from the extensive community input during the master planning process. These criteria are applicable to the entire range of projects and programs and reflect both the Master Plan principles and goals.

When considering the priority of projects and programs and the order in which they are implemented, the following set of criteria will be used as an initial guide to identify the benefit to the community and parks system in relation to other projects and programs. Proposed projects and programs will be ranked using a range of low, medium, and high; on how well the programs meet the criteria. These criteria will not provide a numerical score, but will inform staff, the PRC, and Council how a particular program could serve community needs. Each of the projects and programs recommended will be evaluated against criteria as a guide to identify the benefit to the overall system and in relation to other programs. Staff, PRC and ultimately the City Council will determine the final order of implementation as part of the established CIP and Operating budget process. The criteria are defined below:

- *Fill existing gaps*: Bring recreation opportunities (park land, facilities, programs) to areas of the city and to users where gaps were identified.
- *Respond to growth*: Add features or programs and/or modify or expand components of the system to prepare for and address increasing demand.
- *Address community preferences*: Target the highest priority types of projects and programs identified through citywide outreach.



- *Maximize public resources:* Create the most benefit for each dollar of capital and operating expenditure possible.
- *Realize multiple benefits:* Advance the principles of this Master Plan as well as the goals, projects and directions of other adopted City efforts.

### *Implementation Timelines*

Not all projects and programs are ready to be implemented immediately because they require additional planning, coordination, study or an initial event that is beyond the City's control. However, within the twenty-year timeframe of this plan, many projects and programs that today seem far from possible can and will be completed if thoughtful, measured steps are taken annually to realize the project or program.

This Master Plan looks at three time frames for implementation. These represent different stages of implementation based on the application of the prioritization criteria.

- **Near-Term (First Five Years):**

*Capital* - For capital projects, planning for the first five years of implementation will be through the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP). As each year's projects are completed, the annual budgeting process includes the addition of another year on the rolling five-year CIP. This established budgeting process will be the primary action plan for capital projects in the near term, along with preliminary planning for major efforts in the mid and long term. New capital projects that result from this Master Plan that are not currently in the five-year CIP will be proposed and prioritized during the annual CIP process.

*Operating* - Non-capital projects and programs are more flexible and can be explored in the near term, based on staff availability and existing resources, additional funding if needed will be considered through the annual budget process.

- **Mid-Term (6-10 Years):**

*Capital* - During the mid-term timeframe, new capital projects prioritized in this Master Plan will begin to be added to the CIP through the CIP process, with cost assumptions adjusted to account for cost escalation.

*Operating* - New non-capital projects and programs will be balanced with the ongoing implementation of new programs initiated in the first five years. The mid-term projects and programs may be refined based on data collected during the first five years of implementation, including progress reporting.

- **Long-Term (11-20 Years):** The long-term timeline includes projects that require either significant up-front work and planning, or rare opportunities, such as new land acquisition.

## *High Priority Needs and Opportunities*

There are some projects and programs that we know today are high priority needs and/or opportunities. The list below was developed with feedback from the Parks and Recreation Commission, community, stakeholders, and City staff and includes a summary of each of those high priorities and an order of magnitude capital and operating cost for each. Achievement of large scale capital projects will occur in the long term, however; several steps must begin in near term and will continue through planning, design and ultimately construction.

THIS SECTION IS UNDER DEVELOPMENT. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON EACH PRIORITY WILL BE ADDED AFTER PRC REVIEW

### **Projects:**

1. Develop new dog parks in underrepresented areas
2. Construct new restrooms in parks
3. Develop adult fitness areas in parks
4. Develop new community gardens in underrepresented areas
5. Plan, design and construct 10.5 acre site in Baylands for park uses
6. Acquire new parkland in high need areas
7. Plan, design and construct a new public gymnasium
8. Develop conservation plans for open space preserves
9. Create wayfinding signage of safe routes to parks
10. Integrate nature into urban parks
11. Plan, design and redevelop Cubberley Community Center
12. Incorporate sustainable practices in the maintenance and management of parks, open space and recreation facilities
13. Update Americans with Disabilities Act requirements in parks
14. Improve trail connections and access
15. Enhance seating areas in parks

### **Programs:**

1. Provide intramural sports program for middle and high school students
2. Expand programs for seniors
3. Expand non-academic programs for teens
4. Encourage unstructured play at parks and community centers
5. Establish and grow partnerships and identify potential park donors
6. Collaborate with school district to increase access to playgrounds, gyms, and other school facilities
7. Connect youth, teens and families with nature
8. Increase the variety of things to do in parks
9. Expand youth aquatics programs
10. Expand programs related to health and wellness
11. Pilot temporary/pop-up programming in parks
12. Invest in staff training to enhance therapeutic and inclusive program development



There are limitations (both statutory and in practice) on the use of many of the existing funding sources. Table X summarizes the existing funding sources by their applicability to capital and operational projects and programs.

## FUNDING SECTION UNDER DEVELOPMENT

Table X: Summary of Capital and Operational/Programming Use of Funding Sources

Existing Funding Source	Capital	Operational/Programming
General Fund	Eligible	Eligible
Parkland Dedication Fees	Eligible	Not Eligible
Development Impact Fees	Eligible	Not Eligible
Public Private Partnerships	Eligible	Not Eligible
Grants	Eligible	Limited
Donations	Eligible	Limited
Key		
Eligible	Eligible	
Limited	Limited	
Not Eligible	Not Eligible	

In addition, Palo Alto's Infrastructure Blue Ribbon Committee (IBRC) process put the City on a path to "Catch Up" on most of the backlog of replacement and major maintenance needs in the park system, with a funding plan to do so.

### *Funding Gap*

As Table X shows, Palo Alto has more options for funding capital projects than it does for funding that can fund the operation, maintenance and programming of the system. The City should sustain a sufficient investment to maintain its existing facilities, amenities and programs. Future funding options should address this gap.

*IN PROCESS BY PROJECT TEAM. This section will quantify the gap between current funding and needed funding to catch up and keep up with the maintenance of the existing parks, trails, natural open space and recreation facilities and programs. Moreover, this section will provide costs for a variety of new amenities that will be evaluated annually as the department and City develop and approve the capital and operating budget.*

### *Potential Funding Options*

While the total gap in capital funding is a substantial number, the limited options currently available for maintenance, operations and programming funding is a bigger constraint on achieving the Master Plan goals. The potential for a funding method to expand funding for maintenance, operations and programming should be carefully considered as the City explores options to fill the funding gap.

## Expand Existing Funding Sources

One important option is increasing the amount of funding from existing sources. The General Fund could be expanded by increasing revenue generation.

- Parkland dedication fees could be reevaluated to ensure the rates are keeping up with land costs.
- Development impact fees could be increased through action by the City Council.
- Donations and grants could also be expanded with effort by the City
- Public-private partnerships, which could include allocating staff time, creating a new position focused on expanding these sources, or hiring a consultant experienced with grant writing.
- Participation and membership fees should be evaluated to increase cost recovery and to help pay for new and enhanced programs and services.

## Issue Bonds

There are two types of bonds relevant to the Master Plan. While City Council would need to initiate either type of bond, only one method would require a public vote.

General obligation bonds are voter-approved bonds with the assessment placed on real property. The money can only be used for capital improvements, not for maintenance or operations. This property tax is levied for a specified period of time (usually 15-20 years). Passage requires a two-thirds majority approval by the voters.

Revenue bonds are sold to finance revenue-generating facilities, such as community centers, performing arts centers and in some cases sports complexes. The interest and capital are paid from the revenue produced from the operation of such a facility. The City has to guarantee repayment, meaning that if revenue from the facility does not cover the necessary bond payments, the City will be required to pay from another source.

## Create a Special District

There are several types of special districts allowable by California law for recreation purposes.

The Mello-Roos Community Facilities Act of 1982 allows any county, city, special district, school district or joint powers authority to establish a Mello-Roos Community Facilities District (a "CFD") to finance public improvements and services. The services and improvements that Mello-Roos CFDs can finance include streets, sewer systems and other basic infrastructure, police protection, fire protection, ambulance services, schools, parks, libraries, museums and other cultural facilities.

Formation of a CFD requires a two-thirds vote of residents living within the proposed boundaries. If there are fewer than 12 residents, then the vote is instead conducted of current landowners. The assessment cannot be based on property value; instead it is based on the size of the property or square footage of structures. By law, the CFD is also entitled to recover expenses needed to form the CFD and administer the annual special taxes and bonded debt.

The special assessment continues until bonds are paid off and then is typically reduced to a level to maintain the investments.

The Landscaping and Lighting Act permits a public agency to assess housing units or land parcels for a variety of city services, including parks. The assessment revenues can be used for parkland acquisition, development and/or maintenance. The agency can choose to use the revenue generated on a pay-as-you-go basis or can sell bonds in order to receive a lump sum amount which is then paid back from the annual revenue generated from the assessment. The pay-as-you-go method provides steady ongoing revenue to fund services. Bonding against revenue provides a larger sum to undertake a bigger project. Establishment of a new assessment district or revision to an existing one requires a simple majority vote of property owners.

### Exchange or Sell Property

If the City has an excess piece of property, the City could sell or trade the property to obtain a site more suitable for park use.

### Combining Master Plan Project with other Infrastructure Projects

As the primary part of Palo Alto's green infrastructure, the parks, natural open space and trails system connects to many other city services. Some projects can be vital parts of other infrastructure projects or be applicable for funding from sources for transportation, stormwater, flood protection and other engineered infrastructure projects. Combining or coupling Master Plan projects with other infrastructure projects can reduce the costs all around, open up new funding streams, provide mitigation and achieve multiple objectives.

### Evaluating Future Projects

As time passes new ideas will emerge about how to optimize an individual site, add to the system or change the mix of recreation opportunities. The combination of the goals (detailed in Chapter 4) and the prioritization criteria create a framework that can be used to evaluate future proposals for changes to the parks, trails, natural open space and recreation system.

### Review Process

Following a similar process to developing the Master Plan projects and programs, the review process for new ideas includes both staff and PRC review. The review process will follow the steps below.

- Step 1: Staff, individual or community group proposes a project or program.
- Step 2: Staff reviews the proposal to determine if the project aligns with the community's vision as expressed in the Master Plan principles and goals. If a compelling case cannot be made, the process stops here.
- Step 3: Staff analyzes need using the same categories as in the Data and Needs Summary (see Master Plan Chapter 3):
  - Current service/inventory

- Level of control
- Geographic analysis
- Capacity/bookings
- Perception of quality
- Expressed need
- Demographic trends
- Barriers to participation
- Projected demand

In some cases, information may not be readily available for staff to make an adequate evaluation. In these cases, staff may obtain additional data by meeting with the proposer or with local experts, conducting regional or national research or seeking community input. Staff may also recommend conducting a specific technical study. Once adequate information is gathered, staff will complete the analysis of need and document it in a brief report. If PRC review is needed, staff will proceed to Step 4.

- Step 4: Staff makes a recommendation to the PRC. Using the results of the analysis of need (Step 3), staff evaluates the proposal using the prioritization criteria and prepares a staff report to the PRC with a recommendation. Staff may recommend that the PRC add the proposed project or program for further development and eventual addition to the Action Plan. Staff may also recommend against the proposal if the prioritization scoring is low. Low scoring is an indicator that the proposal is not a priority, compared to all opportunities.
- Step 5: The PRC considers the staff's recommendation at a meeting. The proposer is encouraged to attend and to present the proposal. After consideration at the meeting, the PRC makes a determination and directs staff how to proceed.

For proposals recommended for further action, staff can explore the financial and practical considerations and incorporate the proposal into Action Plan and/or the CIP process as applicable.

## Progress Reporting

The City has a standing practice of reporting on the annual citizen satisfaction survey as well as a performance-based "Citizen Centric Report", both of which provide data on parks and recreation programs and services. In addition, there is internal reporting that that informs program and service delivery decisions, budget proposals and policy and procedure changes. These existing measures already provide a large selection of data points to draw from when looking at any part of the parks, trails, natural open space and recreation system. Below are the existing measures and indicators currently used along with recommended additional measures and indicators to effectively monitor and report on Master Plan progress.

[Insert a table to be created separated by elements of the plan and the goals of the plan, populated with existing relevant measures and indicators and identifiable new measures and indicators.]

To track progress on Master Plan implementation, specific measurable indicators relate directly to the goals, policies and programs, as described below. Annually, these will be applied and reported to the PRC, City Council and the community.

### *Indicators*

*IN PROCESS BY PROJECT TEAM. A small set of indicators is anticipated, potentially organized by goal. No more than one or two indicators per goal are recommended. Preliminary ideas include:*

- *Number of users in parks (Goals 1, 2, 3)*
- *Acres of new native landscape and new habitat (Goal 4)*
- *Number of new recreation programs, events and locations piloted (Goal 5)*
- *Amount of water used for irrigation (Goal 6)*

*Other indicators relate to topics of concern, as identified in the areas of focus.*

- *Teen participation numbers in recreation programs and services*
- *Senior participation numbers in recreation programs and services*
- *Number of dog park users by site*
- *Number of timeslots used on sports fields*

### **Call to Action**

*MIG will craft a call to action in parallel with development of the executive summary.*

## **Appendices Related to Chapter 5**

### *Appendix X: Existing Capital and Operations Funding Sources*

#### **General Fund**

The General Fund is the pool of unrestricted tax dollars and other revenues that a City uses to pay for most of the services it provides. General Funds are allocated out in the budgeting process and dollars for park operations must compete with other city needs for limited resources. Palo Alto uses the General Fund as the primary source for operations and programming and also makes a substantial transfer to the Capital Improvement Program each year. Recreation programs generate revenue from user fees, which flow directly into the General Fund, not into the budget for recreation services.

#### **Parkland Dedication Fees**

A separate fee is charged at the time land is subdivided for additional development. The parkland dedication fee is authorized under the Quimby Act (California Government Code §66477) allowing cities to require developers set aside land, donate conservation easements or



pay fees for park improvements. This fee is calculated based on the maximum land requirement allowed under the act, 5 acres per 1,000 persons, the number of dwelling units and the current value of land. This funding source will be relatively insignificant in the future due to the limited opportunity to subdivide land within Palo Alto.

### Development Impact Fees

The City of Palo Alto collects impact fees authorized by the Mitigation Fee Act for both new park system expansion and community centers. These fees are collected at the time building permits are issued for new construction and are based on a measurable impact of additional people to the system. The fees are adjusted annually to account for inflation. The current impact fee amounts are listed in Table X, below.

Table X: Development Impact Fees as of August 15, 2016

<b>Fees: Residential</b>	<b>Single Family</b>	<b>Single Family over 3000 square feet</b>	<b>Multi-Family</b>	<b>Multi-Family under 900 square feet</b>
Parks	\$11,864	\$17,716	\$7,766	\$3,926
Community Centers	\$3,075	\$4,605	\$2,024	\$1,021
Total Relevant* Impact Fees Per Home	\$14,939	\$22,321	\$9,790	\$4,947
<b>Fees: Non-Residential</b>	<b>Commercial</b>	<b>Hotel/Motel</b>	<b>Institutional</b>	<b>Industrial</b>
Parks	5.038	2.278	5.038	5.038
Community Centers	0.284	0.128	0.284	0.284
Total Relevant* Impact Fees Per Square Foot of Non-Residential Construction	\$ 5.322	\$ 2.406	\$ 5.322	\$ 5.322
*The City also collects development impact fees for Public Safety Facilities, General Government Facilities, Housing, Traffic and Public Art.				

The amount of the impact fee is based on two variables, the projected growth of the user population resulting from the development and the cost of planned improvements in response to that growth. In 2014, the City revisited the nexus study and projects that form the basis of all of the development impact fees charged. This study determined that the fees were adequate for current needs but should be revisited following the completion of this master plan. In addition to the ongoing collection of impact fees as development continues, Palo Alto currently has a balance in the impact fee funds. For parks, this balance is \$##### and for community centers the balance is \$#####. This balance is partially committed to improvements that are already in the CIP.

## Grants

Both private and public agencies offer a variety of grant programs. Most park and recreation grant funds originate with either the Federal or State government and are limited to funding the acquisition, design and construction of parks, facilities and trails. The active list of grant programs regularly changes, as Federal and State budgets expand and contract and the application schedule and process must be learned and monitored. Further, most grants require that the local agency match a percentage of the funding with local dollars.

In addition, private and corporate foundations are granting funding for the construction of facilities and the acquisition of lands that further their missions. Some private grant agencies in the health sector are currently funding pilot programs in some areas of the country to improve health outcomes, but for the most part grants are not a sustainable ongoing source of funding for recreation programming. Palo Alto has had some success with utilizing grant funding to expand successful programs, including those at the Junior Museum and Zoo and the Palo Alto Art Center beyond the borders of the City. This allows these unique programs to reach a larger scale without costing the taxpayers of Palo Alto additional funds.

## Public-Private Partnerships

The idea of working in close collaboration with a private entity to enhance park and recreation opportunities is gaining in popularity across the country. The basic approach is for a public agency to enter into a working agreement with a private corporation or non-profit entity to help fund, build, and/or operate a public facility. Generally, the three primary incentives that a public agency can offer is free land to place a facility (usually a park or other piece of public land), certain tax advantages and access to public facilities. While the public agency may have to give up certain responsibilities or control, it is one way of developing public facilities at a lower cost.

Palo Alto has had several high-profile successes, most recently with the Magical Bridge Playground, with a fairly unique model of public-private partnership. In this model, the City allows a partner organization to take on the design and construction process, carving out the project site and leasing the property to the partner for the duration of the project. The City remains involved in oversight and technical assistance and takes possession of the project at completion. Putting the partner organization at the front of the effort has resulted in very successful fundraising and a high quality and relatively lower cost process.

## Donations

The donations of labor, land, or cash by service agencies, private groups or individuals are a popular way to raise money for specific projects. The most effective agencies actively solicit donations from both the general public and through developed relationships with local companies and philanthropists. Friends of the Palo Alto Parks is an established channel for tax-deductible donations that can be directed to specific projects or to park improvements in general. The current level of donations has averaged approximately \$15,000 per year. Labor hours contributed by volunteers is another type of donation that benefits the City's parks and open space preserves. In Palo Alto's history, there have been significant donations, such as Lucie Stern Center.