



**CITY OF LOS ALTOS
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
August 25, 2015**

DISCUSSION ITEM

Agenda Item # 20

SUBJECT: Receive a report from the Parks and Recreation Commission on parkland acquisition criteria and accept the criteria point system as part of the evaluation process for acquiring land for park development

BACKGROUND

On May 8, 2012, the City Council adopted the Los Altos Parks Plan. In the Parks Plan, the highest priority goal is to increase the amount of total parkland. In 2014, the Parks and Recreation Commission was charged by Council to create criteria for acquiring land in Los Altos that would be used as parkland. A Parks and Recreation Commission subcommittee was created to address this matter and to make recommendations to the Commission and City Council.

EXISTING POLICY

None

PREVIOUS COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

None

DISCUSSION

In an effort to address the low ratio of park acreage in Los Altos (1.57 acres per 1,000 residents), a Parks and Recreation Commission subcommittee developed a report that suggests utilization of a system of assigning numerical value to important criteria when evaluating land acquisition for the purpose of park development. A numerical value is assigned to the important characteristics of the land being evaluated and a numerical ranking is created for that plot of land.

Although there are many factors to consider when evaluating land acquisition for park development, the Parkland Acquisition Criteria subcommittee focused on just a few important factors. These factors are:

Location

In creating the criteria, the subcommittee took into consideration that there are no parks in Los Altos north of Village Park. This area would be the most desirable part of the City to develop a park. Although all opportunities to acquire parkland should be taken into consideration, acquisition of parkland in the North Los Altos area is assigned a higher numerical value according to the criteria.

Size

The Parks Plan shows Los Altos as having the lowest parkland acreage per 1,000 residents when compared to similar cities in the region. In an effort to increase that average, the acquisition criteria places a higher value on larger areas for park development. Although larger plots of land are most desirable for park development and understanding the limited availability of land in Los Altos, it is recommended that properties smaller than .75 acres are still considered for park development.

Use

A park having the flexibility to be used in different ways is very valuable since it would serve a larger portion of the community. The three components within this factor are passive, medium and active (i.e., sports fields). The more usage flexibility a plot of land has, the greater the numeric value.

The point system being recommended by the Parks and Recreation Commission simplifies the evaluation of land in Los Altos that could be potentially developed as parkland. The higher overall number that is assigned to the land would be considered more valuable for parkland development.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Posting of the meeting agenda serves as notice to the general public.

FISCAL/RESOURCE IMPACT

None

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Not applicable

RECOMMENDATION

Receive a report from the Parks and Recreation Commission on parkland acquisition criteria and accept the criteria point system as part of the evaluation process of acquiring land for park development

ALTERNATIVES

1. Provide revisions for consideration by the Parks and Recreation Commission

Prepared by: Manuel A. Hernandez, Recreation & Community Services Director

ATTACHMENT:

1. Parks and Recreation Commission Parkland Acquisition Criteria Report

Receive a report from the Parks and Recreation Commission on parkland acquisition criteria and accept the criteria point system as part of the evaluation process for acquiring land for park development

To: PARC

Sub: Parkland Acquisition Criteria

Date: March 11, 2015

From: Parkland Acquisition Criteria Subcommittee

Larry Baron

Bill James

Pradeep Parmar

Overview

The Los Altos Parks Plan was adopted by City Council in March 2012. The number one long-term goal is to provide a park in north Los Altos. Additionally, a citywide goal is to look for opportunities to expand existing parks, listed in Appendix 1, where feasible. At the suggestion of City Council at the City Council/PARC Joint Meeting in 2014, PARC was asked to address Parkland Acquisition Criteria. This memo contains criteria and recommendations.

Discussion

There are several factors to consider when evaluating a piece of land for the creation of a park, such as location, size, use, neighborhood impact, traffic considerations and more. See Appendix 2 for additional considerations.

However, the sub-committee considers the most important criteria to consider are location, size, and use, each of which is discussed more fully below.

The sub-committee also came up with a numerical scoring scheme based on these three criteria. The scheme and a recommendation as to how it should be used to evaluate land acquisition opportunities are described in the final section below.

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Location:

As can be seen by the map in Figure 1, there are no Parks north of Village Park downtown. Therefore, North Los Altos is a priority but all opportunities to acquire parkland or open space should be considered.

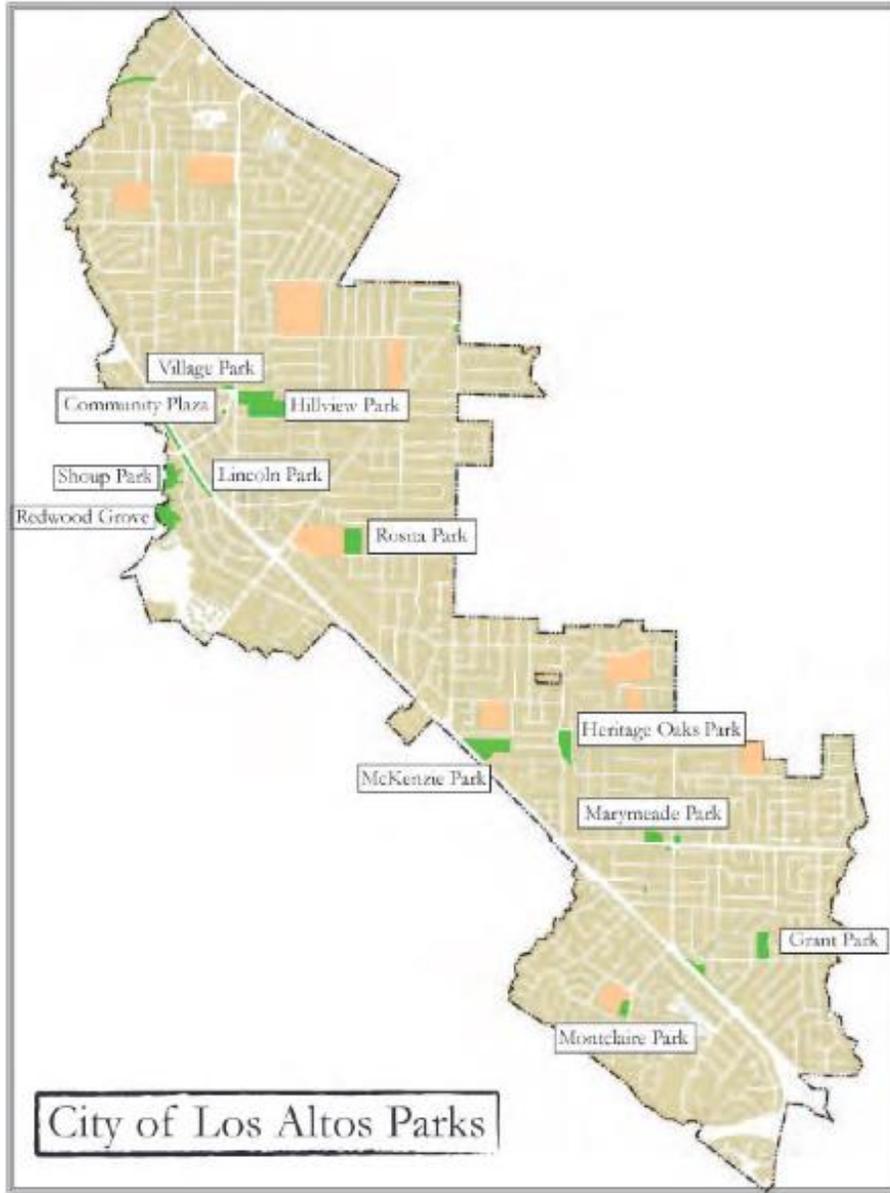


Figure 1

Size:

The Parks Plan shows that Los Altos park acreage is the lowest when compared to neighboring cities. See Appendix 3. Even small patches of land can be useful for alleviating this parkland deficit.

Any available land .75 acre or above should be considered for acquisition as open space or as a park. Any land below .75 acre should still be considered as an open space addition to the City.

Use:

A park that is more useful to more residents should logically be weighted higher.

Evaluation Numerical Criteria:

Table 1 shows the point scoring system to evaluate new parkland acquisition.

Los Altos Parkland Acquisition Criteria Matrix		
Criteria	North Los Altos (points)	Other Los Altos (points)
Location	4	1
Size		
.75 - 2 acres	1	1
2 - 4 acres	2	2
4 - 6+ acres	4	4
Use		
Passive	1	1
Medium Use	2	2
High Use with fields for team sports	4	4
Total Points (higher is better)		

Table 1

The sub-committee recommends that parcels that score at total of 3, 4, or 5 points should be considered as opportunities to add or preserve open space, and that parcels that score 6 points or above should be pursued as opportunities to develop as a park. The scoring may be useful in situations in which a choice has to be made among competing opportunities that happen to become available at the same time.

Appendix 1: Existing Los Altos Parks (by size)

Park	Acres
Community Plaza	0.16
Hetch Hetchy Trail	0.17
647 N. San Antonio Rd	0.50
Village Park	0.78
Montclair Park	1.10
Marymeade Park	2.47
Shoup Park	3.95
McKenzie Park	4.30
Lincoln Park	4.44
Grant Park	4.50
Rosita Park	5.00
Heritage Oaks Park	5.33
Redwood Grove	6.12
Hillview Park	6.63
Total	45.45

Appendix 2: Criteria for parkland acquisition

- Location – North Los Altos is a priority but all opportunities to acquire parkland or open space should be considered
- Programming:
 - Does acquisition allow programming of team sports (softball, soccer, basketball) or tennis?
- Impact on neighborhood
- Is land reasonably attainable pricewise?
- Site condition
 - Flatness
 - Sewer available?
 - Potable water available?
 - Landscape water available?
 - Electrical power available?
 - Soil condition
 - Drainage
 - Existing vegetation
 - Structures present
- Accessibility
 - ADA
 - On site parking
 - Pedestrian access
- Cost of improvements
- Cost of annual maintenance
- Existing zoning
- Any adverse environmental conditions present (e.g. air pollution, noise)
- Any relationship or connection to other community services, location, trails or schools

Appendix 3: Park Acreage Comparison, Excerpted from Los Altos Parks Plan, May 8, 2012, Page 4

PARK ACREAGE COMPARISON

Compared to similar, regional cities, Los Altos has a low park acreage ratio. Per 1,000 residents, Los Altos has approximately 1.57 acres of dedicated parkland.

	Population¹	Developed Parks Acreage	Park Acreage per 1,000 Residents
San Carlos	28,406	143	5.03
Campbell ²	39,349	132	3.35
Burlingame	28,806	94	3.26
Cupertino ²	58,302	162	2.78
Mountain View ²	74,066	187	2.52
Palo Alto	64,403	162	2.52
Saratoga	29,926	63	2.11
Menlo Park	32,026	54	1.69
Los Altos	28,976	45.45	1.57

¹ Based on 2010 Census

² Includes school sites under joint-use agreements