

STAFF REPORT
City of Lancaster, California

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Date: November 13, 2007

To: Mayor Hearn and City Council Members

From: Lyle W. Norton, Director, Parks, Recreation and Arts

Subject: **Lancaster Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Cultural Master Plan**

Recommendation:

Approve the Lancaster Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Cultural Master Plan.

Fiscal Impact:

None as the result of the recommended action.

Background:

In February, 2006, the City council approved a recommendation to develop a comprehensive twenty year Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Cultural Master Plan and approved the hiring of Moore, Iacofano and Goltsman, Inc. (MIG), consultants.

The purpose of the plan was to create a common vision for the City relating to parks, recreation, open space and cultural issues, to proactively seek input and respond to community interests and to provide policy direction for current and future needs in compliance with the current General Plan update.

The development of the plan involved extensive public input through immersion activities, a community survey, focus groups with residents representing interest in the areas of trails and open space, seniors, youth, arts and school administration and most importantly, a citizen's advisory committee.

Comparative analyses with other high growth communities, key stakeholder interviews, assessment of current operations and guidance from a project management team representing many City departments provided essential data to shape the plan for the future. The master plan has also been integrated into other City-wide planning efforts including the General Plan, the Downtown Specific Plan and the Strong Neighborhood Initiative.

Summary:

Based upon input from various stakeholders, a vision of how we want Lancaster to be was developed to establish a framework to guide policy development. The vision of the master plan is as follows:

Lancaster is (1) a city whose residents actively use parks, recreation and arts facilities to maintain a high level of fitness and well-being; (2) a location for premier sports and recreation facilities that accommodate children, youth, seniors and families; (3) a thriving cultural and artistic center, with a downtown arts district that features space for art and musical performance, beautified streets and gathering spaces; (4) a city where pathways and trails link neighborhoods with parklands, facilities, schools and other community destinations; (5) a steward of its natural and historic resources; (6) a city known as a great place to live, plan and stay.

The key findings and action plan derived from the Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Cultural Master Plan are found in Chapter 4: Policies, Recommendations and Actions. This chapter will serve as an addendum to the General Plan and will be the specific action required to achieve our vision and mission. Department goals and policy highlights included in the plan are as follows:

The Department of Parks, Recreation and Arts will:

- ◆ Provide safe, clean and well-maintained facilities that meet the diverse needs of a growing community.
- ◆ Create and enhance a positive community image and increase livability.
- ◆ Support and encourage residents in pursuing healthy, active lifestyles.
- ◆ Celebrate and honor Lancaster’s heritage and history.
- ◆ Be a key contributor to downtown revitalization and economic development activities.
- ◆ Encourage community building and provide organized and informal, neighborhood-based opportunities.
- ◆ Support the community’s ability to participate in the arts as both audience members and artists.
- ◆ Sustain and enhance the City’s superior quality arts and athletic facilities.
- ◆ Encourage the integration of parks and trails into overall community design, planning and development decisions.
- ◆ Develop partnerships with schools, and public and private organizations to leverage resources and expand opportunities.

Work with Developers to Meet Neighborhood Needs

1. Encourage Developers to Provide Turnkey Parks in Lieu of Fees
The development of turnkey parks will optimize our ability to achieve and maintain parks standards within the City's fiscal constraints.
2. Maintenance Standards
Maintenance standards will not only develop a standard by which we can measure success but will help us clearly identify the specific maintenance commitment required for future park facilities.
3. Maintain Standard of Five Acres of Parkland per 1,000 Residents
The achievement of this goal will require creativity and partnerships with the development community.

Encourage Community Connectivity

1. Master Plan of Trails
The City should develop a comprehensive master plan of trails that identifies connectivity among neighborhoods and with the Los Angeles County master plan of trails.
2. Expand Trail Connections and Pathways
The City can work with the residential development community to provide trails and pathways in neighborhood parks that connect to the internal neighborhood. If this is achieved there could be future trail systems that connect neighborhoods.

Contribute to Downtown Revitalization and Economic Development

1. Support City Wide Events and Activities
City wide special events can and will continue to assist the City in larger goals such as the revitalization of the downtown area.
2. Continue High Standards for Sports and Arts Facilities
The City will continue to assist in economic development through our highly visible sports tourism and performing and visual art venues.

Strengthen and Grow the Arts

The public immersion process consistently identified a community need and desire for expanded arts programs for both children and adults. This policy will evolve into expanded outreach programs as well as encourage art in public places.

Develop Partnerships

This will drive the City to continue to strengthen our partnerships with local school districts through joint use agreements and joint development of schools/parks facilities.

Continue to Seek Community Opinion

We have already begun to seek consistent customer feedback on our parks and programs. Periodic surveys through the City's web site, telephone surveys, etc., should become an essential part of our operation.

In conclusion, the lengthy research and process in the development of the master plan provided for extensive communication with the general public, consistent park users, and community stakeholders. It has provided us with a clear direction in areas to enhance our existing policies and to continue to meet the future demand for a community growing in both population and diversity. It is recommended that the City Council approve the Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Cultural Master Plan.