



Council Agenda Report

Department Name: Parks & Recreation
Cost Center: 7001
For Agenda of: May 4, 2021
Placement: Study Session
Estimated Time: 90 minutes

FROM: Greg Avakian, Parks and Recreation Director
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SUBJECT: STUDY SESSION ON THE PUBLIC DRAFT PARKS + RECREATION BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE: 2021-2041 (PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN AND GENERAL PLAN ELEMENT UPDATE)

RECOMMENDATION

1. Receive a presentation on the Public Draft Parks + Recreation Blueprint for the Future: 2021-2041 (Parks and Recreation Plan and General Plan Element Update) (Attachment A); and
2. Provide comments and direction to staff to guide the Final Draft Parks + Recreation Blueprint for the Future: 2021-2041 (Parks and Recreation Plan and General Plan Element Update).

REPORT-IN-BRIEF

The City Parks and Recreation Department has prepared the Public Draft Parks + Recreation Blueprint for the Future: 2021-2041 (Parks and Recreation Plan and General Plan Element Update) (Plan Update) to guide the future of parks and recreation in the City for the next twenty years. This report provides an overview of the Public Draft Plan Update. The current Parks and Recreation Master Plan and Element (2001) is proposed to be replaced in its entirety by the Plan Update. One notable and important change with the Plan Update is that it addresses urban parks and recreation, and no longer includes plans or policies related to the City's Open Space, which is appropriately addressed in the City's Conservation and Open Space Element (adopted in 2006). The purpose of this study session is to invite comments, questions, and general input on the Public Draft Plan Update from the City Council and the public. The Plan Update is scheduled to return to the City Council for consideration and potential adoption on July 6, 2021.

The Public Draft Plan Update and Public Draft Initial Study/Negative Declaration are provided as Council Reading Files (Attachments A and B) and the Public Draft Plan Update is available for public review at <https://www.slocity.org/government/departments-directory/parks-and-recreation/parks-and-recreation-plan-and-element-update>.

DISCUSSION

Background

In 2017, the City Parks and Recreation Department initiated the update to the City's Parks and Recreation Element of the General Plan and the Parks and Recreation Plan (Plan Update).

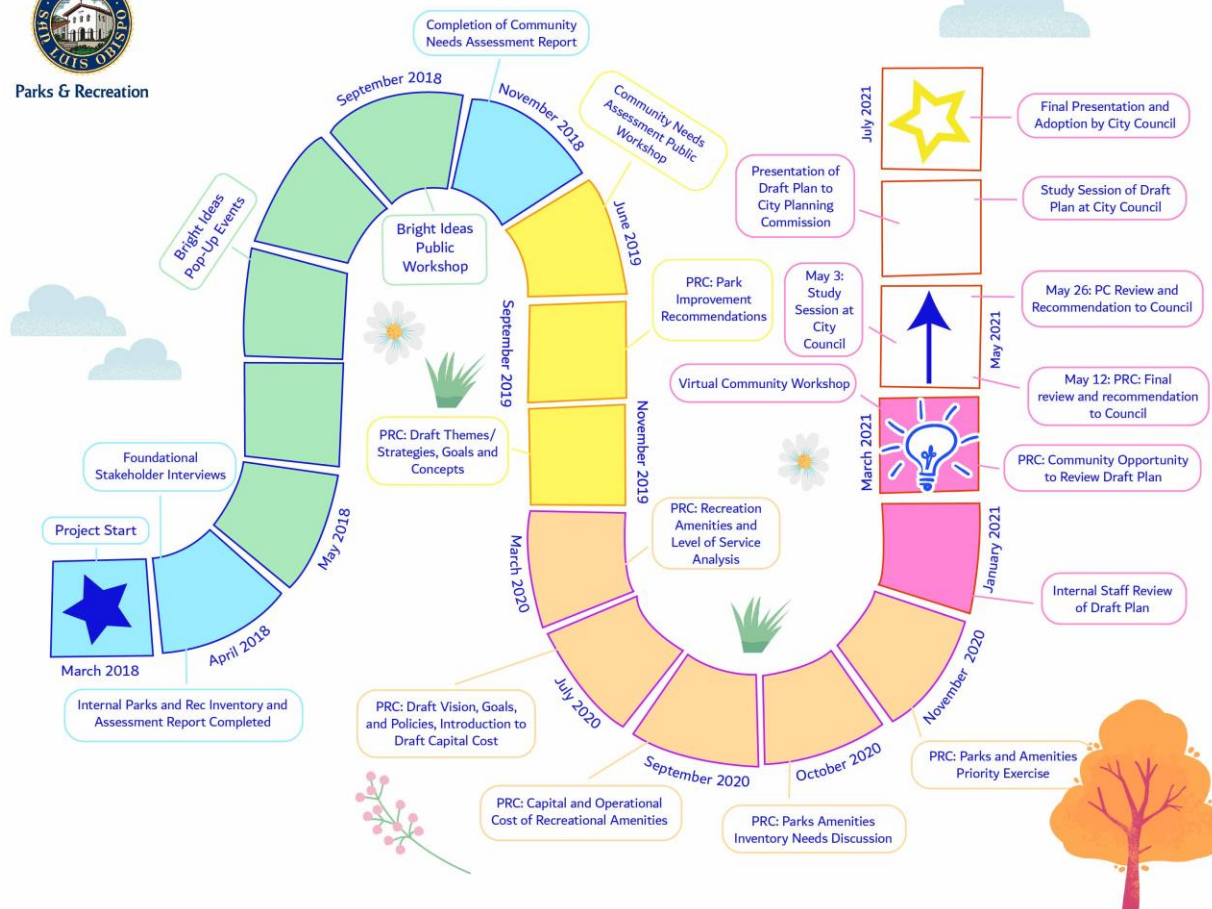
On November 7, 2017, the City Council approved the Project Plan for the Plan Update, and a consultant team led by WRT was selected in February 2018 to support staff. In April 2018, the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) approved the Community Engagement Plan¹ for the project, and the Plan Update has been informed by three years of public outreach and comment, public workshops and forums, a statistically valid survey, and focused review by Parks and Recreation and Planning staff and the PRC. The Plan Update will be an essential guide for parks and recreation in San Luis Obispo, while also serving as the General Plan Parks and Recreation Element; goals and policies are embedded in the City's larger blueprint for future growth and change. The Plan Update also serves to support, supplement, and advance the goals of the City's *Climate Action Plan for Community Recovery*², *Active Transportation Plan*³, and *Recommendations to City Council for Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the City of San Luis Obispo*⁴. Implementation of the Plan supports and strives to ensure that City's parks, facilities, and programs will be inclusive, safe, and accessible to all people.

¹ Approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission in April 2018, [available here](#).

² Climate Action Plan for Community Recovery (August 2020), [available here](#)

³ Active Transportation Plan (February 2021), [available here](#)

⁴ Recommendations to City Council for Advancing DEI (January 2021), [available here](#)



Park and Recreation Needs

The City currently has 205.6 acres of parkland, including 99.7 acres of Community Parks, 34.7 acres of Neighborhood Parks, 7.9 acres of Mini Parks, and 63.3 acres of recreational centers and special facilities. Proposed park acreage standards require a minimum of 10 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, including five acres of Neighborhood Parks per 1,000 residents. For reference, the City's 2018 Capital Facilities Fee Nexus Study calculated the park level of service at 4.18 acres per 1,000 residents or 2.69 acres per daytime service population.⁵

Looking ahead, the City would need an additional 361 acres of parkland to meet the park acreage standard in 2035, inclusive of 249 acres of Neighborhood Parks, based on resident population estimates in the City's General Plan (56,686) (Attachment A, Appendix C, *Community Needs Assessment Table 2-6, San Luis Obispo Park Acreage Standards and Level of Service*). An additional 677 acres of parkland would be needed if the same standard is applied to the estimated 2035 daytime (service) population of 88,286.⁶

⁵ The identified level of service included existing parks and facilities, and did not include planned parks identified in adopted Specific Plans (Capital Facilities Development Impact Fee Nexus Study, 2018)

⁶ Daytime (service) population identified in the Capital Facilities Development Impact Fee Nexus Study, 2018)

Implementation of currently approved parks within adopted Specific and Development Plans (Avila Ranch, Orcutt Area Specific Plan, Froom Ranch Specific Plan, and San Luis Ranch Specific Plan) would provide 41 acres of parkland. This will contribute to the total acreage of parkland in the City, resulting in total park acreage of 246, with a remaining gap of **320 acres** needed to serve the estimated resident population in 2035. An additional **636 acres** of parkland would be needed if the 2035 daytime population is considered. The recommended park acreage standard is ambitious and aspirational, and these gaps highlight the need for multi-use, multi-generational, and multi-ability amenities within parkland and facilities, in addition to the identification of new parkland within the City.

Known planned amenities within Specific Plan areas are identified in *Table 1. Specific Plan Parkland Amenities* below.

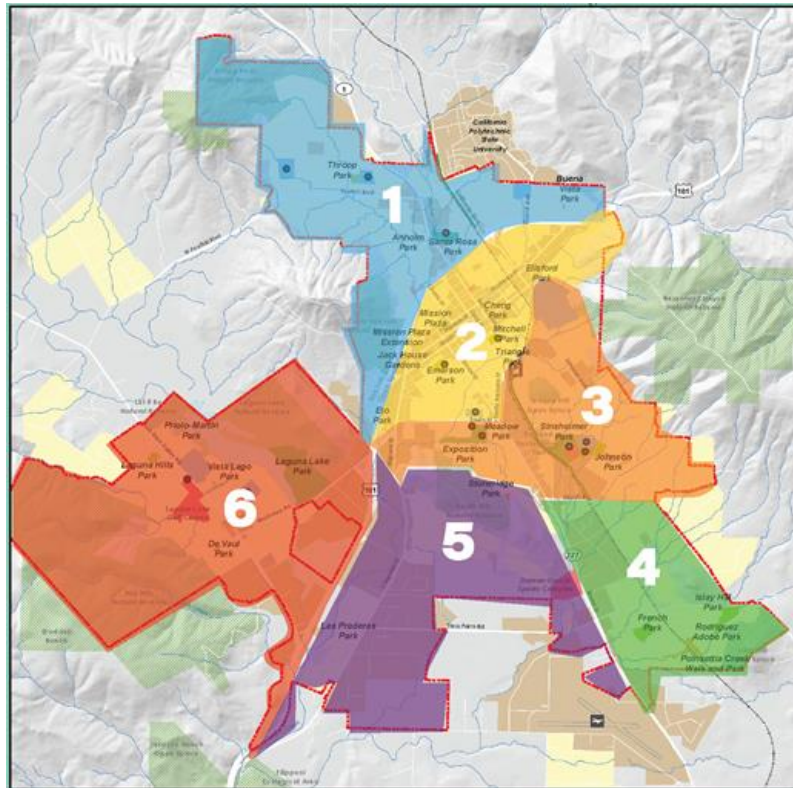
Table 1. Specific Plan Parkland Amenities

Amenity Type	Specific Plan – Planned Amenities
Diamond Athletic Fields (Youth)	1 - Avila Ranch
Rectangle Athletic Fields	3 – Orcutt Area 1 – Avila Ranch
Outdoor Basketball Court	1 – Avila Ranch (full court) 3 – Avila Ranch (half court) 2 – San Luis Ranch (half court) 1 – Orcutt Area (full court)
Tennis Court	4 – Orcutt Area 2 – Avila Ranch
Playground/Tot Lot	7 – Avila Ranch 2 - San Luis Ranch 3 - Orcutt Area
Dog Park/ Off-leash Dog Area	1 – Avila 1 – Orcutt Area
Pickleball Court	6 – Orcutt Area 2 – Avila Ranch
Group Picnic Areas	1 – Orcutt Area 1 – Avila Ranch (BBQ)

In order to determine base needs for City park facilities and amenities, staff worked with the project consultant team (WRT and PROS) to assess the current level of service for park facilities and amenities based on the 2017 estimated resident and daytime populations, and the 2035 estimated resident and daytime populations. This assessment considered a list of key amenities based on the City's current inventory, planned amenities identified in Specific Plan areas (see *Table 1. Specific Plan Parkland Amenities*, above), input from the public and the PRC, consideration of recreational trends, and recommendations identified in the Community Needs Assessment.

In addition to overall need, the Plan Update assessed needs based on identified sub-areas within the City (refer to *Figure 1. City Sub-Areas*), with a policy directive for equitable distribution of amenities through-out the City, such that every resident would be able to access no-cost key amenities via sustainable transportation including walking, biking, rolling, or transit. Existing City inventory, existing needs, future needs, access gaps, and implementation timing priority are identified in *Table 2. Amenity Inventory and Current and Future Needs*, on the following page.

Figure 1. City Sub-Areas



Area of Residence

1. Foothill/Anholm
2. Downtown
3. Meadow/Sinsheimer
4. Righetti/Orcutt
5. Stoneridge/Margarita
6. Laguna Lake

Table 2. Amenity Inventory and Current and Future Needs

Amenity	Current Inventory	Current Additional Need	General Plan Build-out Total Additional Need¹	Location Based on Access Gap and Planned Amenities (Sub-area)²	Priority
ATHLETIC FIELDS					
Diamond Athletic Fields (Youth)	4	2	3	Downtown Laguna Lake	0-10 years
Diamond Athletic Fields (Youth/Adult)	1	4	5	Downtown Meadow/Sinsheimer Righetti/Orcutt Stoneridge/Margarita Laguna Lake	0-10 years
Diamond Athletic Fields (Adult)	1	2	3	Downtown Righetti/Orcutt Stoneridge/Margarita Laguna Lake	0-10 years
Rectangle Athletic Fields	4	4	6	Downtown Meadow/Sinsheimer Laguna Lake	0-5 years
SPORTS COURTS					
Outdoor Basketball Court	6	6	8	Citywide	0 – 20 years
Tennis Court	8	7	11	Downtown Laguna Lake	0-5 years
Pickleball Court	3	9	12	Foothill/Anholm Downtown Meadow/Sinsheimer Laguna Lake	0 – 5 years
Sand Volleyball	8	3	5	Downtown Stoneridge/Margarita Laguna Lake	0-20 years
Roller Sports Court	1	1	2	Downtown Meadow/Sinsheimer Righetti/Orcutt Stoneridge/Margarita Laguna Lake	10-20 years
Multi-generational recreation and community center	Ludwick Center and SLO Senior Center	27,000 sf	46,000 sf	Citywide	5-20 years
Dog Park/ Off-leash Dog Area	1	6	7	Foothill/Anholm Downtown Meadow/Sinsheimer	0-5 years
Playgrounds/	26	10	18	Citywide	0-20

Amenity	Current Inventory	Current Additional Need	General Plan Build-out Total Additional Need ¹	Location Based on Access Gap and Planned Amenities (Sub-area) ²	Priority
Tot Lot					years
Group Picnic Areas	9	6	9	Downtown Stoneridge/Margarita	0-5 years
SPECIAL RECREATION FACILITIES					
Disc Golf Course (18-hole)	2	0	0	N/A	N/A
Golf Course	1	0	1	Citywide	10-20 years
Swim Center	1	Expansion of existing pool	1	Citywide	5-20 years
Skate Park	1	0	1	Citywide	10-20 years
Pump Track (Bike or Skate)	0	2	3	Citywide	0-20 years

¹ Includes amenities identified in approved Specific Plans.

Public Draft Plan Update

The following discussion provides a brief guide to the structure and content of the document. The first thing the City Council and the public may notice is the updated title, which has been modified to be more visionary, aspirational, and inclusive:

Parks + Recreation Blueprint for the Future: 2021-2041

Parks and Recreation Plan and General Plan Element Update

The Plan is divided into five chapters:

Chapter 1 introduces the planning process and overarching goals of the plan. The Plan includes the following six Guiding Themes, which permeate through the Plan's recommendations, goals, and policies:

- Design Excellence
- Stewardship and Sustainability
- Inclusion and Access
- Building Community
- Partnerships and Public Engagement
- Good Governance

Chapter 2 takes a deeper look at San Luis Obispo through demographic analysis and its parks through a detailed inventory. This information was presented to the PRC and the public in a Community Needs Assessment Report, which is included in the Plan Update Appendix.

Chapter 3 provides a summary of the extensive community engagement conducted in association with the Plan Update. This information was presented to the PRC and the public in the adopted Community Needs Assessment Report, and subsequent updates presented to the PRC.

Chapter 4 provides the detailed policies that flow from five system-wide goals. The draft goals and policies were presented to the PRC in July 2020 and have been expanded and updated based on continued public input, continued staff review, and to maintain consistency with the adopted *Climate Action Plan* and *Active Transportation Plan* and *Recommendations to City Council for Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the City of San Luis Obispo*. The Plan Update is intended to support and advance the goals and programs identified in these previously adopted plans.

The five goals include:

- **Build Community and Neighborhoods:** City Parks and Recreational facilities should build and connect community through inclusive and diverse amenities and programming.
- **Meet the Changing Needs of the Community:** Leverage regionalism and creatively increase the number of City parks, recreational facilities and amenities, to meet user needs.
- **Sustainability:** The City's Parks and Recreation facilities will be vibrant, resilient, and sustainable.
- **Optimize Resources:** Establish, maintain, and operate parks, facilities, and programs in a manner that is cost effective and manageable while engaging the community in a manner that optimizes involvement and support.
- **Safety:** Provide safe, accessible, inclusive, and well-maintained City parks, recreational facilities, and amenities.

Chapter 5 provides the details around **implementation and funding strategy**, including phasing and priority projects. This chapter was informed by public comment and PRC feedback on project prioritization for the near term (0-5 year), mid-term (5-10 year), and long-term (10-20 year) timeframes. Park and facility improvements can be understood in three tiers: Tier 1, Critical Park Improvements (Maintenance); Tier 2, Strategic Park Improvements, Improvement of Existing Parks/Facilities; and Tier 3, "Visionary" Park Improvements, New Opportunities.

Tier 3 park and facility needs and priorities identified in the Public Draft Plan Update are grouped by park classification (i.e., neighborhood parks, community parks) and are then presented in alphabetical order. Project priorities are identified by phase (near-term, mid-term, and long-term). For quick reference, Tier 3 park and facility needs and priorities are also summarized in *Table 5-1* of the Public Draft Plan Update (Attachment A).

Implementation of the Plan Update

The Plan Update will be implemented over the next twenty years, depending on funding and staffing resources. Plan Update Chapter 5 (Implementation) is intended to be aspirational and identifies amenities that may be appropriate for existing parks based on the wants and needs expressed by the community. As amenities are constructed, the City will need to monitor implementation of the Plan Update and track progress towards meeting service standards for both park acreage and identified amenities, equitable distribution of amenities, and resolving access gaps such that all residents will be able to enjoy parks and recreation within a ½ mile (or ten minute walk) from their home.

The Plan Update is also intended to be flexible, to enable the City to conduct focused community outreach and prepare park-specific comprehensive plans for the following existing community and neighborhood parks:

- Laguna Park (update Laguna Lake Plan)
- Meadow Park and Meadow Park Center
- Sinsheimer Park, Sinsheimer Stadium, SLO Swim Center
- Mitchell Park

In addition, as noted in the plan, **new parkland** is needed in the following sub-areas:

- Foothill/Anholm: in the vicinity of Grand Avenue, potentially through agreement with San Luis Coastal Unified School District;
- Downtown: along the Johnson Avenue corridor south of the high school;
- Meadow/Sinsheimer potentially through expansion or amenitization of Stoneridge Park;
- Stoneridge/Margarita: along the South Higuera corridor;
- Laguna Lake: at the Laguna Lake Golf Course as part of potential site reuse.

Key considerations for the enhancement and redevelopment of existing parks and the development of new parkland will be striking a balance between active and passive recreational use, maintaining neighborhood character, ensuring high quality design and maintenance, and optimizing resources by incorporating multi-generational and multi-use amenities and facilities. Incorporation of innovative universal design and continued conversations with the community will be critical to resolve and prevent any barriers⁷ to our community's enjoyment of the City parks, recreation amenities, public art, and programs.

⁷ Potential barriers may include, and are not limited to, ability, skill level, sense of safety, monetary limitations, knowledge and/or interest in programming and/or recreational activity.

The Plan Update also identifies the need for park activation and building community through site planning and provision of community gathering space and associated infrastructure (i.e., gazebo, stage, improved access); supporting and facilitating community events; incorporation of public art and cultural expression; and dynamic programming to address multi-generational and multi-ability needs of our community.

Implementation of the Plan Update would be funded by development impact fees, the general fund, grants, revenues from services, provided, and picnic and facility rentals. Potential external funding sources could include grants; “friends of parks” organization(s); corporate sponsorships; crowdfunding; partnerships with other agencies; gifts from non-profit foundations; private donations; irrevocable remainder trusts; volunteerism; and fundraisers. The Plan update identifies rough lifecycle costs for key amenities, while more aspirational projects such as multi-generational center would require a specific cost and financing assessment due to the potential variables that affect construction, operation, and maintenance costs.

Policy Context

The recommendations of the Plan Update support and advance many of the goals, objectives policies and programs of both the City’s *General Plan*, *Active Transportation Plan*, and *Climate Action Plan for Community Recovery*. The development and enhancement of accessible parks and facilities in the City would reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and related greenhouse gas emissions. Redevelopment of parks and facilities would facilitate carbon-neutrality and provide an opportunity to educate and showcase evolving technology. Implementation of the Plan Update would advance goals and policies of the *Land Use Element*, including neighborhood connectivity and enhancement (*Policies 2.2.4 and 2.2.6*); provision and enhancement of parks within neighborhoods (*Policy 2.3.1*); and increasing green space in the Downtown (*Policy 4.11*).

Public Engagement

Chapter 3 of the Plan Update (*What We Heard*) summarizes the extensive public engagement conducted over the past three years pursuant to the Plan Update’s Community Engagement Plan, starting with foundational stakeholder interviews in April 2018. Throughout the summer of 2018, in order to reach our community, City staff conducted over 25 “pop-up” events with the Parks and Recreation “Bright Ideas” bicycle to reach and connect with San Luis Obispo residents and visitors at parks, facilities, programs, and events. During these pop-ups, the public had an opportunity to provide comments on portable white boards and comment cards and take photos with the “Bright Ideas” bicycle for sharing on the Parks and Recreation Instagram account. A statistically valid **Needs Assessment Survey** was conducted August to October 2018, with a total of 507 respondents.

Public Workshops and forums included the “**Bright Ideas**” **Public Workshop** in September 2018 to gain additional input from the community regarding existing parks and facilities and the future of parks and recreation in San Luis Obispo. A **PRC Workshop Series** was held in January, February, and March of 2019, which consisted of focused discussions and public input related to the community’s values and priorities, unmet needs, and hopes and dreams.

Following the Workshop Series, a Community Needs Assessment report prepared by the consultant team was presented to the PRC and the public in May 2019, and a **Community Needs Assessment Workshop** was held in June 2019. A **Park Improvement Priorities Workshop** was held with the PRC in September 2019.

Through the remainder of 2019 and 2020, the public had an opportunity to attend PRC meetings, where information was presented for public response and direction from the PRC, including draft themes, goals, and policies; lifecycle costs; and the ongoing feedback and questions provided by the public. The Public Draft Plan was introduced to the PRC on March 3, 2021 and presented to the Active Transportation Committee (ATC) on March 18, 2021. The ATC unanimously moved to recommend adoption of the Plan Update, with recommendations that were supported by the PRC, and will be presented to the Planning Commission in May 2021. ATC recommendations focused on a stronger connection to the Active Transportation Plan, and improved access to and through the Sinsheimer Park area, and support for policies that facilitate incorporation of infrastructure at parks and facilities that support sustainable transportation.

On March 25, 2021, a **Public Draft Plan Update Public Workshop** was held via Zoom. The Workshop included a presentation on the Plan Update, and the community was invited and encouraged to provide feedback via poll questions conducted during the workshop, use of the “chat” function, and [Open City Hall](#). The results of the ATC public meeting and public workshop are summarized in the April 5, 2021 PRC Agenda Report.⁸

Online community engagement continues to be fostered by information updates on City social media, the project website, direct communications with staff, and the Open City Hall website.

Community Needs Assessment report includes:

- Demographic characteristics and population trends of the community;
- Description of existing park system and comparison to benchmark cities;
- Overview of recreational trends and preferences in the U.S. and in the region;
- Summary and evaluation of existing amenities and programs; and
- Summary of themes heard during community engagement activities and the community preferences reflected in the statistically-valid survey.

⁸ Parks and Recreation Commission agenda report, dated April 5, 2021, [available here](#).

CONCURRENCE

Over the past three years, the PRC has provided valuable input on the Plan Update. The PRC will consider a recommendation of the Public Draft Plan Update at a Special Meeting on **May 12, 2021**. The Planning Commission will consider a recommendation to the City Council on the Public Draft Plan on **May 26, 2021**. The recommendations of the ATC, PRC, and Planning Commission will be presented to the City Council on **July 6, 2021**.

The Administrative Draft Plan Update was provided for internal review by several City departments, including Community Development, Public Works, City Administration, Utilities. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee provided valuable review and input on the Administrative Draft Plan Update. In addition, the Plan Update was coordinated with the City Transportation Division and the Office of Sustainability to ensure the document supports and advances the goals, policies, and programs of the Active Transportation Plan and Climate Action Plan.

Other community groups have helped shape the Plan Update including Arts Council, American Youth Soccer Organization, Cal Poly (special thanks to NR 418 class, 2018), Central Coast Concerned Mountain Bikers, Central Coast Soccer, Friends of SLO City Dog Parks; Downtown SLO, History Center of San Luis Obispo County, Jack House Committee, Land Conservancy of SLO County, San Luis Coastal Unified School District, San Luis Obispo Museum of Art, SLO Baseball, SLO Pickleball Club, SLO Railroad Museum, SLO REP Theatre, SLO Rugby, SLO Senior Center, SLO Soccer Club, SLO Women's Soccer Club, YMCA, and many other individuals.

STUDY SESSION FRAMEWORK FOR FEEDBACK TO STAFF

At this study session, Council will receive a summary presentation of this report, hear input from the public, and provide questions and feedback to staff to guide development of the Final Plan. In the years that this work effort has been underway hundreds of inputs have been provided by the community on their hopes and dreams for recreation and parks in San Luis Obispo – and they have been as diverse and unique as the individuals providing them. While tempting to give Council 100s of specific questions to reflect this kaleidoscope of interests, in providing feedback to staff, below are a series of very broad and general questions that Council may want to use to guide its discussion.

1. Does the Parks and Recreation Blueprint plan represent the needs of the community?
2. Is there more Chapter 4 (Goals and Policies) Themes, Goals, and Policies can provide to further represent, support, and advance the City's core values of civility, sustainability, diversity, inclusivity, regionalism, partnership, and resiliency?

3. Does the Parks and Recreation Blueprint Chapter 5 (Implementation) appropriately prioritize future amenities and projects in the following timeframes:
 - a. Near-term (0-5 year)
 - b. Mid-term (5-10 year)
 - c. Long-term (10-20 year)
4. Is there more the Draft Plan can provide to further incorporate and advance Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion?

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This study session does not constitute a “Project” under CEQA Guidelines Sec. 15378. However, a CEQA Initial Study / Negative Declaration has been prepared for the Plan and is provided for public review concurrent with release of the Public Draft Plan (Attachment B).

FISCAL IMPACT

Budgeted: No
19

Budget Year: 2017-

Funding Identified: No

Fiscal Analysis:

Funding Sources	Current FY Cost	Annualized On-going Cost	Total Project Cost
General Fund			
State			
Federal			
Fees			
Other:			
Total			

This study session itself does not have any direct fiscal impact since no formal action will be taken. If adopted, the fiscal impact associated with fully implementing the Public Draft Plan is significant and will extend over twenty years, requiring substantial funding commitments over multiple financial plans as well as exploration of grants, development fees and other outside funding sources. Since the Plan Update is a programmatic document, it provides only a planning level assessment of project costs, with estimates provided for line-item amenity features (i.e., seating, turf area, nets, etc.). Any larger scale projects identified in the programmatic document such as a multi-generational community center or additional aquatics center would require specific feasibility and financial assessments to determine cost based on a variety of factors such as location, size, and other specific features. Ultimately, each individual project and program expenditure would be considered and prioritized by the City Council as part of the City’s two-year financial planning process.

The Council included \$160,000 in the 2017-2019 Financial Plan for the Plan Update. \$145,000 was allocated for Contract Services, which includes \$ 135,000 for consultant assistance with the Community Needs Assessment and Plan Update, and a \$10,000 contingency. \$113,614 has been spent on consultant services to date. \$10,000 was also allocated for City operating expenditures, such as meeting notifications, outreach direct costs and document production. \$5,000 was assigned for an intern to assist with the facility needs assessment.

ALTERNATIVES

Council could provide feedback in areas other than the example questions listed above.

Attachments:

a - COUNCIL READING FILE - Parks & Recreation Plan and General Plan Element Update

a - COUNCIL READING FILE - Plan Update Appendix

b - COUNCIL READING FILE - Initial Study Negative Declaration