To: Palo Alto City Council, Peter Jensen and Elizabeth Ames
Cc: Daren Anderson, Greg Betts and Rob deGeus
From: Ryan Mottau, Lauren Schmitt and Ellie Fiore, MIG
Re: Project Update for City Council
Date: January 20, 2015

Since the last Council presentation on the Parks, Trails, Open Space and Recreation Master Plan (PTOSR Plan) in March of this year, a great deal of work has been done to document and evaluate the City’s existing parks and recreation system and to collect community input. Preliminary analyses on gaps and opportunities are underway and will be augmented by public workshops and a community survey, leading to a robust understanding of needs, opportunities and community values that will form the foundation of the Plan.

This informational update provides 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.

Community Outreach

Guided by the Public Engagement Plan developed at the outset of this planning process, and with support of the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC), MIG successfully solicited input and ideas from over 650 community members in the summer of 2014, including in-depth map-based comments from over 475 individuals. A project website (www.paloaltoparksplan.org) has been developed and will serve as the project communication hub, including updates, document downloads and links to the online questionnaire.

Events and input opportunities were promoted in a variety of ways, including the City newsletter, website and social media accounts; e-Blasts to the community service mailing list, stakeholder advisory group, and community-based organizations; and with flyers and signs in parks. Intercept boards and in-park signage included a QR code that took users directly to the Mapita questionnaire. Community workshops were also promoted with newspaper ads and on public access television.
Stakeholder Advisory Group
A Stakeholder Advisory Group was convened in the summer of 2014. This group of approximately 30 community members represents a diverse range of interests and community groups in Palo Alto. The first of three meetings with this group was held in June to introduce the Plan; discuss issues, needs and opportunities; and identify community engagement opportunities. A summary of this meeting is available on the project website (www.paloaltoparksplan.org).

Intercept Events
A unique element of this project was the use of intercept events in which MIG staff and PRC members engaged visitors outdoors at parks, farmers markets and community events. PRC members were able to extend MIG’s reach of this effort and overall, six intercepts captured comments from over 200 people. A summary of the input received from the intercept events is available on the project website.

Online Interactive Map Tool
Using the web-based Mapita application, community members were able to answer a series of questions and provide geo-tagged comments on specific parks and locations throughout the City. Over 475 individuals provided park-specific feedback using this tool. Extensive comments on park quality, barriers to access, needs and opportunities for dozens of parks were collected. Comments on every City park were received using this interactive tool. An example of an output of this tool is included below.

In the last months of 2014, MIG will hold three community workshops and conduct a community survey (online and in hard copy) throughout the community to help focus on desired improvements and local priorities.
Analysis of the Community and the System

Working closely with City staff and the PRC, MIG developed several products that document the existing parks, trails, recreation and open space assets in Palo Alto as well as the policy and demographic environments in which the Plan is being developed. MIG participated in a site tour with City staff and met with maintenance and operations staff as well as representatives of the Palo Alto Unified School District. The early work on analysis of the system was focused on the inventory of parks and facilities, other City efforts, related planning and the demographic analysis of the community. The following work products were developed by MIG, reviewed by staff and the PRC and posted to the project website:

- GIS Base Map
- System Inventory
- Planning Environment Summary
- Demographic Analysis

More recent and ongoing work on analysis of the system includes evaluation of recreation program options; site evaluation of each park in the system; a revenue analysis; a high-level sustainability review of policies, practices and operations; and a geographic analysis to identify any gaps in the system. When these work products have been through the staff and PRC review process, they will be posted to the project website.

Geographic Analysis

One of the innovations that MIG brings to this process is moving beyond a traditional park planning methodology of applying population-based standards (typically expressed as a number of acres per 1,000 population) and instead using a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) model of how people actually travel to and from park sites.

The GIS model being used for Palo Alto provides a locally-specific analysis that uses the streets, sidewalks, trails and pathways to illustrate the geographic reach of each park, reflecting the way people move through the city. Model outputs show the desired travel distance (¼ or ½ mile) to park sites and particular recreation opportunities and show where service gaps appear. The image above shows an example of ¼ (red) and ½ (yellow) mile walking distances from parks in Palo Alto. This model is being refined using the public comments on barriers (such as busy streets and intersections), desired activities, and the paths people use to travel to and from parks.
This analysis will dovetail with the extensive input from park users in Palo Alto and the project team’s review of each park site to inform recommendations and priority improvements in the next phase of the project.

**Next Steps and Estimated Timeline**

Community Workshops: October 28, 29 and December 2, 2014
Community Survey: November – December 2014
Project List: January 2015
Prioritization Meetings: February – March 2015
Community Workshop: February or March 2015
Commission Meetings: February - March 2015*
Administrative Draft Plan: April 2015
Council Study Session: May 2015*
Revised Plan: June 2015
Plan Adoption: July 2015*

*Pending Council and Commission schedules