

TO: Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)
FROM: Jeremy Dennis, Advance Planning Manager
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Department



TITLE: Community Services and Facilities Element Discussion

The Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) was created by the City Council to inform and provide guidance during the Comprehensive Plan update. This staff report provides instructions, background material, and in-depth discussion of the Community Services and Facilities Element. Based on the discussion during the meeting, a revised draft Community Services and Facilities Element will be prepared for further reviewed by the CAC.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE MEETING

Because the Mitchell Library closes at 8:00, discussion on the Community Services element must be completed within the 2½ hours allocated. Starting in October, meetings will be moved to the Rinconada Library and can last longer

Following updates from staff, a public comment period, and a brief presentation offering an overview of the Community Services and Facilities Element, there will be about 2 hours for CAC discussion. Crucial to this discussion will be the annotated version of the Community Services and Facilities Element, which contains the text of the current, adopted Element, notes on changes recommended by the PTC, and input from community members received via Open City Hall in advance of this meeting. Please use this annotated document, included as Attachment 1 in your packet, as your primary resource in preparing for the discussion on August 11.

As noted on the agenda, the CAC discussion will be organized by goal. By now you should have familiarized yourself with the source documents, including the existing Comprehensive Plan element and the full text of the PTC's revisions. Staff suggests that the Chair ask CAC members to volunteer their most innovative ideas, strongest concerns, and/or reactions to the policies and programs listed under each goal in the annotated Element (the Goals will be reviewed by the City Council). This first review of the Element is best treated as a brainstorming

session, allowing for a free flow of ideas that staff and the consultants can condense into an initial rough draft of the full element as described below. CAC input on individual policies, programs, or questions does not need to be formalized by motions, seconds, and votes. If there is clear consensus of the majority of the group, staff will note that. If there are differences of opinion, staff will record the various points of view expressed. Staff will particularly value observations regarding the number of programs, and discussion of any programs that can be combined, eliminated or converted to policies

CAC input from this meeting will be used to develop a draft version of the Community Services and Facilities Element, with background narratives, maps, photos, and other graphics. The Discussion Draft Element will be presented to the CAC at the October meeting for further refinement.

BACKGROUND

Existing Community Services and Facilities Element Contents

Palo Alto provides a rich array of community services and facilities for those who live, work, and go to school in the city. Community services and facilities play a vital role in fostering public health and enriching the social life of the community. A nationally-recognized leader in delivery of public services, the City of Palo Alto is committed to providing high quality, responsive customer service for its residents and businesses. The Community Services and Facilities Element is not explicitly required by State law, so the City has considerable flexibility in what it covers and the policies and programs it contains.

Currently, this Element covers:

- Schools
- Libraries
- Parks
- Recreation
- Police and Fire
- Childcare
- Senior Services
- Services for People with Disabilities
- Cultural Arts

Emergency response services are currently addressed in the Natural Environment Element and are contemplated for inclusion in a new Safety and Noise Element that will be a topic for discussion at a future CAC meeting.

Throughout the Element, consistent themes that emerge include the need to integrate planning for these services and facilities into citywide planning efforts as well as into individual development proposals; the challenges of providing high-quality services cost effectively; and the need to respond to a diverse and changing array of physical, educational, recreational, and cultural needs and abilities.

Existing Conditions

In 2014, in preparation for the legally required environmental review of the updated Comp Plan under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the City and the consultant team prepared a series of existing conditions reports. An existing conditions report is prepared to provide a snapshot of community conditions, economic conditions and social characteristics related to land use planning in Palo Alto.

One of the topics CEQA requires the City to consider is Public Services. The Public Services Existing Conditions Report covers schools, police, fire, and parks – many of the same topics covered in the Community Services and Facilities Element. The 2014 Public Services Existing Conditions Report summarizes State and local regulations relevant to each service area and describes the existing facilities, capacity, and service levels provided. For example, it covers past and projected enrollment in PAUSD; current response times for the Palo Alto Fire Department; crime statistics for 2009-2013; and information on lands managed by the Mid-Peninsula Regional Open Space Preserve (MROSD) and the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST). The Public Services Existing Conditions Report is Attachment 2 in this packet.

Comprehensive Plan Update Work

In preparation for the Comprehensive Plan Amendment, a Community Services Background Report was prepared in April 2009 to describe the existing level of services relative to current and projected population in the City of Palo Alto's neighborhoods and to identify possible gaps in community services that could arise between then and 2020. A subcommittee of the Planning and Transportation Commission worked with staff of the Planning and Community Services Departments to review the existing element and identify suggested changes.

On October 4, 2011 the Community Services Department convened a Community Stakeholders meeting, including but not limited to Palo Alto Recreation Foundation, Children Advisory Commission, and Avenidas, to discuss any gaps in services and answer a series of questions that would inform the necessary updates to the element. Planning staff then worked with the Library, Human

Relations, and Parks & Recreation Commission on reviewing the proposed changes through a series of public hearings. The ideas and comments generated through the various outreach efforts were used to inform the changes recommended by the PTC.

The Planning and Transportation Commission engaged in an extensive Comprehensive Plan Update process that culminated in a report to the City Council in May of 2014. Those revisions to the Comprehensive Plan relevant to this discussion are included in the annotated document attached.

Related Efforts

In 2013, the City initiated a Parks, Trails, Open Space and Recreation (PTOSR) Master Plan (<http://www.paloaltoparksplan.org/>). Through this process, the City will analyze and review Palo Alto's parks and recreation system and develop clear guidance regarding short-term (within five years), mid-term (10 years) and long-term (25 years) renovations and capital improvement needs for parks, trails, open space and recreation facilities. The Master Plan is currently being formulated through a public process with input from a stakeholder advisory group, community workshops and surveys, the Parks and Recreation Commission, Planning and Transportation Commission, Public Arts Commission, Youth Council, Historical Resources Board, and City Council; it is anticipated for completion in 2016.

Many of the topics the PTOSR Master Plan will address are detailed and specific, such as identifying outdated and obsolete facilities that are seldom used (e.g. shuffleboard courts) and emerging recreational activities and sports that Palo Alto's facilities aren't currently designed to accommodate (e.g. rock climbing). For other fundamental issues, the Comp Plan's Community Services and Facilities Element can provide big-picture goals and a solid policy foundation. These issues include acquisition of new park land; expansion of existing park land; regulation of "in-lieu" park development impact fee payments; accessibility; revenue generation; and public/private partnerships to provide recreation facilities.

DISCUSSION

The discussion of the Community Services and Facilities Element will be organized by goal; each goal is discussed individually below. Of course, many of the policies and programs are interrelated, so some discussion may be relevant to more than one goal.

Following the summary of each goal, there is a list of questions. These questions provide a starting point for dialogue; they are not intended preclude any other

questions from the CAC or the public, and the CAC may wish to use the attached annotated document to guide their conversation.

GOAL C-1: Effective and Efficient Delivery of Community Services.

The policies and programs under this goal are intended to foster partnerships and collaboration with other agencies, organizations, and groups in the community and the surrounding region in order to expand the range of community services available to Palo Altans and to streamline costs associated with delivery of those services.

Delivering high quality City services to meet the evolving needs of the community with finite fiscal resources requires efficiency and coordination. Technology has revolutionized the way many services are provided, but has also added a new level of complexity. Changing demographics affect the demand for services such as child care, senior care, and even cultural and recreational programming. Increasingly, services that were once exclusively provided by the City may now be provided by another public entity or by a nonprofit agency or private company. The result of this trend has been a growing emphasis on partnership and collaboration. Key partners for the City in the delivery of community services including the Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD), Stanford University, and neighboring jurisdictions as well as local community groups and businesses. Cooperation with these organizations and entities can eliminate duplication of efforts, streamline delivery of services and build community bonds.

Review

As you review the current Comprehensive Plan policies and programs, the modifications recommended by the PTC, and other input from community members, please consider the following questions:

1. What criteria would you use to evaluate potential community partnerships and should any of these be made explicit in the Comp Plan?
2. Are there opportunities to collaborate with Stanford in delivering community services? If so, in what ways?
3. Are there opportunities to consolidate, group, or streamline the policies and programs under this goal?
4. What ideas do you have about collaborating with our schools in providing programs, services, and facilities within the City?
5. How should the City explore partnerships with non-profit community partners to support City programs and services?

6. Should the City pursue partnerships with local businesses to expand the range of services available to Palo Altans and manage delivery costs? If so, how?

GOAL C-2: A Commitment to Excellence and High Quality Customer Service among City of Palo Alto Officials and Employees.

The policies and programs under this goal are intended to promote high quality, responsive customer service and reinforce the customer-service ethic.

The city government of Palo Alto has a long commitment to continuously improving and enhancing resident's ability to receive municipal services. The City Council regularly provides guidance to city staff on how best to serve Palo Altans, but good ideas for improving service come from staff as well as the public.

In the last few years alone, the City has implemented a wide range of new, innovative ways to connect with and receive city services:

- Increased customer service opportunities at the Development Center via the Development Services Blueprint project.
- Online tools to receive land use data and track permits, including Parcel Report and Buildingeye.
- Home Efficiency Genie Program providing homeowners a chance to talk to an energy adviser free of charge.
- Open City Hall to increase civic engagement.
- 311 service system
- Online registration tool for activities, memberships, and facility rentals.
- Palo Alto Library pioneered a Chromebooks checkout program.

Review

As you review the current Comprehensive Plan policies and programs, the modifications recommended by the PTC, and other input from community members, please consider the following questions:

1. Are there other ways to further this goal, such as using technology to improve customer service or continuing a commitment to training and skill building for City staff?
2. What are ways to better connect resident's needs with the way the City provides connected services?

GOAL C-3: Improved Quality, Quantity, and Affordability of Social Services, Particularly for Children, Youth, Seniors, and People with Disabilities.

The policies and programs under this goal focus on services for children, youth, seniors, and persons with disabilities.

The Palo Alto Office of Human Services provides a safety net of services to the community, working to enhance the quality of life in Palo Alto through the delivery of: child care services, senior services, services for people with disabilities, and mental health services, as well as administration of a grant program to support community organizations that deliver human services to Palo Alto residents. The percentage of children and seniors in Palo Alto grew notably between 2000 and 2010, and in 2010, approximately 23 percent of the population was under the age of 18 and approximately 17 percent was over the age of 64. In recognition of this trend, it is essential to develop long-term and short-term strategies to deliver the comprehensive package of services needed by these groups. At the same time, services for children, youth, seniors, and persons with disabilities are constrained by limited resources. Coordination among the many agencies and organizations serving these populations is therefore critical to stretch these resources as far as possible.

Childcare Services

The City has an Early Care and Education Committee that advises the City Manager on child care issues, as well as an Early Care and Education Master Plan. Additionally, the Office of Human Services contracts for after-school care at each of Palo Alto's 12 elementary schools and maintains a register of licensed child care facilities in the city that serves as a resource for residents. The City also provides child care subsidy assistance for income-eligible residents administered through Palo Alto Community Child Care (PACCC), a private group that operates several center-based facilities in Palo Alto. This subsidy can be used at PACCC-run facilities or at other child care centers. The Office of Human Services acts as a clearinghouse of information on how to open a child care facility in Palo Alto.

Senior Services

The City of Palo Alto provides financial support to Avenidas, a nonprofit organization that offers a comprehensive range of services for the independent living, education, and enrichment of people age fifty and over. Avenidas' services include transportation, housing, counseling, support groups, health screenings and senior day care, as well as assistance to people with aging parents. Avenidas' Palo Alto Senior Center provides a central facility for the delivery of these services, as well as a social center for seniors.

Services for People with Disabilities

The City of Palo Alto helps connect people with disabilities and specialized service providers. The City also maintains a list of resources specifically for parents of developmentally disabled children, and provides the contact information of organizations that specialize in technology for the disabled. The City directly funded Abilities United with a grant in 2011 for swimming and aquatic therapy, adult daycare, employment services, as well as pre-school and clinic-based therapy. Additional activities for disabled persons supported by the City include The Omega Club for socializing special needs adults 21 and over; Summer's Excellent Adventures Camp, a summer camp for special needs children ages 5 to 13 years old; and the Santa Clara County Special Olympics. The City's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) coordinator is the Chief Building Official, who is responsible for implementing the Compliance Plan, which identifies all of the public access projects necessary for the City to comply with the ADA.

Youth and Teen Services

City participates in Project Safety Net, a coalition of nonprofit and government agencies formed in response to a series of teen suicides in the community. Project Safety Net implements a community-based mental health plan for youth in Palo Alto which centers on education, suicide prevention, and intervention strategies. Project Safety Net promotes core assets fundamental to healthy young adult development.

City Initiatives

The City Council has identified community health as one of their priorities and in recent years, the City Council and the PTC have discussed integrating strategies to implement better health and well-being outcomes into the Comprehensive Plan. That work is partially reflected in the attached annotated document that references new Goal sections to prioritize those programs and strategies that promote such goals.

In 2012, Community Services Department staff, developed draft policies and programs to strengthen Policy C-17, regarding the provision of services for children and teens. They are listed on pages 11 and 12 of the annotated document (Attachment 1).

Review

As you review the current Comprehensive Plan policies and programs, the modifications recommended by the PTC, and other input from community members, please consider the following questions:

1. Are there policies or programs that should be added to the Comp Plan to bolster the City's commitment to child care services, senior services, or services for people with disabilities?
2. Community Services Department staff have recommended a range of new policies and programs (listed on pages 11 and 12 of Attachment 1) that focus on the physical and mental health of youth and teens. Do these policies and programs sufficiently capture the needs of young people? Are there others to add?
3. Given the recent increase in the size of the local homeless population, Community Services Department staff recommends strengthening Policy C-20. In response, PTC recommended a new program aimed at promoting regional coordination for the provision of temporary shelter, food, clothing, and transportation for those in need. Do you agree with the recommendations of CSD staff and the PTC? Do you have other ideas on how the Comp Plan should address services for the homeless?
4. Various outreach efforts conducted between 2009 to 2011 identified the need to promote healthy lifestyles and general wellness. What are your ideas for how the Comp Plan can do this?

GOAL C-4: Attractive, Well-Maintained Community Facilities that Serve Palo Alto Residents.

The policies and programs under this goal focus on Palo Alto's parks, community centers, libraries, and other civic buildings that are an important part of what makes the City such a desirable place to live.

Existing Parks and Recreational Facilities

The City of Palo Alto owns and operates 34 parks and preserves as well as a number of cultural and recreational facilities. In addition to these facilities, there are a variety of other facilities in Palo Alto that serve to reduce the demand for City owned and operated facilities. These include PAUSD owned land used for recreation, Stanford University open space and recreation lands, privately owned recreational facilities, land managed by conservation groups, and State and regional parks in the vicinity of Palo Alto.

City-owned and operated facilities include mini parks, neighborhood parks, open space preserves, and recreational facilities. Mini-parks range in size from ½ acre to 2 acres, and usually include play equipment or open space areas for active and passive recreation. Most of the other parks are larger “neighborhood” parks, providing a mix of active and passive recreational areas. There are also open space preserves that serve larger service areas and contain a more broad range of facilities, including picnic grounds, hiking and biking trails, wildlife watching and camping. The City of Palo Alto Recreation Services Division offers numerous programs, including youth and adult sports, teen and middle school activities, after school programs, a variety of classes for all ages and a wide range of special events. Recreation facilities include the Cubberley, Lucie Stern, and Mitchell Park Community Centers; the Children’s Theater and Community Theater; Rinconada Pool; Junior Museum and Zoo; Golf Course; Art Center; Baylands Interpretive Center; and Skateboard Park at Greer Park.

Opportunities and Challenges

Despite significant growth in residents and nonresidents who spend their days in Palo Alto, there has been little recent expansion of park inventory. There is also a rising demand for our facilities to meet the diverse needs of our growing population (e.g., playing fields, dog parks, restrooms, and equipment that is accessible for all ages and abilities). As a consequence, the City faces increasing costs and challenges to maintain the quality of facilities, increasing conflicts among user groups over how space should be used, and a loss of passive green space as attempts are made to accommodate multiple dedicated uses within limited space.

Following the standards set by the National Recreation and Parks Association, the current Comprehensive Plan lays out standards for parks within walking distance (½-mile) of neighborhoods and employment areas, and at least 3-4 acres of parks for each 1,000 people. Currently, neither of these standards is being met. Access to parks and recreational facilities is addressed below under Goal C-5. In total, the City owns and operates 4,150 acres of parks and preserves, and with approximately 64,000 residents, this translates to 64 acres per thousand residents. However, much of this parkland is far from the urbanized areas of the city. Calculating the ratio on the basis of the total acreage of mini-parks and neighborhood parks in the urban service area (167.2 acres), the ratio is approximately 2.6 acres per thousand residents, which is below the adopted standard. To meet the minimum acreage goal for our forecasted resident population in 2035, (84,000), Community Services staff calculates the City would have to increase the park inventory by 2.3 percent (or 4 acres) annually. In a September 2014 memo (Attachment 3), the Parks and Recreation Commission

staff emphasized that expansion of housing or commercial square footage must go hand in hand with creative and vigorous pursuit of ways to expand our park inventory, noting also that if denser use can make room for more buildings, it can also, or alternatively, make room for more parks.

Future Needs

Changes in the demographic make-up of the community mean changing needs too. From 2000 to 2010 we saw more than 20 percent growth in the population of senior residents and over 22 percent growth in school-aged children. These age groups are prominent users of recreational services. As their numbers grow, we must plan to accommodate their particular needs. Palo Alto is also becoming a more ethnically diverse community and programming at our cultural and recreational facilities will need to recognize and respond to this trend in order to satisfy the needs of tomorrow's residents.

New Parks and Facilities

In California, the 1975 Quimby Act gives cities and counties the authority to pass ordinances requiring that developers set aside land, donate conservation easements or pay fees for park improvements. Revenues generated through Quimby Act ordinances cannot be used for the operation and maintenance of park facilities, only for acquisition. Palo Alto has a Parkland Dedication ordinance, however, development impact fees for parks have grown more slowly than anticipated and funding remains a significant challenge. Since 2006, the City has collected, on average, only about \$600,000 per year, despite a projection of \$1.3 million annually based on ABAG forecasts of population and employment. As a result, the capital improvement project to renovate El Camino Park, alone, will consume 60 percent of the entire Park Development Fund balance.

Maintenance of Parks and Facilities

Maintenance funding is another significant challenge. In October 2010, Palo Alto City Council appointed a 17-member Infrastructure Blue Ribbon Committee (IBRIC) to look out 25 years and make recommendations on infrastructure needs, priorities, projects, and associated funding mechanisms to address the existing infrastructure backlog as well as future needs. According to the IBRC report, as of FY 2011-12, neighborhood park maintenance was underfunded by \$5.6 million (catch-up); when open space and golf are factored in, the number is closer to \$14 million. As our facilities continue to age, and with projected population growth of 27 percent between 2013 and 2035, the gap between needs and resources will continue to grow.

Review

As you review the current Comprehensive Plan policies and programs, the modifications recommended by the PTC, and other input from community members, please consider the following questions:

1. How should the City address the growing need for new parks and recreational facilities in proximity to residential and employment areas? What policies or programs could be included in the Comp Plan to incentivize and facilitate the creation of new parks and recreational facilities as needed to satisfy adopted standards?
2. What sort of strategies to fund maintenance and operational needs should be incorporated into the Comp Plan?
3. Given the changing demographic make-up of the community and the long-range nature of the Comp Plan, what modifications to policies and programs would you recommend in order to ensure Palo Alto's parks and recreational facilities are suited to the needs of current and future residents? (Note: Staff recommends that the Comprehensive Plan incorporate references to the Parks, Trains, and OS Master Plan that is currently being prepared and defer to that play any changes to the quantitative standards in Policy C-28.)
4. Are there opportunities to consolidate or combine policies and programs in this Element to better represent the issues and opportunities at hand?

GOAL C-5: Equal Access to Educational, Recreational, and Cultural Services for All Residents.

The policies and programs under this goal address the location of facilities, their design, and the availability to transportation to reach them.

Attachment 4 shows the location of parks and recreational facilities in Palo Alto and their associated service areas, using the standards as a proxy for walking distance from ½-mile of neighborhoods and employment areas. Attachment 4 indicates that some residents in several neighborhoods lack park land within the ½-mile radius. Additionally, recent growth in residential development in South Palo Alto and commercial development in Downtown Palo Alto creates additional burdens on parks in those areas. The number and proportion of seniors and youth in the community is forecast to grow over the next 15 to 20 years and, for these groups, even a ½-mile park service radius may be a long distance to cover. Further, as vehicle traffic increases, it becomes harder for them to get there safely.

Review

As you review the current Comprehensive Plan policies and programs, the modifications recommended by the PTC, and other input from community members, please consider the following questions:

1. A resident survey conducted in 2009 indicated that only 50 percent of residents visit their community centers during the year. What strategies do you suggest the City employ to make our community centers more accessible or appealing to different populations?
2. Are there real and or perceived barriers to the use of these community centers that the City should address, including barriers associated with transportation to facilities?
3. The attached map illustrating the location of parks suggests that there are several areas in the City that are underserved. How can this be addressed in a Comprehensive Plan policy?
4. Would similar maps for education and community/cultural facilities be useful to include?

ATTACHMENTS

1. Annotated Community Services and Facilities Element
2. Public Services Existing Conditions Report (August 2014)
3. Parks and Recreation Commission Memo to City Council (September 2014)
4. Parks, Trails, Open Space and Recreation Master Plan – Park Service Areas Map
5. Public Comments

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