



**To: Peter Jensen and Elizabeth Ames, City of Palo Alto**

**From: Ryan Mottau and Ellie Fiore, MIG**

**CC: Daren Anderson, Greg Betts and Rob DeGeus**

**Re: Parks, Trails, Open Space and Recreation Master Plan Existing System Summary Memo**

**Date: December 22, 2014**

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Over the past year, MIG has collected and generated a foundation of data, analysis, community input, best practices, and opportunities from which to build a comprehensive Palo Alto Parks Plan, Trails and Open Space Master Plan (the Plan or PTOSR Plan). The following memo describes the process and outcomes of tasks 1 through 5 of the scope of work guiding the planning process: Refining the Work Plan, Policy and Standards Review, Inventory and Analysis, Demographic Analysis and Community Needs Assessment. The work done to established overall direction for the plan and will inform the development of recommendations.

This memo describes the approach and process and provides an overview of each of the work products delivered by the MIG Team for each task. The materials developed over the course of the past year have been provided to the City Staff Project Management team and Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) and PRC Ad Hoc committees, in addition to update memos, and periodic presentations. The materials are posted for public viewing on the project website: [www.paloaltoparksplan.org](http://www.paloaltoparksplan.org).

## **1. Refining the Work Plan**

The MIG team and City Project Staff Team kicked off the PTOSR Plan with a project initiation meeting in December 2013. We worked with staff to update the scope of work, public input plan and project timeline.

## **2. City Policy and Standards Review**

The planning process began with a review of City plans, policies and practices relevant to the Plan. The MIG team launched the policy and standards review with a facilitated interdepartmental Staff workshop, including representatives from several City departments. Staff discussed the role that parks, trails, open space and recreation services play in Palo Alto and identified past and current planning efforts relevant to the Plan. The MIG team submitted an information request and collected background materials. We assembled and reviewed all existing planning documents identified by the City to ensure compatibility with the final PTOSR

Plan recommendations. Using data provided by the City and other organizations, we assembled a base map, which revealed some gaps and inconsistencies in available GIS data. After compiling and reconciling the data, we created a base map that has been used throughout the planning process and can be utilized by the City moving forward.

### *Work Product: Planning Environment Summary*

The findings of this task were summarized in the Planning Environment Summary, which includes a review of guiding documents, related plans and programs and city policies and practices. The Summary surfaces facility and program gaps identified by past planning efforts for consideration in the PTOSR planning process. The Summary was delivered to the City in June 2014.

## **3. Existing System Inventory and Analysis**

Building on the Policy and Standards Review, we assessed the physical and programmatic state of Palo Alto's park system and provided a comprehensive inventory and analysis of the system. The MIG team began this phase with a tour of the park system led by the Community Services Department Staff. Several members of the maintenance and operations staff accompanied the tour or met the group at park sites to highlight key O&M issues. We also met with Palo Alto Unified Public School District representatives who provided insights about the District's publically accessible spaces and the District's relationship with the City.

The MIG team launched an interactive online map-based questionnaire that collected data from community members about park usage and travel patterns to parks. With this foundation of data about the physical system, we conducted a geographic and network analysis. In addition to our analysis of the physical system, we reviewed programs offered by the Community Services Department and private community providers to determine overlaps and gaps in local recreation offerings and uses. We also reviewed policies and practices to identify opportunities to enhance the Park system's sustainability.

In addition to the tour, the MIG team made more extended field visits to each park site to evaluate conditions and consider possible interventions and enhancements. The MIG team provided a sample set of five site conditions maps to the City in December to obtain feedback about the information presented. The full results of the field work are documented in the Physical Inventory and existing conditions site maps (which will be delivered to the City in January 2015).

Using the information gathered in tasks 2 and 3, MIG analyzed the mix and distribution of recreation opportunities, access parks and essential park elements, current practices, constraints on individual sites and the system and opportunities to expand the opportunities offered by the City of Palo Alto. This process generated several products, which are briefly summarized below.

### *Work Product: Program Review and Analysis*

MIG compiled an inventory table of programs offered by Palo Alto Community Services and private providers that was reviewed by the City Project Staff Team to ensure accuracy and completeness. The program inventory informed the Recreation Program Review and Analysis, which reviews the division of responsibility for recreation programs offered within the Community Services Department and by private and community providers. The Program Review and Analysis makes recommendations for high-level strategic directions and key findings about Palo Alto's programming areas, populations and facilities, and identifies gaps and overlaps. The Program Review and Analysis was delivered to the City on December 2, 2014.

### *Work Product: Physical Inventory*

The physical inventory includes an inventory table, detailed site analysis and a base map that has been reviewed and updated throughout the analysis. The inventory table quantifies the facilities at each of Palo Alto's parks and provides each park's acreage and quality rating, as defined by the City. The most recent version of the base map was delivered to the Staff Project Team on October 11, 2014.

### *Work Product: Online Interactive Map Survey Summary*

Using the web-based Mapita application, more than 487 community members were able to answer a series of questions and provide geo-tagged comments on specific parks and locations throughout the City. This survey provided an opportunity for all park users (residents, visitors, employees, etc.) to share their on-the-ground knowledge about strengths and challenges in the park system and the transportation network that provides access to parks and open spaces. The Survey Summary includes site maps with participants' comments on park quality, barriers to access, needs and opportunities for dozens of parks. Ideas and opportunities uncovered by the interactive map are informing recommendations for both specific park sites and the entire system. The survey data about park usage and travel patterns has been incorporated into our geographic analysis. The Interactive Map Survey Summary was delivered to the City on October 15, 2014.

The Mapita survey data is Geographic Information Systems (GIS)-based and fed directly into our geographic analysis. We produced maps that show survey participants' park closest to home, route densities, which parks are mostly heavily used by respondents, and barriers to reaching parks. We delivered these maps to the City on October 30, 2014.

### *Work Product: Geographic Analysis*

Building upon the base map, the MIG team analyzed the physical data gathered from our park tours and observations, meetings, research and the interactive map survey to produce maps of park service areas. This map illustrates park walksheds based on  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile distances using the existing street and trail network (5 and 10 minute walks at average walking speed). We also generated maps showing access to indoor recreation facilities, off-leash dog facilities, and distance from parks that provide **all** essential activities. These activities were determined based on the community's input that was gathered through intercept events and the online interactive mapping survey.

- Play for children
- Throw a ball
- Gathering
- Exercise and fitness
- Relax and enjoy the outdoors

Results were presented and provided to the City and PRC in late October 2014.

#### *Work Product: Sustainability Review*

The Sustainability Review builds on the physical and program inventory to identify opportunities to increase sustainable and resource-saving practices associated the operation and management of parks and open space within the City. Drawing on best practices from other cities and agencies, the site tour and inventory findings and Staff Project Team input, the Sustainability Review evaluates the City's current policies, programs and practices and identifies opportunities to increase sustainability across 13 indicators. We delivered this document to the City on December 2, 2014.

## **4. Demographics and Trends**

To augment the analysis of the system and guide recommendations, MIG researched local and national trends in park use and interpreted these trends for Palo Alto's spaces, facilities and programs. Trends include income inequality, aging baby boomers, and health, connecting kids with nature, the growing popularity of the outdoor lifestyle, technology, and universal design. We also researched local and regional population and demographic trends from the past several decades and projections for the coming decades.

#### *Work Product: Demographics and Trends Analysis*

Delivered to the City in September 2014, the Demographics and Trends Analysis includes Palo Alto's demographic profile, key findings, and trends that have and will continue to inform the community outreach and the PTOSR planning process. The analysis highlights the city's youth population and its residents with disabilities. It also acknowledges that less is known about Palo Alto's low income residents.

## **5. Gather and Assess Community Needs**

The MIG team has implemented ongoing, multi-faceted community outreach throughout the planning process to meet the goal of fostering an accessible and community-driven PTOSR planning process. Community outreach is integral to the process and helps to determine how Palo Alto parks, trails, open spaces and recreation facilities can better meet the needs of the community. We launched the outreach process last summer (2014) with the first of three Stakeholder Advisory Group Meetings on June 25.

Last summer MIG also conducted six intercept events, with support from the Staff Project Staff Team and Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) members. The intercept activities were conducted in parks and at markets. Through this method, the intercept team asked community members to indicate their responses to questions about what they value about the parks and recreation system using dot stickers placed on large posters. These intercepts captured input from a large number of people and include many people who may not otherwise be involved in the process due to schedule conflicts or an unwillingness to attend traditional community meetings.

A series of three community workshops provided residents with an opportunity to provide more specific input on design approaches and aspects of the system that they would like to preserved or improved. Most recently, an online community survey further drilled down into many of the issues that have emerged from previous outreach efforts and research and analysis. The online interactive map survey has also been an important community outreach tool and is summarized above as part of task 3.

#### *Work Product: Stakeholder Advisory Group Meeting Summary*

MIG convened the first of three Stakeholder Advisory Group Meetings. The MIG team provided facilitation and graphic recording of the meeting to ensure that all voices were heard. Twenty-four community members, representing a range of interests and organizations, were in attendance. Meeting participants identified issues, challenges and opportunities to be explored in the planning process.

#### *Work Product: Intercept Event Summary*

Intercept events at some of Palo Alto's most popular parks, farmer's markets and summer events engaged more than 200 community members who learned about the PTOSR Plan and provided input. Participants were also given the option to sign up for project updates through an e-mail list and directed to the website for more information and to stay engaged. The intercept questions asked participants which aspects of the parks system are most important to them, the reasons they choose recreation programs, and what they feel is most important to improve or add to the parks and recreation system. The summary provides the community's responses to the questions in table and pie chart format, for an at-a-glance of the community's perspective on their park system. The Summary also provides participants' anonymous demographic data.

#### *Work Product: Community Workshops Summary*

We facilitated a series of three community workshops, on October 28, 29 and December 2, 2014 that engaged a total of 60 community members. The Community Workshop Summary provides the results of the visual preference survey and key themes from the small group discussions and comment cards.

#### *Work Product: Online Survey Summary*

MIG worked with the City Staff Project Team to launch an online community survey at the end of November, 2014. The survey was based on earlier input from the community and the analysis of

the system. The objective of the survey was to better understand community priorities. The PRC and Staff Project Team reviewed the survey and it was available online from November 17 through December 19. It was also available in hard copy in Spanish and in English. The results are being analyzed and a report will be delivered to the City and PRC in January.

### *Work Product: City Council Update*

On November 17, we provided City Council with a review of work completed to date an overview of the current status of the project and a discussion of the next steps and project schedule. It is anticipated that this written update will be presented to Council in January 2015.

### **Developing the Plan Document**

The MIG team is working to finalize the remaining items in Tasks 1-5 of the PTOSR Planning process. This includes the analysis and Summary of the Community Survey in Task 5 and the Revenue Analysis under Task 3. These will be delivered to the City Project Team in January 2015.

The next phase of the planning process is focused on prioritization. Continuing to analyze the data and input collected in the first five project tasks, we will make recommendations and work with the City Project Team, PRC and the communities to establish priority policies and actions. In January, we will work with City staff to finalize the existing conditions maps and formulate preliminary recommendations and a project list. Dedicated prioritization meetings will be held with the stakeholder advisory group, PRC and broader community to inform the Draft Plan. In the spring, MIG will develop the elements of the administrative draft plan and the first draft of the document for internal review. A Public Draft Plan will be reviewed with several commissions and the City Council in study sessions as well as at a community workshop and revised in preparation for adoption in early summer.