

DATE ISSUED: May 30, 2003 REPORT NO. 03-115

ATTENTION: Land Use and Housing Committee  
Agenda of June 4, 2003

SUBJECT: City of San Diego Parks System Master Plan

REFERENCE: Manager's Report No. 03-049, State 2002 Resources Bond (Prop 40) Per  
Capita and Roberti-Z'berg-Harris Per Capita Funding – Final Allocation

SUMMARY

Issues – Should the Committee recommend to the City Council approval of the work program and preferred timeline for a Parks System Master Plan, as described in this report if use of Proposition 40 Bond Funds are approved by the State Legislature?

Manager's Recommendations – 1) Approve the Parks System Master Plan work program, as outlined in this report, 2) Approve the preferred timeline as outlined in this report, 3) Approve the use of Proposition 40 Bond Funds, if approved by the State Legislature, as identified below under Fiscal Impact, and 4) If the use of Proposition 40 Bond Funds are approved by the State Legislature, approve the commencement of Phases One and Two of the work program.

Environmental Impact – None with this action.

Fiscal Impact – The total cost for the Parks System Master Plan is projected to be \$4,092,000 spread over a two to three year period. (See page 7 of this report.) If approved by the California State Legislature, \$1,828,000 in Proposition 40 per capita Bond Funds would be utilized for the Phase One and Two work efforts divided as follows:

- 20% from regional allocation
- 20% citywide allocation
- 60% equally divided by all eight council districts' allocations

## BACKGROUND

On March 19, 2003, the Rules Committee approved the State 2002 Resources Bond Fund distribution, also known as Proposition 40, outlined in Manager's Report No. 03-049. As part of their motion, the Committee directed the Park and Recreation Department, upon recommending approval to City Council, to complete two additional tasks:

1. Modify the 1472 and Manager's Report No. 03-049 to include a resolution that authorizes staff to seek appropriate legislative change to provide for Proposition 40 funding to be used for a Parks System Master Plan; and,
2. Develop a work program, timeline and financing strategy for a Parks System Master Plan to be presented to the Land Use & Housing Committee.

The 1472 and Manager's Report have been modified to address task 1, and this report has been developed to meet the request of task 2.

San Diego was incorporated as a city on March 27, 1850. The last Parks System Master Plan known to have been prepared was in 1956. This 1956 master plan aimed to take care of the needs of the steady increase in population until 1970, which was approximately 700,000 persons. At that time, the City owned 5,720 acres of park land for recreational purposes. Interestingly, Balboa Park, Torrey Pines Park and Mission Bay Park comprised two thirds of the 5,720 acres. Amongst the 1956 inventory, the park system consisted of:

- Five (5) neighborhood parks and thirteen (13) community parks/recreation centers
- Three (3) district parks (Presidio, Colina del Sol, and Memorial Park)
- Three (3) resource-based parks (Balboa Park, Torrey Pines Park and Mission Bay Recreation Area)
- Two (2) scenic areas were being held for future park development (La Jolla Heights and Soledad Park)
- Nine (9) shoreline parks
- Two (2) municipal swimming pools

The 1956 master plan provided a road map for a growing city. The master plan outlined projects for regional and city-wide uses many of which have been implemented. It also discussed a park system that should link its assets together, for example, open space corridors linked to parks, parks to hiking trails and bike paths, and comprehensive programs regionally planned where possible. It included a romantic concept of tree-lined scenic drives from one park asset to another; the same inspirational vision our current leaders are striving to implement today. Although only partially implemented, the 1956 master plan outlined a strategy that gave park planners guidance and enabled the park system to grow in a planned and organized manner.

Today, the City of San Diego has the second largest municipal park system in the United States. The current population is approximately 1,256,000. To date, the inventory includes approximately 36,300 acres of developed and undeveloped parkland and open space. In addition, the Park and Recreation Department now offers approximately 100 recreation programs, and manages:

- One hundred ninety five (195) combined neighborhood, community and other parks with fifty-two (52) recreation centers/thirty-eight (38) gymnasiums, eleven (11) senior centers
- Nineteen (19) resource-based parks
- Approximately sixty-one (61) open space areas comprised of 21,560 acres
- Twenty-five (25) miles of ocean and bay beaches
- Thirteen (13) permanent pools; five (5) portable pools with four (4) in service at anytime
- Golf courses, and more

Absent a current Parks System Master Plan, the City has not had the benefit of a broader evaluation of the park system with a corresponding policy guidance and implementation strategy that sets the priorities for projects based upon the highest needs. As the population has grown from 700,000 to 1,256,000, the planning has been without a strategic focus and the big picture in mind. This has resulted in piece-meal development, shifting priorities and project delivery based primarily upon community advocacy. The benefit of a Parks System Master Plan is based on the logical premise that if a City knows where it wants to go, it possesses a far better prospect of getting there.

## DISCUSSION

At City Council direction, the Planning Department has begun updating the City's Progress Guide and General Plan. As part of that process, the current Recreation, Open Space, Conservation and Cultural Resources Elements will require revision. The City Council adopted Strategic Framework Element identifies the need to remedy existing public facilities shortfalls and to provide high quality public facilities and services in the future. Further, it calls for new development to be more compact, provide greater joint use efficiencies, securing new funding sources, and that facilities and services must be better tailored to meet the needs of diverse communities. Additionally, policy discussions respective to parks will need to occur around such issues as population-based requirements, service area radii, equitable distribution of services and facilities city-wide, methods to compensate communities for parks and services deficiencies, and how to count neighborhood/community park elements in regional parks, and joint use acreage and leased recreation when determining service gaps.

Ideally, the Progress Guide and General Plan Update should coincide with the formulation of a Parks System Master Plan. These documents would work in tandem, with the Progress Guide and General Plan clearly spelling out both the vision and guidelines for park planning and development, followed by the Parks System Master Plan outlining the options, priorities and strategies for achieving these guidelines. This coordinated approach will ensure that the goal of developing a city-wide network of parks and open space will always be present and at the forefront during community planning discussions and long range park planning efforts. Since the Progress Guide and General Plan Update is occurring now, it is most logical and critical that the Parks System Master Plan effort commence, as well.

Several studies of the park system have been done in recent years and the Parks System Master Plan should capitalize on the findings of those efforts. In April 2002, the Park and Recreation Department was studied by a Budget Workgroup which was chaired by Councilmember Scott

Peters and included Council members Toni Atkins, and Jim Madaffer. The scope of their review with respect to the Parks System Master Plan and the current status is as follows:

- **Organizational Structure:** The findings showed that the existing structure could be improved upon. Hence, the Park and Recreation Department itself was reorganized in September 2002 to add an Open Space Division and create a new Park Planning Division, to align Community Parks I and II Divisions (operations and maintenance) and Park Planning with council districts, and to expand Developed Regional Parks Division to include Balboa Park and Mission Bay Park. Now, effective July 2003, the City Manager has directed the consolidation of all park development functions (previously housed in both Park and Recreation and Engineering & Capital Projects Departments) into a single division under the Park and Recreation Department.
- **Capital Improvement Program (CIP)/Park Development:** The findings showed that the community input process is valuable, but time consuming and expensive, resulting in fewer dollars being available for capital improvements. With community support, the Park and Recreation Department embarked upon an extensive streamlining process. The results of the process will be presented to the Rules Committee in June 2003.
- **Park and Recreation Department Deferred Maintenance and Unfunded Needs:** The findings concluded that there was a lack of long range planning, a significant backlog due to chronic under-funding, and a need for revenue sources for maintenance, programming and capital improvements. Included in the CIP project budget updates proposed for FY04 are adjustments for inflation and mandated regulatory requirements. It is envisioned that a component of the Parks System Master Plan will be an evaluation of potential revenue sources. Also, as part of the City Manager's direction to consolidate the park development functions, a long range park planning section is proposed to be added.
- **Parks System Master Plan –** The findings concluded that a long-term, comprehensive Parks System Master Plan is needed to strategically plan for the future. The Park and Recreation Department agrees with this assessment, but has been unable to fund this endeavor.

The Zero Based Management Report prepared in November 20, 1997, reflected on many of the key issues stated above by the Budget Workgroup and identified 62 items to be addressed. The top two items recommended completing deferred maintenance with a prioritized plan and financing strategy.

The Blue Ribbon Committee, summoned by the Honorable Mayor Dick Murphy in January 2001, also evaluated the fiscal health of the City of San Diego. Recommendations included the compilation of a comprehensive deferred maintenance list, inclusive of Management Information Technology establishment and procurement, which is rated by priority, with funding increased in this area. Another recommendation noted the need to expand the current revenue and seek additional sources of revenue.

In addition to the need for a healthy and safe park and open space environment for our citizenry, it is a recognized fact that our parks are an important part of an economically viable city. Most

would agree that the Mission Bay, Balboa Park and Shoreline beaches and parks are the corner stone of why so many people make San Diego their vacation destination. The Parks System Master Plan provides an opportunity to re-evaluate the way the parks and open space systems provide services to address the park and recreation needs of both residents and visitors. The scope of the Parks System Master Plan work program would focus on the following components of the parks and open space systems:

### **Work Program**

- 1. Inventory and Conditions Assessment** - A comprehensive conditions assessment of the City's inventory of parks, recreation facilities and open space would be done in conjunction with, and building upon, the existing conditions and data collection efforts to be performed by the Planning Department for the General Plan Update. The creation of a management information system for entry of data collected, inclusive of geographic information system (GIS) capability, would be prepared to identify, evaluate and document the existing physical assets and deficiencies.
- 2. Public Outreach** - Public outreach would be coordinated with the Planning Department's General Plan Update effort which will require a wide range of community input to determine which types of public facilities best suit the needs of each community, taking into account unique neighborhood character and urban form. Interviews with focus groups of key stakeholders, public forums and a statistically-correct resident survey would be conducted to gather input on park, recreation and open space needs on a community-by-community basis and discussed with an advisory ad hoc task force of city-wide community leaders with diverse backgrounds and interests, and the Park and Recreation Board.
- 3. General Plan Guidelines Update**- In coordination with the General Plan Update effort currently underway by the Planning Department, methods of providing parks and recreational facilities will be developed to meet the diverse needs of suburban and urban communities, recognizing available land constraints in built-out communities. Broad-scale guidelines would be explored inclusive of benchmarking with other major cities which have demonstrated measurable success and flexibility.
- 4. Recreation Programming Needs and Capabilities Assessment** - Although sometimes not openly apparent, parks and open space are just as valuable for promoting mental health and an emotional sense of well-being, as they are for physical health opportunities. A thorough assessment of the existing programs would be conducted on a community by community basis for their unique needs. It is envisioned that new initiatives would be developed to relieve existing service gaps, and expand services and facilities to meet the needs of an evolving customer base with emphasis being the need to educate and give enjoyment to children, youth, adults and seniors, especially for those with economic disadvantages. It should also consider the needs of people with disabilities, not only for access, but for interactive programming.
- 5. Master Plan Compilation and Recommendations** - All data collected during the Inventory and Conditions Assessment, and Public Outreach phases would be synthesized

based on current and future needs and updated General Plan guidelines. This compilation would result in prioritized recommendations for potential projects within each community, which would include: 1) capital improvement opportunities, including deferred maintenance, 2) acquisition of new or expansion of existing facilities, 3) exploration of new trends and innovations, in the areas of community forestry, formal and informal trail systems, dogs-off-leash areas, skateboard parks, accessibility (ADA) transition planning, tree-lined scenic routes linking resources, rivers and canyon corridors, partnerships and joint use, 4) historic preservation/restoration and interpretation, 5) coordination of acquisition, maintenance and management of Multiple Species Conservation Program lands with City-owned Open Space, and 6) new and expanded recreation programs.

- 6. Funding and Financing Strategies** - An extensive financial analysis of potential revenues and funding opportunities would be conducted. A long-term forecast model would also be developed that incorporates personnel and non-personnel costs associated with operations, preventative maintenance and capital replacement costs to be used as a planning tool. The findings from these analyses would be benchmarked against other cities with comparable park systems and demographics to develop strategies to secure funding for capital improvements, deferred maintenance, operations and recreation programs.
- 7. Capital Improvements Implementation Plan** - A comprehensive implementation plan would be developed to include all proposed projects, for which appropriate funding has been identified, within each community, and would incorporate all existing capital improvement program and deferred maintenance projects. Project scopes, cost estimate and time schedules would be prepared, prioritized and phased to guide park development and deferred maintenance project implementation over the next twenty years.

The Park and Recreation Department has researched and compared the cost to prepare a Parks System Master Plan with several cities. The City of Dallas has recently gone through a similar process with a smaller park system. Their Parks System Master Plan, which was adopted this last fall, was developed over a 36-month period costing several million dollars, of which \$1.8 million was used to hire a multi-discipline consultant team. This figure does not include their City's internal, dedicated staff and supervisory costs for approximately four, full-time staff, the cost to provide a program-level environmental review, and assesses a much smaller, and less environmentally diverse open space system. The public interest and support generated by the Dallas Parks Master Plan effort resulted in the voters of Dallas passing two park bonds on their May 7, 2003 ballot, the first being a \$57 million bond for neighborhood and community parks construction (passed by **82%**), and the second being a \$43 million bond for regional/city-wide parks construction (passed by **77%**.)

**With the aforementioned considerations in mind**, there are two options proposed in this report. Both options list the general components of the work program, a timeline for the tasks, and their corresponding costs. The Park and Recreation Department's preferred option includes a comprehensive and inclusive Public Outreach effort. The alternate option is similar to the preferred in tasks, but reduces the Public Outreach effort in consideration of limited funding. The costs increase incrementally for the elongation of the timeline to conduct an inclusive Public Outreach.

# Parks System Master Plan – 3 Years

<b>Phase One - First Year</b>	Preferred	Alternate
Inventory and Data Collection, Management Information System Development, and Conditions Assessment	\$ 650,000	\$ 650,000
Dedicated City Staff	<u>\$ 264,000</u>	<u>\$ 264,000</u>
Subtotal	\$ 914,000	\$ 914,000
<b>Phase Two - First and Second Year</b>		
Public Outreach and Support of General Plan Guidelines Update	\$ 650,000	\$ 300,000
Dedicated City Staff	<u>\$ 264,000</u>	<u>\$ 264,000</u>
Subtotal	\$ 914,000	\$ 564,000
<b>Phase Three - Second and Third Year</b>		
Master Plan Compilation and Recommendations	\$1,400,000	\$1,150,000
Environmental Review	\$ 600,000	\$ 600,000
Dedicated City Staff	<u>\$ 264,000</u>	<u>\$ 264,000</u>
Subtotal	\$2,264,000	\$2,014,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,092,000</b>	<b>\$3,492,000</b>

Notes:

1. The Public Outreach anticipated in the alternate option is consistent with the level of effort performed in the Dallas master planning process. This process included, broad public forums at the initial input and recommendation stages of the project only. Staff recommends the preferred option which would be more inclusive and consistent with the level of input currently experienced by our residents, and would utilize the established community input processes to prioritize the needs and provide more comprehensive feedback.
2. The cost estimated for the Master Plan Compilation and Recommendations will increase proportionally with the extent of Public Outreach for the preferred option.
3. It is envisioned that a program-level environmental review will be necessary. The level of environmental review will be determined based upon the draft master plan recommendations and may affect the timeline.

4. This effort requires three dedicated, in-house staff working with a multi-discipline consultant team, and assumes that the consultant team has been selected, and a contract negotiated and executed, which is approximately a nine-month process.

**In comparison, the Naval Training Center Precise Plan covering approximately 400 acres, approved in 2000, took five years to complete and cost \$3.0 million for consultant services, exclusive of dedicated City staff costs. The Mission Bay Park Master Plan Update, covering approximately 4,200 acres, approved in 1994, took three years to complete and cost over \$500,000, exclusive of City staff costs. The Balboa Park Parking, Circulation and Land Use Study, currently underway, is estimated to take 12 months and is costing \$650,000 for consultant services to provide community input and design only. The San Diego River Master Plan and associated Environmental Impact Report, currently underway, is estimated to take two years and cost \$1,000,000, inclusive of City staff costs.**

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, a Parks System Master Plan would provide a comprehensive evaluation of the parks and open space systems' existing conditions, identify opportunities and constraints, articulate a method and prioritization for the equitable distribution of facilities and services city-wide, recommend recreation programming, and define capital improvements and funding strategies to meet the needs of our residents and visitors. It would provide a prioritized "road map" for reducing service gaps and creating new opportunities for recreation and leisure, and thereby, improving the quality of life for our residents. In the words of notable landscape architect John Nolan, "No City regrets its acquisition of parks, but many Cities regret their failure to act in time."

## ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve the Parks System Master Plan work program and preferred timeline as outlined in this report and the commencement of Phases One and Two using Proposition 40 Bond Funds, if approved by the State Legislature, with modifications.
2. Approve the Parks System Master Plan work program and alternate timeline as outlined in this report and the commencement of Phases One and Two using Proposition 40 Bond Funds, if approved by the State Legislature.
3. Approve the investigation of alternative funding sources to complete Phase Three of the Master Plan, if the State Legislature and City Council approve the use of Proposition 40 Bond Funds for Phases One and Two.
4. Approve the investigation of alternative funding sources to pursue individual phases of the master planning effort if the State Legislature or City Council do not approve the use of Proposition 40 Bond Funds.
5. Do not approve the Parks System Master Plan work program and preferred timeline as outlined in this report.



Respectfully submitted,

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Submitted by Ellen Oppenheim  
Park and Recreation Director

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Approved by Bruce Herring  
Deputy City Manager

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