

# STAFF REPORT

## PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

**MEETING DATE:** November 20, 2017

**SUBJECT:** City of San Marcos Parks Master Plan Update  
Resolution PC 17-4674; Case No. PA17-0002

### RECOMMENDATION

ADOPT the proposed Resolution recommending that the City Council approve an update to the 1990 Parks Master Plan.

### INTRODUCTION

The City Council adopted a Parks Master Plan in 1990 to present a vision of the parks and recreational future for the City of San Marcos. Since the adoption of the Parks Master Plan, the City has changed significantly. The adopted General Plan of 2012 recognizes this fact by adopting a policy, Policy PR-1.2, in the Parks, Recreation and Community Health Element which states that the City should update the Parks Master Plan to identify long terms goals for the Parks and Recreation Department and the community. The goal of this Parks Master Plan Update ("the Plan") is to identify potential improvements to the parks system, and as funding becomes available, suggest additional amenities for new parks and improvements to existing park facilities.

The Plan is based on significant outreach and data to make the best recommendations for the community. It relies on national standards from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and data from a community-wide telephone survey which found that nearly nine in ten residents describe the current overall quality, safety, appearance, and availability of San Marcos' parks, trails, and recreation facilities as "excellent" or "good." The same survey results found a majority of respondents (60%) saying they desire "no changes" to the City's parks or recreation programs or "could not think of any changes" that would improve them at all.

The recommendations are also based on results from town hall-style meetings that were advertised to the community through the City's website, local media, and social media and were held at the Community Center and the San Elijo Recreation Center; meetings with City staff involved in the parks or recreation programming; meetings with small focus groups including the Trails Advisory Committee, members of the equestrian community, the arts community, older adults at the Senior Activity Center, the Friends of San Marcos Parks and Recreation, the San Marcos Youth Sports Council, and the San Elijo Women's Club. The outreach process was extensive and provided opportunities for all segments of the San Marcos community to participate in the process.

The proposed update to the Plan does not propose any ordinance changes or site-specific improvements to any park. It is intended to be used as a policy document, and as funding becomes available, to suggest possible future park amenity changes based on the needs and wants of the community. It is anticipated that at the time when specific improvements are considered for any existing and/or future parks, further evaluation and environmental review will likely be required to analyze conformance with applicable planning, zoning and environmental regulations.

## DISCUSSION

The Plan evaluates the City's existing park facilities, programs, and services; analyzes the current and future demographic make-up of the city; assesses the community's needs and desires; and provides recommendations to improve the current services provided to residents. This community-driven plan is intended as a policy guide for the City's departments by identifying the existing levels of services and establishing recommendations for facility improvements and development, recreation programming, as well as the resources and funding associated with each future action.

The following description provides a brief overview of the Plan's contents:

### Population and Demographic Changes

In order to determine what park facilities and amenities will be needed in the future, the Plan looks at population and demographic projections of the community. It is anticipated that the San Marcos of the future will look remarkably similar to the San Marcos of today. By 2035, it is estimated that San Marcos will have just under 110,000 residents. There is relative consistency among the different age groups as a percentage of the population, even looking into the future. The median age of the City's population is anticipated to stay within 3 years through the year 2050, going from 34.2 (present) to 36.9 in 2050. Due to the anticipated similar demographic makeup of the City through year 2050, the park and recreational activities that the City seeks today will likely be similar to the ones in the future.

### Park Standards and Dedication

As a condition of approval for any development, the Plan recommends that the City require applicants to dedicate land, pay fees in lieu thereof, or a combination of both for park purposes to serve future residents of those developments.

When dedicating land for parks, the land should only be counted if it is for "Active Recreational Use" by the public, a common standard that is used by other cities and counties. This definition includes recreation facilities occurring on level or gently sloping land (maximum 10%) restricted for park and recreation purposes in a planned development which are designed to provide individual or group activities of an active nature similar to local parks in San Marcos, including, but not limited to, open lawn, sports fields, court games, swimming pools, children's play areas, picnic areas, recreation buildings, dance slabs, and recreational community gardening. Active Recreational Uses do not include natural open space, nature study areas, open space for buffer areas, steep slopes, golf courses, riding and hiking trails, scenic overlooks, water courses,

drainage areas, water bodies (lakes, ponds, reservoirs), boating areas, parking areas, and archaeology areas.

The Plan also defines different types of parks as detailed below:

- **Regional Parks:** These parks are a minimum of 50 acres in size and are located within a drive time of 1 hour or less. They offer county residents the opportunity to participate in a variety of park experiences for an extended period of time.
- **Community Parks:** They are generally over 10 acres and have a 3 mile service radius, and meet the recreation needs of several neighborhoods or large sections of the community.
- **Neighborhood Parks:** These parks are at least 5 acres and have a  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile service radius. They serve as the recreation and social focus of the neighborhood.
- **Mini Parks and Urban Parks:** These parks are generally between 2,500 square feet and 1 acre in size, have a  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile service radius, and provide passive recreation space in an area where densities may limit available open space.

The Plan's recommended standards may be modified for planned urban areas to accommodate a variety of recreation and community activity types at a scale more appropriate to the context of denser, urban environments in the city's downtown.

#### Current Park Inventory

The Plan describes each of the City's parks, and includes a complete inventory of all amenities in the City's park system, from fields to playgrounds to small items like park benches and barbeques.

#### Needs Assessment and Community Input

To establish the wants and needs of the community for parks and recreation, City staff relied on the following data sources and evaluations:

NRPA recommendations for the number of facilities per population; a 2014 survey conducted for the City of San Marcos by True North Research that asked a number of questions about recreation programming and infrastructure in the City; interviews with Parks and Recreation and other City staff; and specific community outreach, through targeted meetings and open town hall forums, which asked residents and other park and trails users what they thought should be priorities for the future.

The City exceeds the NRPA recommendations for basketball, soccer, and lighted baseball fields through the year 2035; however, the soccer fields are also used by other sports including: field hockey, lacrosse, and rugby, all of which are heavily played year-round due to our favorable climate. As a result, the City's needs generally exceed the national recommendations. The City is currently deficient and will continue to be deficient into the future in the number of tennis courts, baseball fields, softball fields, running tracks, and swimming pools. San Marcos

currently meets the standards for the number of playgrounds and football fields, but will fall into the deficient category by 2035.

The Plan also establishes City-specific recommendations for park amenities since national standards do not necessarily fit with every area's geography, climate, and recreation needs.

#### Plan Recommendations

The Plan has established that the City is currently meeting the needs of the community with its current inventory of park amenities, however per the NRPA standards, it is deficient in the number of tennis courts, baseball fields, softball fields, running tracks, and swimming pools. While the Plan does not make any specific commitments for improvements in the future, it does recommend several general amenity improvements in the future, including new tennis courts, basketball courts, sports fields, indoor recreation space and service improvements for aquatics facilities.

#### Cost and Financing

The costs of building enhancements to existing parks, new parks, and the recommendations needed to keep the City's high standards into the future are significant and exceed \$50 million. The City's Park and Development Fees and taxes are not going to be sufficient to meet these financial demands. The Plan provides information on how much the City could receive if it hypothetically increased revenue to meet these financial challenges. If those options are not feasible, it also provides a list of other potential options, ranging from grants and sponsorships to advertising to other private partnerships that could help the City achieve its financial goal to improve the Parks system.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION**

The project to update the City's Parks Master Plan has been reviewed for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and it has been determined that this is not a project within the meaning of Section 15378 of the CEQA Guidelines because there is no potential for it to result in a physical change in the environment, either directly or indirectly. Even if the proposed project was considered a project subject to CEQA, it would be exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the update to the Parks Master Plan would have any significant effect on the environment.

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#### **ATTACHMENT(S)**

Resolution PC 17-4674 recommending approval and adoption of the Parks Master Plan  
Update  
A. Parks Master Plan Update

Prepared by:



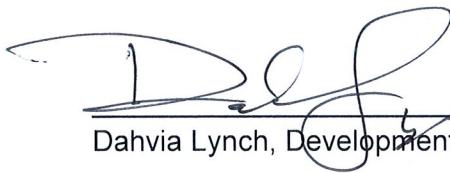
Michael Gordon, Administrative Services Manager

Reviewed by:



Buck Martin, Director, Parks and Recreation

Reviewed by:



Dahvia Lynch, Development Services Director

Approved and Submitted by:



Karen Brindley, Planning Division Manager

RESOLUTION PC 17-4674

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY  
OF SAN MARCOS RECOMMENDING CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL  
OF THE PARKS MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Case No. PA 17-0002  
City of San Marcos

WHEREAS, in 1990, the San Marcos City Council approved Resolution 90-3375 adopting a Parks Master Plan which presented a vision of the parks and recreational future for the City of San Marcos; and

WHEREAS, the adopted General Plan of 2012 includes a policy, Policy PR-1.2, in the Parks, Recreation, and Community Health Element to update the Parks Master Plan to identify long term goals for the Parks and Recreation Department and the community; and

WHEREAS, the City Council directed staff to update the 1990 Parks Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Parks Master Plan Update (“the Plan”) is to identify potential improvements to the parks system, and as funding becomes available, to suggest additional amenities for new parks and improvements to existing park facilities; and

WHEREAS, the Plan is based on significant public outreach and data to make the best recommendations for the community, including national standards from the National Recreation and Parks Association, a community telephone survey, publicly advertised town hall forums and meetings with small focus groups; and

WHEREAS, the Plan is community-driven and intended as a policy guide for the City’s departments by identifying the existing levels of services and establishing recommendations for improvements, as well as potential resources available for funding; and

WHEREAS, both the Parks and Recreation Department and the Development Services Department did study the Plan and recommend approval of the Plan; and

WHEREAS, the required public hearing held on November 20, 2017 was duly advertised and held in the manner prescribed by law; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission’s decision is based on the following findings and determinations:

1. The proposed project will not adversely affect the implementation of the General Plan and is in conformance with its elements. The proposed update to the Plan implements

Policy PR-1.2 of the Parks, Recreation, and Community Health Element of the General Plan and is consistent with the General Plan's Implementation Plan.

2. The proposed project has been reviewed for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and it has been determined that this is not a project within the meaning of Section 15378 of the CEQA Guidelines because there is no potential for it to result in a physical change in the environment, either directly or indirectly. Even if the proposed project was considered a project subject to CEQA, it would be exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the update to the Parks Master Plan would have no significant effect on the environment.
3. Adoption of the proposed project will help the City with its short term and long term park and recreational policy needs.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Planning Commission resolves as follows:

1. The foregoing recitals are true and correct.
2. The Parks Master Plan Update in the attached Exhibit A is hereby recommended to the City Council for approval.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Planning Commission of the City of San Marcos, at a regular meeting held on this 20th day of November, 2017, by the following electronic vote:

AYES: COMMISSIONERS:  
NOES: COMMISSIONERS:  
ABSENT: COMMISSIONERS:  
ABSTAIN: COMMISSIONERS:

APPROVED:

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Eric Flodine, Chairman  
SAN MARCOS CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

ATTEST:

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Lisa Kiss, Office Specialist III  
SAN MARCOS CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

Attachment: Exhibit "A"