



PARKS AND RECREATION STRATEGIC PLAN



City of Emeryville

ADOPTED | JANUARY 18, 2011



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The planning team would like to thank the many members of the community who helped shape this plan.

This City is what it is because our citizens are what they are.

- Plato



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the summer of 2009, the City of Emeryville launched its first Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan process. Building on the momentum and vision of the adopted Emeryville General Plan, this Strategic Plan establishes a course of action to create a sustainable and interconnected system of parks, recreation facilities, programs and services that promote recreation, health and environmental conservation as integral elements of the community.

The unique history and distinctive urban form of Emeryville frames an interesting challenge for the community in expanding and maximizing the value of parks, recreation facilities and open spaces. The ongoing and deliberate shift in Emeryville from employment center to thriving mixed-use urban community necessitates flexibility in the park spaces. The ideal system will be able to serve the needs of current residents without jeopardizing opportunities for new residents to help shape the community. This document, built on the strong foundation of the General Plan, is the community's strategy for how to meet these challenges and create an enjoyable, environmentally conscious and financially sustainable parks and recreation system.

This plan document describes the existing parks and recreation system, recommends projects and program enhancements for the future system and presents a plan of action. The plan of action includes prioritization criteria, capital and operations costs and funding strategies.

PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process for this Strategic Plan was designed to determine the specific actions, capital improvements and initiatives necessary to move from the current system to the vision described



in the General Plan. The four phases of the planning process, as well as the general timeline, are illustrated below.



Throughout this process, the development of the plan was guided by community input. The multi-layered public input process was designed to ensure a diverse cross section of residents, employees and visitors to Emeryville. By providing multiple opportunities and ways for citizens to engage, the planning process has achieved a balance of strong quantitative data and rich qualitative detail. Over 350 Emeryville residents, employees and visitors have participated in the planning process between June 2009 and July 2010. The plan was also formed through the dedicated work of the Ad-Hoc Committee formed by the City Council to oversee the work at key points in the process. This committee added additional perspectives to ensure that the plan was aligned with community and political realities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This plan provides recommendations for each of eighteen existing park sites and special use facilities and twenty additional sites either proposed in the General Plan or owned by other agencies with a special relationship to Emeryville. In addition, the plan addresses the intersection of Emeryville Community Services' recreation programming and the sites and facilities within the system.

PARK RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations profiled in detail within the body of the Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan are the results of site specific needs analysis. This analysis identified twenty categories of activities desired in the park system. The variety of ways that Emeryville will support these activities will enhance the enjoyment of the park system as a whole and support distinct neighborhood identities around each site. The needs analysis evaluated the suitability of existing and proposed sites for facilities and spaces to support the activity categories.

Based on community input, four activities—Play for Children, Socializing and Relaxing, Picnicking/Lunch and Respite and Solitude—were selected as key activities that should be included in one form or another at each Emeryville park site. Many parks already accommodate these basic activities, and new sites should first be focused on how to creatively include all four. The additional potential activities identified in the needs analysis—including space for physical activity such as sports fields and courts—were recommended for inclusion at a site based on the size of the site, neighboring land uses and the distribution of the activity across other sites in the system.

The plan recommendations address a series of system wide issues, including how to translate activities in the site program into necessary facilities on the ground. As the system develops, providing multiple, smaller and shared features within parks, rather than larger, dedicated facilities, will add more flexibility in limited park space. These could include off-leash areas for play and exercise with dogs or small skate spots that provide

features designed for skaters to practice on. The City should also clarify what public use is allowed when a park facility is reserved for gatherings and events. A final system wide recommendation is the integration of concessions or vending within the City's larger parks as a way to attract additional visitors and provide additional amenities within key park sites.

RECREATION RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint School District/City Community Services Facility at the Emery Secondary School site will drive changes within the City's recreation programs. This new shared facility will offer major new recreation opportunities for all residents by providing new and expanded facilities. This facility will replace the existing Recreation Center and be the home of after-school, aquatics and athletics programs and classes. The Joint Facility will also be important to participatory arts, cultural activities and special events programmed by Community Services.

The Senior Center/Veterans Memorial will continue to offer programs that are well suited for the unique spaces, including the existing senior programming, special events and community programs.

Two additional areas of programming are recommended for expansion—enlivening public spaces and supporting active healthy lifestyles. Both are focused on making more and better use of the existing park facilities by supporting play, special events and other activities at park facilities and introducing new ways to use the parks and greenways.

PLAN OF ACTION

Each of the existing and proposed sites in Emeryville has an important role to play in creating the complete parks and recreation system envisioned by the community and documented in the General Plan. The keys to achieving this vision are preparation and flexibility. This plan represents the first step in preparing for the twenty-year implementation of this Strategic Plan. Recognizing the inevitability of change, the plan also includes a series of tools to allow the City to be flexible in responding to opportunities as they emerge.

CHALLENGES AND DIRECTIONS

Public input and analysis identified a number of challenges to completion of individual projects as well as general direction about where the community would like to see action. The primary challenge the City faces is the financial balance of moving projects forward and committing operations and maintenance resources to sustain them once they are built. There is strong community support for completing projects the City is currently engaged in, particularly expansion of greenways and the joint facility with the School District. At the same time the recognition of limited operating resources challenges the City to find new partnerships and commit additional operating resources prior to initiating new projects.

Another challenge that the community indicated strong interest in is how to increase access to and use of parks in the Triangle neighborhood. Safety and increased use of Temescal Creek Park and addition of a proposed park more central to the neighborhood are important.

TOOLS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

In order to provide the flexibility needed to address challenges and opportunities as they arise, this Strategic Plan includes a variety of tools to assist the community, elected officials and staff in determining how a new project fits within the community vision and available resources.

Decision Making Criteria

This plan identifies the projects that are needed to move Emeryville toward the community envisioned in the General Plan. A set of decision making criteria





keep the challenges and opportunities faced in implementing these projects in focus as individual decisions are made. These criteria can be used to compare projects or to evaluate an individual idea by raising the essential questions.

These criteria consist of:

- *Capital and Maintenance Resource Availability*
- *Property Availability*
- *Serving Identified Activity and Location Needs*
- *Completing Greenways*
- *Availability of Partnerships*
- *Enhancing/Maintaining Existing Resources*

Capital Project and Operating Cost Model

To inform the decision-making process, the plan includes a model of both capital and annual operations costs generalized for the types of improvements anticipated across the system. This model includes all identified costs, from property acquisition to development of facilities to match the recommended site program. The total cost of projects identified in existing parks is \$7 million, with an additional \$160 million in projects for proposed park sites. In many cases, developers, donations, grants and other resources will reduce the final project cost paid by the City. This is especially true of proposed parks; the capital cost of many parks could largely be provided by property development projects through fees and exactions to off-set the impacts of new residents. In addition to providing this snapshot of the planning-level cost of projects, the model has been provided as a flexible tool for staff to adjust as costs and anticipated projects change.

Funding Strategies and Sources

Three broad strategies are suggested for funding this plan.

Partnering for Success:

The City's major partners for developing and maintaining the parks and recreation system include the School District, the real estate development community, major employers, local businesses, community organizations and the East Bay Regional Park District. For some of these partners, the benefits of parks and

recreation as well as collaboration in projects will be obvious. For others, the City will need to develop relationships and build the case for how parks and recreation activities benefit these partners directly.

Maximizing Capital Dollars:

The community has made effective use of redevelopment funding for capital projects in the park system. However, no one source of funding will be adequate for building the park system. The City should pursue some mix of Impact Fees and Quimby Act fees to help off-set the impacts of increased population as new residential properties are developed. The final category of capital funding to consider is State, Federal and private grant programs. To make the most of this opportunity, staff resources will be needed to track and apply for specific grants where existing capital dollars can be leveraged to maximum effect.

Building Community Support:

While capital funding may appear as the major obstacle to creation of the community's envisioned park system, the larger issue is ongoing operation and maintenance of the system into the future. The most sustainable source of funding for both operations and maintenance is strong community support. This support will need to be reinforced and converted into the necessary political and financial support (including fees and taxes) to implement this plan.

The specifics of how these strategies will be applied and the value the City sees from each will depend greatly on the projects selected. The appendices to this Strategic Plan include a listing and matrix of funding opportunities that matches individual funding

sources to the types of projects that are eligible.

Design Guidelines

This plan includes a set of design guidelines that are intended to provide a reference to City staff, developers and other partners in implementing General Plan policies and Strategic Plan recommendations. These guidelines are posed as a series of questions to focus the design process on key directions provided by the community in both the General Plan and Strategic Plan processes.

APPLYING TOOLS

Most of Emeryville's proposed park sites, along with most of the land in the city, are currently developed for other uses. The General Plan concept relies on ongoing changes in development and use of land in the city to reshape community access to open space and to take advantage of the benefits parks offer to residents, business owners, visitors and employees. Preparing for these projects will involve a careful balance of recognition and support of existing land uses along with an eye to the future as plans begin to form for redevelopment in key locations.

Project opportunities will come and pass quickly. Whether or not to move forward will be one of the key decision points that the City will face. At these key points, the City Council will have the complete set of questions and tools to evaluate the merits of a particular project based on the community input into this planning process. This Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan will serve as the City's tool box as it moves forward in implementing the General Plan vision.

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