

APPROVED

REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER

NO. 09-247

OCT 09 2009

DATE October 9, 2009

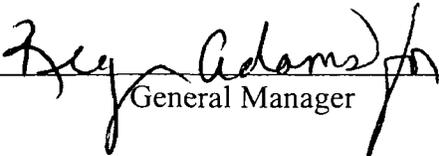
BOARD OF RECREATION
and PARK COMMISSIONERS

C.D. ALL

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

SUBJECT: 2009 CITYWIDE COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT FINAL REPORT

R. Adams	_____	J. Kolb	_____
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 General Manager

Approved _____

Disapproved _____

Withdrawn _____

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board adopt the 2009 Citywide Community Needs Assessment (CCNA) Final Report as a planning document and tool to consider during future Recreation and Park Department activities; including land acquisition, capital improvements, recreation programming, maintenance, partnerships, and funding, as well as key areas of concern, subject to adoption of Exhibit A.

SUMMARY:

The Department of Recreation and Parks and its consultant team of Mia Lehrer + Associates and PROS Consulting, LLC recently completed the Citywide Community Needs Assessment Final Report, as on file in the Board Office, to determine needs and preferences for recreation and parks land, facilities and programs, as well as key areas of concern.

The Needs Assessment team gathered information regarding the City's recreational needs. Tasks included preparation of a stakeholder database, website, 26 leadership interviews, 24 focus groups, 23 workshops, Advisory Group meetings, demographic analysis, and the review of 2,925 completed mailed surveys. Information was also obtained from infrastructure evaluations, program evaluations, park tours and service area analysis.

The issues, findings and preliminary recommendations of the Citywide Community Needs Assessment are detailed in the attached Statement of Acceptance (Exhibit A) and Final Report. The Final Report is on file in the Board Office.

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The Citywide Community Needs Assessment Final Report provides information and preliminary recommendations to the City and to the Department of Recreation and Parks on citywide and community preferences, park system key issues and facility service levels. A Master/Strategic Plan would further research and analyze additional information relative to area resources, service levels, guidelines, resolving key issues, articulate specific goals, objectives, policies and programs, determine capital improvement plans, implementation schedules, as well as include a vision statement, to meet existing and future needs. The Plan will coordinate Department activities in various areas of the City in a way that is both beneficial and desirable to the residents of these communities, compatible with infrastructure and service level needs, and address funding, partnerships and key areas of concern.

Preliminary recommendations in the Final Report, guidelines and service levels need additional research and analysis during the strategic master planning process to determine specific and strategic goals, objectives and implementation schedules, considering factors of asset availability, linkages, network potentials, Department resources, demographic factors of need, and community service area preferences, among other research and analysis studies. This next stage of analysis will include recreation and park facilities outside of City boundaries, and those in the public/private sector, not included in the current figures. Financial and other resources, broad City planning, and additional surveys and outreach will also be considered in the master planning process. The unique nature of Los Angeles, and its geography, and changes in mobility options, will figure in the process, as well. When the full planning process is completed, with all these inputs and analyses, specific goals can then be accurately determined.

An overview of the valuable information collected during this Needs Assessment process, includes the following:

Citywide Needs and Preferences

Given the time and resources available for a preliminary analysis, higher preferences for facility needs were:

Walking and biking and nature trails, picnic areas, local neighborhood parks, indoor gyms and community centers, outdoor pools, larger community parks, play areas, community gardens, nature centers, athletic fields and basketball courts.

Given the time and resources available for a preliminary analysis, higher Preferences for Recreation Programs were as follows:

Fitness and Wellness programs, walking/biking/nature programs, family programs, arts programs, sports and water programs, senior programs, afterschool/summer camp programs, special events and festivals, nutrition, tutoring, mentoring and intergenerational programs.

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Findings

Many residents reported not being aware of what is offered, and think safety/security are important issues. As 30% of the City's population is under 18, there will be a growing young adult and mature adult population in the City in the near future. Parks may be underutilized in the day, and overused on weekends and in the evenings. There is a preference to fix up and rebuild existing parks/facilities, develop new parks and new recreation programs at existing parks.

Preliminary Recommendations

Further research and analysis during the strategic master planning process is needed to determine specific goals and timetables relative to meeting current and future service area needs. Both the National and State Recreation Associations are moving away from fixed standards and guidelines, recognizing cities grow and develop in unique ways. Community guidelines, short and long-term goals and objectives and implementation strategies can be used to articulate plans for an effective and efficient Recreation and Park (RAP) system, a network of RAP opportunities. The preliminary guidelines in the Needs Assessment Final Report require additional research and analysis during the strategic master planning process to determine final goals and objectives.

Key Issues

Funding and partnerships are essential for an effective system, providing linkages and a network for healthy cities. Safety, marketing and communication need attention, as well as the unique needs of each service area. It would be helpful to determine Department core services, highest needs and priorities to consider, especially during times of limited resources.

These matters need the additional deep research and analysis afforded during a strategic master planning process to finalize specific goals and strategies, objectives and implementation measures.

The completion of a Master/Strategic Plan would include other studies, such as:

- A complete inventory of other service providers of recreational opportunities, park areas and open space. The Department may achieve success and provision of service and excellence through a combination of resources. The RAP system for a healthy city will include participation, cooperation and coordination with other agencies and service providers to create a regional network of RAP opportunities to serve City residents. Preliminary service levels and guidelines will be adjusted, considering options in each service area;
- Additional research and action plans on key issues of concern such as: safety, lack of knowledge, funding, partnerships, park access, connectivity;

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- A vision statement developed to capture a world-class park and recreation network of opportunities, worthy of this great City, one that serves its diverse population, encourages health and fitness, provides attractive, safe, playful, happy places and programs, considering the unique needs of specific community areas and citywide issues.

Department staff is currently developing a framework for the Master/Strategic Plan. The Needs Assessment will help frame the foundation of the Plan which will include strategies to implement a vision, goals, policies, programs and values, as well as contain operational, policy and financial sections, a Capital Improvement Plan and will be customized by area of the City, reflecting networks to serve community and neighborhood needs.

The Executive Summary, Final Report and updated powerpoint presentation are available at: www.laparks.org. This powerpoint version has updated graphics and text in a more user-friendly format, making the essentials of the Final Report more quickly reviewed.

Department staff support the information, preliminary findings and recommendations contained in the Report, and will use this as a valuable planning tool to consider in Department activities.

The Citywide Needs Assessment Report is a planning tool for guiding future recreation and park activities, and does not make a commitment to any specific project that may result in physical environmental impacts. Therefore, the Needs Assessment constitutes a planning and feasibility study as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) [Pub. Res. Code 21102 and 21150] and is statutorily exempt from the provisions of the CEQA pursuant to Article II, Section 2(d) of the City CEQA Guidelines.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT:

As no specific projects are indicated in the Citywide Community Needs Assessment Final Report, there is no immediate fiscal impact. With the completion of the Final Report, all costs to the consultant team have been paid.

This report was prepared by Camille Walls, City Planner, and Melinda Gejer, City Planning Associate, Planning and Construction.

Exhibit A

Citywide Community Needs Assessment

Statement of Acceptance

By

Department of Recreation and Parks, Board of Commissioners

The Board of Recreation and Park Commissioners hereby accepts the 2009 Citywide Community Needs Assessment subject to this statement of acceptance which shall be appended to and incorporated in this report.

In receiving this report, we note the constraints under which the report was created. These limitations are inherent in the opinion gathering process, in the nature of Los Angeles, and in the scope of the work assignment. They include:

- The needs assessment is only one step in the planning process. In addition to assessing needs, the Department will have to consider its financial and other resources and broader city planning in moving to an actionable master plan.
- In gathering community opinions on needs, the community expressed its preferences among the various services and facilities that the Department of Recreation and Parks does or could provide, but did not express its preferences among all services the community might want from city government. In many cases the desired Recreation and Parks service or facility must compete for funding with the services and facilities of other city departments to which the community might give a higher priority. A broader survey, beyond the scope of this report, might yield different results.
- By gathering opinions of the public on needs, the report could not assess the needs which might be just as critical but not known by the general public. One example that is obvious is the need to conserve water. This is among the Department's highest priorities, but it is not mentioned by the public. Other examples include toxics mitigation and regularization of partnership arrangements with third parties. These items and others must figure into the next stage of analysis before a strategic plan is done.
- The "checkerboard" nature of the map of Los Angeles County has many city residents living in close proximity to and using recreation and park facilities outside the city limits. The map at page 67 of the report and the chart at page 69 of the report give some sense of this issue. However, the scope of this study did not allow a more thorough exploration of how this fact might cause the calculations made in the report on the quantities of land and facilities available to city residents to be understated. (Of course, however much such calculations might be understated, this Commission and this Department are devoted to

increasing substantially the services and facilities available to Los Angeles residents.)

- The use of guidelines based on other cities' services and facilities is in the nature of the scope of the assignment, but it unavoidably fails to take into account the unique nature of Los Angeles, its climate and its geography. As is mentioned at page 2 of the report, our weather gives the public more thorough access to the services and facilities that the city has than would be true in a wintry climate; and the city's vast distances and tradition of automobile mobility creates less public expectation of parks or anything else being in walking distance to home. Further, the beaches--a unique recreational asset of this big city--are intensely used by city residents; are largely outside city limits; and are almost entirely outside the jurisdiction of the city's Department of Recreation and Parks. Mostly, they do not enter into the figures for comparison with other cities. These facts, and Los Angeles' "checkerboard" pattern make comparisons to other cities a matter of apples and oranges. Nevertheless, we will consider the comparisons for the information they do provide.

Despite these constraints, we appreciate the work that this report entails. We believe it reflects high professional standards and we expect to find it to be a valuable tool in our work. Our goal is to provide more and better services and facilities to our residents and to do so as soon as possible.