

COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Parks Department



DATE: November 24, 2014

COMMISSION MEETING DATE: December 6, 2014

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Marlene Finley, Director

SUBJECT: Recommendation to Amend County Parks Department's Five-Year Strategic Plan

RECOMMENDATION:

Review and recommend to the Board of Supervisors to amend the County Parks' Five-Year Strategic Plan to include goals and strategies for Parks as a community resource for health-focused settings, use and activities.

BACKGROUND:

At the Parks and Recreation Commission's November 6, 2014 FY2015-17 Budget Priority Setting Workshop, the Commission recommended that the Department's Strategic Plan include goals and strategies that position County Parks as a community resource for health- focused programs and settings.

DISCUSSION:

The request by the Commission aligns with San Mateo County's Shared Vision 2025, which calls for a community that is healthy, livable, collaborative, environmentally conscious and prosperous.

Shared Vision 2025: In 2008, the Board of Supervisors approved San Mateo County's Shared Vision 2025. Within Shared Vision 2025 are five broad outcome statements that are to be used to guide policies, budgets and programs. The Department's strategic plan, goals and programs align with the Environmentally Conscious outcome statement: Our natural resources are preserved through environmental stewardship, reducing our carbon emissions and using energy, water and land more efficiently.

Shared Vision 2025 also includes a Healthy outcome statement: Our neighborhoods are safe and provide residents with access to quality health care and seamless services. Within the Department's Strategic Plan is Goal 22: Develop a community outreach program to promote community support and participation in parks and Strategy 22.3:

Partner with health providers and agencies to connect Parks to fitness and wellbeing. The Department has been engaged in several County led programs to implement Strategy 22.3, reflecting the interests of the Commission and connect to Vision 2025.

For example:

Active San Mateo County: Each year, the Department partners with Supervisor Carole Groom's office to assist with Active San Mateo County's Streets Alive, Parks Alive. The event is typically held in early May and occurs over an entire weekend throughout the County. Activities are designed to encourage residents to get out in parks and public spaces, to be active, healthy and have fun in local communities. San Mateo County Parks has hosted a day in a County park for the past three years.

Take A Hike: In 2009, former Supervisor Rose Jacobs Gibson established Take A Hike to encourage residents to see County Parks as resources to visit and appreciate the natural beauty while being physically active. The program has become popular and attendance has grown to an average of 70 participants at each hike. The program has expanded to eight guided hikes during the season, March through October. Hikes are led by rangers and volunteers and often include two hike routes to engage participants with varying levels of physical interests and abilities. Take A Hike sponsors have included Sequoia Health District and Kaiser Permanente. In the 2014 season, Dr. Eshwar Kapur, a Kaiser Permanente sports medicine physician, attended four hikes and discussed the importance of preparation before exercising, including stretching, hydration and attire.

Healthy Parks, Health People: Bay Area: In 2013 the Department was invited to join Healthy Parks, Healthy People: Bay Area (HPPH: Bay Area), a collaborative largely represented by public parks and open space agencies. Through regional efforts in outdoor programming, promotion, education, and policy development HPPH: Bay Area is dedicated to expanding the public's knowledge, awareness, use, enjoyment, and appreciation of how parks and recreation resources can contribute to improved health and the reduction of chronic diseases.

San Mateo County Parks participates in HPPH: Bay Area quarterly meetings to further develop this program, which includes identifying ways to work with and engage the health community.

In September, Director Finley met with San Mateo County Health System Chief Jean Fraser to discuss a partnership between the departments. In October, Director Finley and Community Programs Specialist Schoof met with the Director of Health Policy and Planning with San Mateo County's Health System to discuss the Take A Hike program and HPPH: Bay Area. Health is supportive of the partnership in delivering programs and places that promote health and wellness.

Proposed Strategic Plan Goals and Strategies

Revise **Community Engagement** goals to include the following:

Goal 22.1: Develop community outreach programs that will position parks as a resource for fitness and emotional wellbeing with the community and health providers. Include the following strategies that can support achieving this goal:

- Enhance communications to reference benefits of parks in connection to health and wellbeing.
- Explore feasibility of expanding Take A Hike program.
- Partner with health and community partners to establish a connection with public lands to promote health and wellbeing. (Strategy 22.3 revised to include community partners)
- Partner with health and the community to identify barriers that inhibit high health need populations from using parks as a resource for improving wellbeing.

Revise **Stewardship** Goal 5: *Provide additional opportunities for the public through acquisition and development of additional park lands and trails when funding is available for both acquisition and ongoing operation (existing goal)* by adding the following strategy in support of this goal:

- Seek opportunities to provide parks and trails within and near neighborhoods to promote fitness and wellbeing.