

June 17, 2021

MEMBERS OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

City of Long Beach
California

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file a report on the Draft Parks, Recreation and Marine Department Strategic Plan. (Citywide)

DISCUSSION

The Parks, Recreation and Marine Department (PRM) provides stewardship of 3,125.3 acres of land and offers extensive recreational, social and cultural programs in nearly every one of Long Beach's unique neighborhoods. To do this, PRM has an extensive operation that manages 167 parks, 27 community centers, a five-course municipal golf system, 6.1 miles of beaches, in addition to operating the largest public marina system in the country with 3,300 boat slips, and a 'Compassion Saves' Animal Care Services operation. PRM also offers recreation programs from arts and cultural, sports and fitness and enrichment curriculum for all ages from preschoolers to elders. Long Beach's parks, community facilities, and beaches draw visitors from near and far, bringing tourism revenue to the city and boosting our local economy. Parks and open spaces have never been so appreciated, or as heavily used as they are as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the pandemic, parks and open spaces were deemed essential and remained open and are now critical to survival and recovery. Parks are also an essential part of the City's entrepreneur ecosystem as parks host many emerging small businesses and special event providing recreation programming and vendor spaces to the public. All of this is made possible by 440 full-time and 660 part-time/seasonal employees, numerous volunteers, park partners and community-based organizations.

To plan for the future of the Department, PRM began updating the Department Strategic Plan (Plan) in 2019, which was last updated in 2003. This new Strategic Plan will cover a 10-year period (October 2021 – September 2031) and will guide programmatic, staffing and budgeting decisions for PRM. The Plan will determine how work is prioritized, how staff is organized, and the investments that will need to be made to ensure that PRM is contributing to the quality of life for all Long Beach residents and visitors. A draft of the Plan is attached as Attachment A.

To identify opportunities and strengths, obstacles and needs, PRM created a community outreach methodology in which resident's and staff's voices were centered. This multi-faceted process included engagement with over 2,000 participants through multiple rounds of community surveys, public workshops and events, stakeholder interviews, newsletters, emails, and meetings with PRM Department staff, key stakeholders, and the

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public. The public engagement process began in the summer of 2019 with the go-live of the Department Strategic Plan website and the release of a community survey and staff survey, available in the City's four languages (English, Spanish, Khmer, Tagalog). Available online and at each of the Department's 26 community centers, PRM staff advertised the community survey at 28 parks during summer concerts, movies and other park activities and online using Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, the Department newsletter and through community and City Council communication channels.

The public engagement process was sidelined during 2020 due to COVID, as in-person engagement was postponed, and staff were reassigned to the pandemic response. However, the community engagement process was reinitiated in 2021 with a second round of community surveys and stakeholder outreach beginning in January 2021. This second round of outreach was important to re-engage with the community after over a year hiatus because staff anticipated new elements of feedback that may have resulted from their experience during the pandemic and because COVID-19 exacerbated issues of park equity in west, central and north Long Beach. The second round of surveys were promoted by lawn signs that had a QR code link to the online survey, presented in the City's four languages, and were installed at more than 40 parks throughout Long Beach. For those facing the digital divide, pop-up survey boxes and paper surveys, in the City's four languages, were available at four park locations that served as pandemic learning hubs (McBride Park, Houghton Park, Orizaba Park, Veterans Park), the El Dorado Nature Center, and the Long Beach Marine Bureau Office. Residents could also help promote the survey by downloading and printing a Strategic Plan poster and placing it in their windows. PRM promoted the survey online using Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, the Department newsletter and through community and City Council communication channels. Nonprofit organizations and neighborhood associations also participated in sharing the survey to their community base, substantially expanding the survey's reach.

In addition to the public survey, a stakeholder survey was also developed in multiple languages so that key community groups and partners who represent the various communities that interact with PRM could share their feedback on the direction of the Department. This stakeholder survey was distributed to over 200 partner groups and 74 organizations participated in the survey, and 75 stakeholder organizations participated in virtual stakeholder sessions. In total, 1635 Long Beach community members participated in the surveys. The PRM Department also produced a 'Parks Make Long Beach' video series highlighting programs, people, planning and partnerships which will be promoted during July 2021 for *Parks Make Life Better Month* along with a robust calendar of events and activities, and the community is encouraged to share their park story with staff by connecting on social media using #ParksMakeLB.

The Plan will complement other City plans like the Bike and Mobility plans, 2030 City Strategic Plan, Animal Care Services Strategic Plan, Strategic Plan for Older Adults, and Parks Youth Strategic Plan.



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At the conclusion of the inclusive community engagement process, the following main themes emerged:

1. Clean and safe parks
2. Relevant and accessible park programming
3. Park inequity across all neighborhoods
4. Stewardship and partnership
5. Department communication and accountability
6. Environmental sustainability and climate change adaptability
7. Interpersonal experiences with parks staff

The following goals were created to address these main themes most important to the community and PRM staff:

1. Provide safe, accessible public spaces.
2. Offer meaningful recreational programming and events
3. Prioritize health equity across the City
4. Build innovative and lasting partnerships
5. Connect - internally and with the community - clearly and transparently
6. Establish an environmentally sustainable park ecosystem
7. Ensure a diverse and dynamic workforce

Each of these areas are uniquely important towards aligning the park system with the vision of the community and many are interdependent for the success of the PRM's future.

The draft of the Plan is now being presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission, and also to the Long Beach City Council on July 13, 2021 in order to further solicit community feedback. The presentation is attached as Attachment B. Those interested in providing feedback on the draft Plan can submit their comments online in English, Spanish, Khmer and Tagalog at: <https://longbeach.gov/park/business-operations/about/prm-strategic-plan/>

The Plan will be updated with all Commission, Council and community feedback and finalized for adoption in August and September, in time for the start of the new fiscal year (FY22) in October 2021.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this recommendation. This effort was made possible by \$70,000 allocated by the City Council in 2019, and an additional \$20,600 was identified by PRM in Fiscal Year 2021 through development permit revenue. This additional funding was necessary to comprehensively complete the Plan that will most effectively and efficiently guide the PRM's efforts through the next decade and this total budget structure closely aligns with similar Strategic Plan efforts of other Departments.



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SUGGESTED ACTION:

Approve recommendation.

Respectfully Submitted,



NANCY VILLASEÑOR
MANAGER
PARK PLANNING & PARTNERSHIPS

APPROVED:



BRENT DENNIS
DIRECTOR

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Attachment A: Parks Make Long Beach: Parks, Recreation & Marine Department Strategic Plan Draft
Attachment B: Parks Make Long Beach: Strategic Plan Draft Presentation

