

A. Summary

1. Overview

The Parks and Recreation Element serves as a policy to guide these services and facilities during the planning period. The Element is not a guide to physical improvements on specific park sites, which is the reason for recommending an update to the existing Parks and Recreation Master Plan. In addition, the Plan recommends expanding cultural events in the City, programming additional events in the Downtown and on the Bayfront (with support from a full time events coordinator), activating unused or underused parkland and developing an athletics complex at the west side ballfield complex.

2. Funding Considerations

The Element recommends a number of improvements or service expansions, including updating the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. These additional facilities and services will require additional funding. Options that should be considered by the City include the following:

- A. Concurrently the City should consider creating a corporate sponsorship program that could subsidize the maintenance and upkeep of certain parks.
- B. The Subdivision Regulations should be amended to include a mandatory land dedication requirement for new subdivisions where appropriate.

3. Major Recommendations

The Parks and Recreation Element recommends the following major strategies.

- A. Preparing an update of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and integrating the plan into capital improvement planning process.
- B. Enhancing and improving existing events and farmer's market.
- C. Programming events in the Downtown/Bayfront.
- D. Activating unused or underused parks in line with master plan update and available funding.

B. Goal

Expand year round recreational activities and cultural events for all ages and backgrounds while maintaining the quality of existing parks and recreational facilities.

C. Objectives and Strategies

1. Update Parks and Recreation Master Plan

The City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan was prepared over two decades ago and while it has served well as a guide to physical facility investment, it is outdated and the City has changed in the intervening years. The master plan would serve as an implementation tool of the Comprehensive Plan, providing detailed recommendations for each current and future facility. Those recommendations would be integrated into the City's capital improvement planning process to ensure additional investments would be made.

The master plan update is necessary to providing specific recommendations at the park level, as opposed to general citywide recommendations as found in this Element. Each facility should be inventoried and assessed, citywide standards adopted and recommendations prepared to upgrade or

improve individual parks. In addition the plan should be updated to consider a bikeway system throughout the City as well as the need for a community recreation center.

Updating the plan should involve a citizens committee that can serve as a sounding board to review and comment upon various aspects of the plan as it develops. The committee should be comprised of citizens, businesses, Sandusky City Schools and the recreational community (athletic boosters, youth organizations, etc.). Several public forums should be held to provide progress reports as the plan develops and to gather public comment.

Strategies

A. Updating the Master Plan.

The City should initiate an update to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan by appointing a citizens committee to work with Staff and a consultant, to allocate funds for professional consulting services and to initiate the project by selecting a qualified planning firm. The update should involve significant public participation. Recommendations should be scheduled into the City's capital improvement planning process.

Policy Direction: City Commission and Recreation Commission
Implementation: City Manager, Community Development Director, and Recreation Director
Timeframe: Mid term

During the update of the Park and Recreation Master Plan the need for a community recreation center would be explored.

2. Continue to Expand Public Access to Bayfront

In particular access is important to Sandusky Bay, Big Island Wetlands and Lions Park. Targeted acquisition and purchase of access/viewshed easements should be programmed into the City's capital improvement process.

Strategies

A. Continuing to implement the Bayfront Corridor Plan.

The City should continue to implement the Bayfront Corridor Plan as appropriate. In particular access is important to Sandusky Bay, Big Island Wetlands and Lions Park. Targeted acquisition and purchase of access/viewshed easements should be programmed into the City's capital improvement process.

Policy Direction: City Commission
Implementation: Community Development Director and City Engineer
Timeframe: Ongoing

B. Encouraging private development to include public access elements through Zoning Code changes.

As part of a Zoning Code update, the City should consider encouraging public access along all properties that front Sandusky Bay. Such access could include providing an easement to the City for construction of a public dock or providing a public viewing point integrated into a development.

In some cases the City may wish to participate in a private project with the goal of obtaining public access more extensive than would otherwise result from code changes. These opportunities should be considered and approached when to the public's benefit. Public acquisition of key properties is another alternative, but one requiring significant funds.

Policy Direction: Planning Commission and City Commission
Implementation: Community Development Director
Timeframe: Ongoing

3. Expand Parks Programming and Cultural Events

The City should expand its major local cultural events by sponsoring an annual ethnic festival or arts festival. Both events, as well as other related activities, should occur in the Downtown and Bayfront areas. The purposes would be to bring Sanduskians together to celebrate their heritage and local culture, as well as to generate tourism in line with the Economic Development Element. Facilitating cultural and celebratory events in the City requires a staff person with the available time and access to resources to make such events successful. The City's public information officer currently provides these functions. The City Commission should consider expanding that office to provide additional staff support, especially if Strategy A is undertaken. The City will benefit tremendously by this investment, in terms of goodwill with residents and increased tourism.

Strategies

A. Developing cultural events, such as an annual ethnic festival or an annual arts festival.

Citizens have indicated a desire to expand the City's local festivals to include more variety and to reach a broader audience both within the City and through visitors. Sandusky currently hosts several outstanding festivals and celebrations, such as the Fourth of July. Additional events that could be included would be an annual ethnic festival focusing on the ethnic diversity found within the City. This could be organized with the assistance and support of local cultural and religious institutions.

An annual arts festival could also be held, centered on the City's landscaped downtown parks. The arts festival could be linked to a gardening theme in the late Spring, given the City's outstanding park landscaping. This could provide a further linkage throughout the Downtown and Bayfront as continued improvements take place.

Policy Direction: City Commission
Implementation: Recreation Director and Events Coordinator
Timeframe: Short Term

B. Increase the number of events in the Downtown and Bayfront.

The City should program additional events in the Downtown and Bayfront. Coordination with the Chamber of Commerce and the Visitors and Convention Bureau. The City should consider options for coordinating event programming, such as contracting with an existing non-City organization or contracting with a third party private sector organization. The City would work with community organizations that currently support festivals and celebrations to assist in coordination and support, and would build a network to support additional events.

Policy Direction: City Commission
Implementation: Events Coordinator, Downtown Development Manager, Sandusky Main Street Association
Timeframe: On-going

4. Maintain and Expand Recreation Facilities

As an update to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is completed, the City should begin to implement its recommendations by focusing on unused or underused parks. These existing facilities should be the starting point of enhancing the City's outstanding park system. Where feasible, unused and underused parks should be made accessible for public use. Additionally, several new facilities have been identified by the public as part of the Community Forums leading to the

Comprehensive Plan. The facilities, which are summarized as strategies, should be evaluated in light of an updated master plan.

Strategies

A. Identify unused or underused parks and create reuse strategies.

As an update to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is completed, the City should begin to implement its recommendations by focusing on unused or underused parks. These existing facilities should be the starting point of enhancing the City's park system

Implementation: Recreation Director
Timeframe: Short Term

B. Identify underserved areas and develop parks as needed.

Implementation: Recreation Director
Timeframe: On-going

C. Improving public access at Lions Park.

As part of the parks master plan update process, the feasibility of improving public access at Lions Park should be evaluated. The Port Development Plan identified developing a gravel beach as a near term project. Additional evaluation was necessary to determine the actual size, along with site engineering and water quality testing. In addition, a fishing pier could be an appropriate enhancement. If feasible, implementation could occur in the mid term provided sufficient funds are available.

Implementation: Recreation Director and City Engineer
Timeframe: Mid Term

D. Developing a public marina and transient dockage in the Downtown.

The public has clearly stated that additional transient dockage open to the general public is needed in the Downtown, which has also been recognized by the City. Appropriate sites for such facilities should be identified per the Port Development and Bayfront Corridor plans, and efforts made by the City to either acquire such sites and develop them as dockage facilities, or locate a private sector partner to jointly develop such facilities.

If a project is undertaken, it should include open space features for the general public that protect views of the Bay and are well integrated into other activities downtown. Tourism that could be developed by transient dockage is important to ensuring that visitors use local retail businesses and restaurants. Off-street parking should also be located nearby to maximize use of transient dockage.

Policy Direction: City Commission
Implementation: City Manager, City Engineer and Community Development Director
Timeframe: Mid Term