

City of Huntington Park

Conclusions & Philosophies

**Prepared as part of the City of Huntington Park
Parks & Recreation Master Plan
May 2008**

Conclusions and Philosophies

1. **Parks & Recreation Master Plan:** This document is a 15 to 20 year Visionary Plan. Its approach is a city-wide review and recommendations for Recreational Programs and Parks Facilities. It offers both short-term and long-term investments and priorities that should be undertaken by the City. The goal is for Parks & Recreation Staff and City Policymakers to use this “tool” as a guide to decision-making actions that take the City to new levels of service for both Park Facilities and Recreation Programs. Site-specific Master Plans will likely be required for individual parks, where significant modifications to recreational activity areas are planned, to guide renovations and expansions; which is a follow-up step after the adoption of the Parks & Recreation Master Plan.
2. **Parks & Recreation Commission Involvement in Annual Budget Process:** Using the Parks & Recreation Master Plan as a tool in guiding both the selection of improvements that are appropriate to the overall parks system, and assisting in an organized upgrading of the parks facilities, the Parks & Recreation Commission should get much more involved in interaction with community groups and focused citizens of recreational services, to gain insight into which projects and services have the highest community support for the upcoming fiscal year. Following Commission deliberations, specific recommendations should then be forwarded to the City Council to assist this body in making the final decisions on Capital Improvement Projects, Parks & Facilities Maintenance, and Recreation Services.
3. **Higher Levels of Parks & Facilities Maintenance:** Highly maintained parks offer a critical image to the citizens, as well as potential new businesses the City is eager to entice to locate within the City. Impacts from the public parks image can include the following:
 - a. Citizens may respond with improved private property maintenance and appearance.
 - b. New businesses will generate new revenue for the City; and all businesses may respond with improved property management.
 - c. The City should not expect private property / business property owners to maintain their properties to a higher level than that accomplished by the City with all of its public property (parks, specifically).

A greater level of discussion of maintenance levels can be found in the Park Facility Maintenance Section of this Master Plan.

It is the general conclusion of the Consultant that the physical conditions of the parks' athletic fields and general picnic / passive recreation areas are not well connected to the discussion of the level of execution of horticultural practices being performed by the Park Maintenance Contractor. Furthermore, a greatly expanded level of ongoing dialogue between the Field Services contract administration staff and the Recreation Staff is critical, if the City is going to experience a higher level of appearance throughout the parks system.

4. **Volunteer Involvement in Parks Maintenance & Recreational Programs:** Promoting volunteer involvement provides lower cost opportunities for upgrades in facilities maintenance and program subjects and content. Usually, this in turn, leads to greater citizen and business pride in the total community. Community members often become the protectors of park property, and often interact with offenders of appropriate park behavior.
5. **Overall Recommendation for Park Facilities:** It should be anticipated that the City will receive criticism from the community, should a priority be placed on the acquisition and development of additional park acreage, which is higher than upgrading existing parks. The Consultant has heard comments from many other municipal clients' citizenry, where the park maintenance program has been more effective than in Huntington Park, with the traditional response, "*Why are you building more parks when you can't take care of what you have?*"

Regardless of the overall priority, the City should be exploring the acquisition of park lands in those areas of the City in which no parklands are currently available to offer neighborhood recreational spaces. Taking an overview of the citywide map with parklands plotted (see Section E), one can see voids in recreational services to entire neighborhoods. With these introductory comments, the following recommendations are provided:

1. Place the upgrading of Existing Park Acreage above the Acquisition of New Park Acreage.
 - a. This includes placing a low priority on recreational development of the DWP Public Utilities Corridor, west of California Avenue, extending from Walnut Street to Santa Ana Street.
 - b. The exception is to either acquire the collective 3-acres of residential parcels at the southwest corner of Salt Lake Park, or re-locate the Public Works and the Parks Department Corporation Yards from Bissell Street to an undetermined alternative site outside of Salt Lake Park. (See Section H for further discussions).

For more in-depth discussions on improvements to the parks system, see the Park Renovation with Cost Estimates section.

6. **Recreational Program Offerings:** Prioritize getting local programs on track with State and Regional Trends.
7. **Recreational Program Content:** Focus on Recreational Programs that offer the following opportunities:
 - a. Build self-esteem.
 - b. Bring families closer together.
 - c. Offer mentoring and tutoring during school years, and the preparations for optimum positive adult development.
 - d. Support Public Survey Priorities of the Community's Characteristics:
 1. Families
 2. Culture
 3. Education

8. **Park Facilities Infrastructure:** Upgrade park infrastructure (i.e. Irrigation Systems, Drainage) that will come closer to supporting the extensive use of the parks.
9. **ADA Accessible Furnishings:** Upgrade park furnishings to provide ADA accessibility for citizens who are physically challenged as they use the parks for various activities. As stated in Goal 4.0 of the *Open Space and Conservation Element*, Policy 4.1 clearly specifies: *Provide active and passive park and recreational facilities...to serve the needs of residents of all ages, economic levels, and physical conditions.* Generally, the public parks system provides a significantly sub-standard level of compliance with the federally-mandated ADA Accessibility Standards; which translates to very limited access to recreational activities for community members with special physical challenges.
10. **Cultural Heritage Programs:** Increase Recreational Program content that is supportive of the cultural heritage of ALL segments of the community, while emphasizing respect of all cultures within the cultural diversity.
 - a. Provides an excellent vehicle to promote a positive respect of the cultural diversity of the entire community.
 - b. Reinforces respect of earlier residents/pioneers and their historical contributions to the City, while blending in the newer residents' impacts, since a high percentage are immigrants.
11. **Recreation Programming:** It is critical to develop record-keeping and hard data of attendance in all programs, success of programs, etc. to potentially influence Regional and Local Decision Makers in the competition for available funding. It is especially important to document positive impacts that specific programs have achieved for the entire local community.
12. **Westside Park:** Given the lack of clear understanding of the proposal by LAUSD to develop an alternative park site, and strong opinion that the offered site cannot improve on the delivery of Park Facilities and Recreation Programs to the Westside community, the Consultant recommends not moving forward with the proposal. It is impossible, at this point, to see the City receiving what it needs for Park Facilities, for the Westside neighborhood, under the current proposal.