

**CITY OF ALBANY
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda Date: January 18, 2022
Reviewed by: NA

SUBJECT: Final Draft of the 2021 Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan

REPORT BY: Isabelle Leduc, Assistant City Manager/Recreation & Community Services Director

SUMMARY

The item before Council is the final draft of the 2021 Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan for review and approval. Groundworks Office a local urban design and landscape architecture firm based in Berkeley was retained in March 2021 to update the 2004 Parks Master Plan. The 2021 Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan is a 10-year planning tool that addresses current and future needs and provides recommendations for a systematic and prioritized approach to the implementation of parks and recreational projects.

This final draft includes modifications based on input received at the [December 6, 2021 Council meeting](#). A matrix of the most recent edits is included as Attachment 3 to this staff report. Upon approval of the Master Plan by the City Council, a Notice of Exemption from CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) will be filed with the County Clerk on the basis that the Open Space Plan is not a project, as it will not result in any physical impact on the environment.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the Council:

1. Receive and provide input on the final draft of the Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan; and
2. Adopt Resolution No. 2022-08, approving the final draft of the Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan.

BACKGROUND

The previous Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan was adopted in October of 2004 and was used to identify funding priorities and capital improvement needs for the Albany Park system. The 5-10 year plan included the evaluation of community needs and an assessment of existing parks and facilities, outlined a clear set of goals, policies and objectives for the enhancement of the City's park system, open space, recreation facilities, programs and services to direct the work of staff, the Parks, Recreation & Open Space Commission and City Council.

The City also adopted in 2016 the 2035 General Plan that includes policies, goals, and actions to preserve and enhance open space, expand and improve local park system to keep pace with population growth, manage and maintain existing parkland and other recommendations to meet changing needs of park user groups, emerging trends, and improve the local trail system to link neighborhoods and schools to recreational facilities and open spaces, including the waterfront. Albany places significant emphasis on the provision of high-quality amenities and ample recreational opportunities for the community. Periodic updates to the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan are recommended as an implementing action in the General Plan to identify goals, standards, guiding policies and action plans to guide the City in the development, acquisition, operations and maintenance of Albany parks and open spaces.

On [December 7, 2020](#), the Council authorized the release of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the update to the Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan seeking firms with proven experience and knowledge in park and recreation planning, master plan preparation, inclusive practices, physical park access issues, project management, and effective public engagement skills. The RFP was released on December 9, 2020 and on [March 1, 2021](#), Council awarded a contract for services to Groundworks Office. Groundworks Office, a local urban design and landscape architecture firm based in Berkeley submitted the most competitive proposal, had extensive experience in the field, working with a wide range of clients including the Cities of Piedmont, Berkeley and San Francisco. Groundworks Office's scope included a robust and innovative outreach and engagement plan, well-organized and efficient timeline with concrete deliverables for each task, research-based process driven approach, deep analysis of Recreation and Community Services trends and policies and inclusive practices, combined with a close understanding and community awareness of the values, opportunities and challenges facing Albany's park system.

DISCUSSION

The 2021 Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan is a planning tool that addresses current and future needs and provides recommendations for a systematic and prioritized approach to the implementation of parks and recreational projects. The plan provides a new 10-year outlook to drive near-term and long-range planning for Albany parks and directs decision-making and resources toward a clearly defined vision for the future. The Master Plan is divided into six chapters with appendix.

1. Vision & Goals (pages 1-13)
2. Learn: Describes the project discovery phase with initial analyses and reports on Albany parks and community. (pages 15-51)
3. Workshop: Documents community engagement methods used to explore potentially relevant projects, policies and programs. (pages 53-85)
4. Project Catalogue: Includes a list of project ideas detailed, all aligned with the 2035 General Plan with a community priority score and feasibility index (pages 87-107)
5. Evaluate: Explains the rationale for each project feasibility score and provides a forecast for how long each project would take (pages 109-121)

6. Implement: Outlines immediate and long-term next steps for funding acquisition, public processes, and strategic implementation. (pages 123-133)
7. Appendix - Placemaking catalogue: Includes inventories of existing amenities, public memorials, and provides guidance for future placemaking. (pages 135-157)

Groundworks conducted months of outreach to gather input on project ideas, policies and programs which included 2 virtual community workshops via Zoom, the first one in June and the second workshop during the July Parks, Recreation & Open Space Commission meeting. The third workshop was conducted in person at Memorial Park. Other outreach methods included stakeholder meetings, park visits, a survey, a city-wide postcard mailing and meetings to discuss the plan's progress with the Parks, Recreation & Open Space Commission.

The final draft of the Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan also includes feedback received at the October and November Parks, Recreation & Open Space Commission meetings and has been further modified to include input received at the December 6, 2021 Council meeting. A matrix of the most recent edits to the master plan is included as Attachment 3 to this staff report.

The recently adopted land acknowledgement by Council is included in the final Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan on the Acknowledgement page of the document. It is advised that further collaboration with the Ohlone Tribe on the topic of repatriation as directed by Council on [September 20, 2021](#) with the adoption of [Resolution No. 2021-95](#) could focus on the exploration of opportunities for use and stewardship of Albany Hill by the Tribe.

ANALYSIS

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

The 2021 Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan is primarily a planning tool based on the General Plan that explains what projects have been funded in the past and what projects might be eligible for funding in the future as well as describes options for design of parks and open space. Upon approval of the Master Plan by the City Council, a Notice of Exemption from CEQA will be filed with the County Clerk on the basis that the Open Space Plan is not a project, as it will not, reasonably foreseeably, directly, or indirectly, result in any physical impact on the environment.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

An update to the Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan supports the preservation, enhancement and expansion of parks and open space areas, provides greater opportunities for healthy activity in nature and can help protect native habitat.

SOCIAL EQUITY AND INCLUSIVITY CONSIDERATIONS

The Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan provides recommendations for inclusive practices and access to park usage.

CITY COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVES

Goal 3: Goal 3: Maximize and Improve Parks and Open Space.

- Objective 1: Enhance Parks.
 - Work Plan Item 1: Update strategic plan with select items from the Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan and other potential improvements.
- Objective 2: Enhance Open Space
 - Work Plan Item 1: Prepare a plan for improvements and prioritize a list of projects for Albany Waterfront Park and include in the CIP Program
 - Work Plan Item 2: develop a prioritized list of projects on Albany Hill and include in the CIP program
- Objective 3: Create Cultural Facilities & Opportunities
 - Work Plan Item 1: Update strategic plan with select items from the Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan and other potential improvements.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Recreation Reserve Funds in the amount of \$75,000 have been appropriated as part of the current 2-year budget for the completion of the Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan. Funding will be required to fully implement the projects outlined within the plan, which will be included in future budget cycles.

NEXT STEPS

Per the Council Strategic Plan Goal 3: Maximize and Improve Parks and Open Space, staff will work with the Parks, Recreation & Open Space Commission to outline priority parks and open space projects for approval by Council in the CIP program. Please note that staff has applied for Prop 68 funding for the 7 park projects recommended by the Parks, Recreation & Open Space Commission and approved by Council on [November 15, 2021](#).

Attachments

1. Resolution No. 2022-08
2. Final Draft 2021 Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan
3. Matrix of changes from input received on 12/6/2021