



## Legislation Text

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Recommendation to receive a report and adopt the proposed Parks, Recreation and Marine Department Strategic Plan 2022-2032. (Citywide)

The Parks, Recreation and Marine Department (PRM) provides stewardship of 3,125 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, places and open spaces, 27 community centers, a five-course municipal golf system, 6 miles of beaches, management of the largest public marina system in the country with 3,335 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, boosting our local economy, and helping to create strong neighborhoods for Long Beach residents.

Parks and open spaces have never been so appreciated or as heavily used as they are now 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 micro-businesses and special events providing recreation programming and vendor spaces to the public. All of this is made possible by 252 full-time and 450 part-time/seasonal employees, numerous volunteers, park partners, and community-based organizations.

To plan for the future, PRM began updating its Department Strategic Plan (Plan) in 2019, which was last updated in 2003. This new proposed Plan (Attachment) will cover a ten-year period (October 2022 to September 2032) and will guide programmatic, staffing, and budgeting decisions for PRM. The proposed 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.

To identify opportunities and strengths, obstacles, and needs, PRM created a community outreach methodology in which residents' 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 staff, key stakeholders, and the 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 and City staff surveys, available in

four languages (English, Spanish, Khmer, Tagalog). Available online and at each of PRM's 27 community centers, City staff advertised the community survey at 28 parks during summer concerts, movies, and other park activities and online using Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, PRM newsletter, and through community and City Council communication channels.

The public engagement process was sidelined during 2020 due to COVID-19, as in-person engagement was postponed, and City 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 of outreach hiatus because City staff anticipated new elements of feedback that may have resulted from the community's 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 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 four languages, were available at four park locations that served as pandemic learning hubs (McBride, Houghton, Orizaba, and Veterans Parks), 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. 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, 1,635 Long Beach community members participated in the surveys. PRM also produced a 'Parks Make Long Beach' video series highlighting programs, people, planning, and partnerships that were promoted during July 2021 for *Parks Make Life Better Month* along with a robust calendar of events and activities. In addition, the community is encouraged to share their park story with staff by connecting on social media using #ParksMakeLB.

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

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 toward aligning the park system with the vision of the community and many are interdependent for the success of PRM's future.

The proposed Plan was presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) on June 17, 2021 and August 19, 2021, and they recommended the Plan be adopted by the City Council. The proposed Plan incorporates feedback provided by the Commission on the draft Plan as well as community input collected through a third and final survey.

This matter was reviewed by Deputy City Attorney Monica J. Kilaita on August 11, 2021 and by Budget Analysis Officer Greg Sorensen on August 24, 2021.

City Council action on this matter is not time critical.

The development of the proposed Plan was made possible by one-time funding of \$70,000 allocated by the City Council in FY 19, and an additional \$20,600 identified by PRM in FY 21 in the General Fund Group, offset by funds available or operating reserves. This additional funding was necessary to comprehensively complete the Plan that will most effectively and efficiently guide PRM's efforts through the next decade. Funding required to implement the proposed Plan has not yet been identified and cost estimates will be developed as part of implementation. Implementing the Plan is intended to be phased in over time and as resources are made available through City resources, as well as with grant funding and partnerships within the community. This recommendation has no staffing impact beyond the normal budgeted scope of duties and is consistent with existing City Council priorities. There is no local job impact associated with this recommendation.

Approve recommendation.

**BRENT DENNIS**

DIRECTOR OF PARKS, RECREATION AND MARINE

APPROVED:

THOMAS B. MODICA  
CITY MANAGER