

## Joint Commission Meeting Comments

The Joint Commission (JC) represents all members of the Planning Commission and the Library Community Services Commission. The JC met with City Staff and MIG at 7:00 PM on February 20, 2024, to provide input on the draft Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan. The discussion with MIG was complete by 8:35 PM.

## Comments from public

### **Deborah Rodgers (21-year resident and homeowner)**

This plan does not have a natural resources values statement included in it. Is this provided in another city plan or document? Usually these things address air, water, erosion control, native vegetation, shade, habitat for wildlife, rare and sensitive species. Parks are places where those values can be expressed.

## Opening remarks from Dante Hall:

- Park system plans take an average of 18 months – we’re on track meeting that timeline
- Comprehensive document with lots of detail
- In many ways, the plan reflects a process like what we just went through with tree replacement at RVP: Assessment, advice of consulting arborist, work with public to identify palette of trees and shade structure options.
- Plan will allow us to go after funding, make informed improvements, and maintain them
- Financially it helps the city out in that we are more intentional, targeted, and building on things that reflect community priorities

## Presentation of Draft Plan by MIG

MIG provided a brief presentation of the plan overview and detailed the action plan projects (6 park sites, two trail sites). Then comments were provided by the JC.

## Comments from JC

### **Dilli Bhattarai (Planning Commissioner)**

- Plan notes about one thousand engaged. Is this a representative number given our size?
- Can you detail a bit more about the engagement?
- Is our city on par with comparable communities?

**Rachel Edmonds (MIG)**

- Engagement for the MP was carried out in two major phases:
- First phase – Taking what we learned about the park inventory and condition assessment, we used that understanding to gauge what people in Hercules value about the park system thematically. Events on site – multiple pop ups, open house – were designed to reach people where they already are with an emphasis on park users. Materials used at these events solicited feedback and interaction with staff was encouraged. With findings from this engagement phase, we created draft recommendations. Draft recommendations were prioritized using feedback provided by the community in the second phase.
- Both engagement phases featured online and in-person components to meet people where they are and get as a diverse response as possible.
- Overall, out of a community the size of 26,000, we had 1,200 people engaged as unique respondents (986 Phase 1; 213 in Phase 2). This response rate is high enough to suggest what we heard is representative of the wider community (approximately 4.6% of residents).

**Dante Hall (City Manager)**

- Engagement events contacted more people than was officially tallied. We each had dozens of conversations with people, many of whom may not have submitted an official survey response.

**Cindy Mendoza (MIG)**

- I will provide clarification to the question about how the City compares in park terms to other similar communities. While the City is lacking in developed park acreage per 1,000 residents using NRPA standards, the City is rich in open space compared to its peers, and that fact impacted how we finalized the level of service standards the plan should strive to meet.
- The plan's purview was not to look at natural resources and open space in great detail, but the plan does identify needed trails and a future nature park in the open space. This plan will make it possible to guide an informed, sustainable investment strategy.

**Brian Campbell-Miller (Community and Library Services Commissioner)**

- Is there an effort in the plan to include acknowledgement of cultural identities in future park or trail projects?
- The path that comes underneath I-80 with the mural comes to mind. On the other side of Sycamore there could be supplement artwork that provides sense of history for other cultural groups, i.e. Filipinos of Hercules. Can we add a statement to acknowledge the need for cultural inclusion this in the plan?

**Rachel Edmonds (MIG)**

- Detailed planning that will be done as part of individual projects can and should explore appropriate ways to recognize cultural groups in Hercules. That effort can be nuanced and context specific.
- The master plan did not provide detailed recommendations on how to do that for each site.
- It certainly should be part of engagement and design development for specific projects that have an opportunity to expand cultural awareness. We can add a statement to recognize this need.

**Bob Redlow (Master Plan Steering Committee Member)**

- I will add a comment about plan refinement. Can the statement in the action plan chapter about pickleball be aligned with the pickleball project description in Chapter 5 for Woodfield Park? They do not read identical now. Please change to not encourage development of multiuse courts intended to serve pickleball and tennis simultaneously. The court dimensions do not allow it.
- We shouldn't build facilities that can't meet standard dimensions or create the incompatible mixing of uses (tennis and pickleball), which make it an unsustainable park feature that has to be maintained. You really need 4-6 pickleball courts on one site to attract sustained use by pickleball organizations.
- Cities of Richmond and El Cerrito have tried mixing uses to incorporate pickleball and it is not working.
- Sound management is always an issue – the City should ban wood paddles. Any pickleball proposal will require an environmental process.
- If we are not going to do it right, we shouldn't do it.
- My comments are echoed by Jean Schramm in that the City should provide opportunities for seniors to play organized pickleball, and that the mixing of court types doesn't really work.

**Carol Most-Walker (Planning Commissioner)**

- Is there a climate action plan component for the Park Master Plan?
- East Bay MUD has a program to support median conversion drought tolerant plants.
- Some recommendations call for using synthetic turf, which creates run off with forever chemicals.
- City should think about what some of the recommendations may conflict somewhat with the City's future climate goals.

**Tyler Darke (Master Plan Steering Committee Member)**

- The action plan does not address organized sports like soccer. As drafted, the action plan identifies two parks with basketball courts to be resurfaced and restored, as well as tennis facilities.
- Instead, can the action plan improve basketball courts at one park and then also resurface a soccer field with grass turf? Then it is more even. Anticipated costs to resurface and restore a basketball court may be comparable with costs to renovate a soccer field with turf.
- WCCYSL serves 700-800 area families per weekend. They come to Hercules for soccer. This would have a huge impact on serving lots of residents.
- Overall organized sports should be a component of the near-term plan.
- Dante Hall: The City has engaged with WCCYSL to establish the partnership, but it is a bit early to formalize it in the parks plan or assign responsibilities. The city is excited about continuing to develop the partnership.

**Monique Hernandez (Community and Library Services Commissioner)**

- What about improvements for teens?
- Will future engagement ask teens more?

**Rachel Edmonds (MIG)**

- The plan identifies a few locations for projects that would be of interest to teens: spaces for social hang outs, challenge features, all ages play, people watching.
- Parks include Shoreline Park and Ohlone Park.
- The needs for young adults and teens were certainly something we heard about, observed while we were on site, and want the plan recommendations to respond to.

**Rob Schaufenbil (Planning Commissioner)**

- It is obvious lots of work has gone into this detailed plan.
- Easy to read.
- Support for the dog park (formalized) at Duck Pond Park. This area is widely used as an off-leash park right now.
- Question about eucalyptus trees across the city. Is removal of this species a citywide priority?

**Mike Roberts (Public Works Director/City Engineer)**

- The city is broadly looking at eucalyptus tree removal.
- San Pablo Parkway, Refugio Valley Park, Duck Pond Park, Ohlone Park.

**Rachel Edmonds (MIG)**

- Eucalyptus also are fire risks, and they are not a native species to the Bay Area. Other reasons to remove and replace with something different.

**Rob Schaufenbil (Planning Commissioner)**

- Can you explain the “urgency” category in the action plan?

**Rachel Edmonds (MIG)**

- The action plan on page 168 of the Draft Plan provides an overview of the urgency category.
- Generally, it relates to the level of need, and if the failure to act results in a missed opportunity, such as purchase of an available open space parcel that could be dedicated to future parkland.
- Appendix F also provides an overview.

**Kenneth Morrison (Planning Commissioner)**

- Is this report a living document?
- Will it be adjusted as conditions change or need changes?

**Tim Rood (Community Development Director)**

- Ideally, all development proposals are consistent with other adopted plans, such as the Waterfront District Master Plan. The Exchange project, however, evolved the open space guidance with what was eventually provided at that site.

**Hector Rubio (Planning Commissioner)**

- This plan is comprehensive and detailed, easy to follow and read.
- I do have comments about incorporating active recreation. Some sites that seem obvious to add active recreation are not included – example is at the overlook wall at Shoreline Park – there is a concrete wall structure that has graffiti and could be a place for adding new, active park elements along the Bay Trail. Another site that comes to mind is Bayside Park, which is mainly a large lawn.
- Another issue to consider is Hercules Point. Can it be acknowledged as a future park site with space for facilities that are hard to place at other sites – fields, pickleball, etc.?

**Cindy Mendoza (MIG)**

- We have referred to this site as a park provided by others (East Bay Park and Recreation District).
- This site was considered during the park level of service (LOS) assessment.
- The city does not control this land as far as we’ve been made aware.

**Mike Roberts (City)**

- We will confirm ownership of this site.

**Rachel Edmonds (MIG)**

- These comments shared tonight have been recorded, and Dante Hall will provide a summary of them to Council next week. Thank you for working on this important project with us.