



STAFF REPORT

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

December 13, 2022

TO: Honorable Chair and Commissioners

FROM: David Loya, Director of Community Development

PREPARER: Delores Freitas, Senior Planner

DATE: December 07, 2022

TITLE: **Consider the Draft Parks and Recreation Element of the General Plan 2045**

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Planning Commission consider updates to the Parks and Recreation Element for incorporation in the Arcata General Plan 2045, receive public comment, and provide recommendations as necessary.

INTRODUCTION:

The City is updating its General Plan for the next 20 year planning period. Most General Plan Elements only require minor updates to be consistent with current planning law or community value. The Parks and Recreation Element is similar in policy direction to its previous iteration but has not been modified since its adoption in 1994, and has been completely re-written and re-formatted as part of this General Plan update. No formal action is required or expected from this meeting, but the Planning Commission may provide recommendations or comments on the proposed changes.

DISCUSSION:

In 1994, the City adopted a General Plan Parks and Recreation Element (Resolution 945-26) to serve as the central policy document to guide the provision of parks and recreation in the City. The Element considered a wide variety of recreation programs with policies addressing the community's desire to provide a wide spectrum of parks and recreation opportunities and facilities; encouraging cooperative agreements with other government entities and public/private partnerships to enhance the availability of recreation programs; and emphasized fiscal responsibility and the objective to minimize environmental impacts. This Element was included in the Arcata General Plan, 2020.

In 2010, the City updated its Parks & Recreation Master Plan, originally compiled in 1979 and updated with the preparation of the Parks and Recreation Element in 1994. The Parks & Recreation Master Plan establishes a vision for a sustainable and interconnected parks and recreation system relying on local standards and guidelines and a comprehensive implementation strategy to addresses community needs.

Updating The Parks and Recreation element of the General Plan has been an Environmental Services priority project and City Council goal for roughly a decade. Environmental Services staff requested an update to the Parks and Recreation Element be included in the scope of work for the General Plan

Update. This Parks and Recreation Element updates the policies and program of the 1994 Element and incorporates the vision and objectives of the 2010 Parks & Recreation Master Plan.

Input on the draft Element was requested from the Parks and Recreation Committee at three consecutive hearings held July through November of 2022. The version provided in the packet represents final comments on the draft from the committee after the full draft had been presented to them by the City’s consultant team.

The document represents similar goals and principles to the original document with updated policy intended to guide future recreation programming and open space acquisition. Language has been added to further guide policy towards equitable outcomes with an emphasis on accessible play equipment and recreation planning for underserved areas. A comparison of 1994 vs. 2022 Guiding Principles and Goals is provided below for comparison and a matrix of 1994 Goals, Policies, and Implementation Measures has been provided along with the proposed draft updated document (Attachment A).

1994	2022
Provide a wide spectrum of recreational opportunities for Arcata residents of all ages.	Provide residents with an accessible variety of recreation opportunities & park experiences that are equitably distributed throughout the City.
Provide all residents with a wide assortment of parks and related facilities.	Expand the range of park types and recreation programs to meet changing community needs & priorities.
Promote sharing of facilities and programs with other entities.	Design sustainably to maintain carbon neutrality, operate efficiently and minimize water/energy needs.
Emphasize fiscal efficiency in the provision of parks and recreation programs.	Optimize natural resources & amenities for the enjoyment of residents and visitors.
Provide aesthetically pleasing parks and recreational facilities which are compatible with their environment.	Make parks and recreation programs safe, accessible by multi modal transportation, usable by all ages, inclusive, and without barriers for those with limited mobility.
Bring parks and recreation facilities into compliance with changing federal and state laws and encourage user safety.	Assess user needs & adapt as needed on an ongoing basis.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

The Parks and Recreation Element is a major policy document guiding City decision making on a twenty-year timeline. A recommendation of approval from the Planning Commission will forward the document to the City Council for final review and adoption.

COMMITTEE/COMMISSION REVIEW:

The Parks and Recreation Committee was provided the draft Element at three separate hearings in 2022 (July 13, August 15, October 12). The Committee provided specific feedback to staff and consultants at their August 15 and October 12 meetings.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CEQA):

An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is currently being prepared for the General Plan Update which will incorporate analysis of all modifications to General Plan Elements, including the Parks and Recreation Element.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A. Draft Parks and Recreation Element (PDF)

Attachment B. Summary of 1994 Element Goals, Policies and Programs (PDF)