



Agenda Report

Parks and Community Services Commission

File #: 25-562

Meeting Date: 10/30/2025

TITLE: DRAFT FAIRVIEW PARK MASTER PLAN UPDATE:
DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL OF RECOMMENDATIONS

DEPARTMENT: PARKS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

PRESENTED BY: BRIAN GRUNER, PARKS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

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RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Parks and Community Services Commission:

1. Review and discuss attachment 1 – *Draft Fairview Park Master Plan Update* prepared by consultant Moore, Iacofano, Goltsman, Inc. (MIG) and;
2. Develop and adopt Parks and Community Services Commission recommendations, based on the Fairview Park Steering Committee's recommendations, for forwarding to the City Council. (Attachment 2).

BACKGROUND:

Fairview Park is the City's largest park, spanning 208 acres of open space. The park forms an integral component of the 1,000 acre lower Santa Ana River ecological corridor. Within Fairview Park, there are Nationally Registered Cultural Resource Historic Sites and five different habitat ecosystems which are home to a wide array of sensitive, rare and endangered plant and animal species. The City also manages various partnerships with non-profit organizations that conduct programming and activities in Fairview Park.

Several key factors establish Fairview Park as a cultural, ecological and recreational resource of regional significance:

- Cultural and historical significance: The park contains nationally registered cultural resource historic sites, and is a sacred site to the tribal community.
- Habitat diversity: Fairview Park encompasses several distinct habitat types, including wetlands, riparian areas, coastal sage scrub, coastal bluff scrub, and flower fields. These habitats support a wide array of plant and animal species, many of which are designated as endangered, rare, or special-status wildlife.

- Vernal pools: The park is home to rare vernal pools, which are ephemeral wetlands that provide critical habitat for a variety of unique and specialized organisms, including the San Diego fairy shrimp and Riverside fairy shrimp, both listed as endangered by the federal government.
- Wildlife corridor: Fairview Park serves as a crucial wildlife corridor, connecting the Santa Ana River system of trails and parks to other open spaces in the region, such as Talbert Regional Park.
- Wildlife refuge and human ecology: Fairview Park provides a valuable refuge for wildlife within the urban landscape of coastal Orange County, offering a unique space for people to connect with nature.
- Recreational trails, active transportation connectivity, and unique recreational activities: Fairview Park offers approximately seven (7) miles of trails, providing passive recreational opportunities such as walking, running, bicycling, wildlife observation, environmental interpretation and connectivity to the Santa Ana River bikeway system. The park also hosts unique activities including the narrow gauge railroad and model glider flying for hobbyists.

Original and Revised Master Plan Timeline

- 1996 to 1998: The City of Costa Mesa prepared and adopted the Fairview Park Master Plan (“Master Plan”) to provide a framework for existing and future park improvements, public uses, interpretive elements, and restoration opportunities.
- 2000 and 2002: City Council subsequently adopted revisions to the Master Plan to address specific changes in park features, and in 2008 to account for an updated biological survey of the park.
- 2016: Costa Mesa voters adopted the citizen-initiated Ballot Measure AA, which became codified in the Costa Mesa Municipal Code. Measure AA requires that further development and significant permanent constructed improvements in Fairview Park must be approved by the Costa Mesa electorate prior to being constructed, with certain exceptions for purposes of restoration, public safety, preservation, and maintenance.
- 2017: the City Council established the Fairview Park Steering Committee, which is tasked with providing advice and recommendations to the City Council on the implementation of the Fairview Park Master Plan and on Measure AA.
- 2019 to 2020: City Council allocated funding for the Fairview Park Master Plan from the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Budget.
- 2023: In January the City Council awarded the Professional Services Agreement to MIG for the Fairview Park Master Plan Update.

ANALYSIS:

Project Funding and Purpose

The primary objectives the Fairview Park Master Plan are:

- Incorporate mitigation commitments and new conservation obligations associated with restored areas and conservation easements. (e.g. wetlands and riparian habitat restoration projects,

Headlands coastal sage scrub mitigation, vernal pools restoration)

- Reflect Measure AA and its stated intent in preserving Fairview Park as a passive use park and protecting Fairview Park's unique natural heritage for future generations.
- Account for completed improvements, trails, and recreational access features (e.g. North Bluff stairs, Placentia Ave. bridge, Vernal Pool 1 boardwalk).
- Define resource protection measures based on regulatory requirements.
- Account for documented species and resources present within the site, and produce current biological and cultural resource assessments for the site which align the City's land management activities with current regulatory requirements.
- Carry out tribal consultation in accordance with new State requirements (AB 52/SB 18), which requires lead agencies to consult with California Native American tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated with a geographic area of a proposed project.
- Utilize contemporary technology and asset mapping tools to support informed, resource-efficient operations and park management.
- Conduct community outreach and engage the local community in planning the future enhancement and improvement of the park.

Project Activities and Highlights

Since March 2023, the consultant team has gone through an intensive process of analyzing a large amount of information about Fairview Park, while evaluating conditions of the site and engaging with the site's diverse stakeholders through the community outreach process.

The key activities completed by the consultant team are:

- Review of historical biological reports, surveys, and other technical reports from the site.
- Conducted botanical investigations to develop a comprehensive list of plant species in the park.
- Review of relevant codes, regulations, and legal information pertaining to the site's biological resources, environmental resources and cultural resources.
- Conducted public outreach sessions including a combination of community workshops, informational sessions, and presentations to the Parks and Community Services Commission, Fairview Park Steering Committee, and the City Council.
- Consultation with representatives of the Tribal Advisory Group both in-person at the site and in virtual format.
- Conducted a series of site reviews at various times, seasons, and periods of the day and week to examine use patterns by park visitors throughout the 208-acre site.
- Evaluated recreational features, public use patterns, furnishings, amenities, and other features.
- Confirmed the presence of over twenty rare and endangered species including Western burrowing owl, Coastal California gnatcatcher, Least Bell's vireo, Crotch's bumble bee, San Diego Button Celery, Southern tarplant, and several others.
- Prepared and completed three technical reports addressing biological resources, vegetation community mapping and restoration opportunities, and cultural/historical resources assessment:

- Biological Resources technical report, prepared by Hamilton Biological, 2025.
- Vegetation Map and Habitat Restoration Opportunities Report, prepared by Land IQ, 2024.
- Cultural Resources technical report, prepared by Cogstone, 2024.

Findings and Recommendations

The project team synthesized the information gathered during these activities to develop a framework for identifying key findings and recommendations for the Fairview Park Master Plan Update. The consultant team relied on the following criteria in the development of the recommendations for the Master Plan Update:

- Community need and public benefit
- Scientific integrity
- Feasibility
- Sustainability (economic and environmental)
- Legal and regulatory implications
- Consistency with the stated objectives of the Master Plan Update

In July and October 2024, the consultant team presented the Master Plan Update findings and recommendations to the Fairview Park Steering Committee. During the meetings, the Committee discussed, revised and approved the recommendations.

Council Study Session

On January 28, 2025, staff presented to the City Council a Master Plan overview that included a community outreach summary, current ecological conditions, summary of historical documentation and completed restoration, and highlights of technical investigations and field surveys.

Release of Draft Fairview Park Master Plan and Remaining Steps

On October 3rd 2025, the City released the Draft Fairview Park Master Plan Update for public review. The City is currently accepting comments and feedback on the Draft Master Plan during the 30-day public review period.

Parks and Community Services Commission Recommendations

A vital function of the Parks and Community Services Commission is to advise and make recommendations to City Council on matters pertinent to public parks, recreation programs, facilities, improvements, and related activities. In addition, the Commission's role is to advise the City Council on Parks and Community Services planning efforts as well as park projects. Therefore, staff is seeking the Commission's feedback on the Draft Fairview Park Master Plan Update.

FISCAL REVIEW

There is no fiscal review at this time, as the Fairview Park Master Plan Update does not commit City funds towards specific projects at this time.

LEGAL REVIEW

There is no legal review required for this item as the Commission's recommendations will be advisory in nature.

CONCLUSION:

The Draft Fairview Park Master Plan Update represents several years of research to develop a blueprint for future enhancement and improvements of Fairview Park. The Master Plan utilized contemporary technology, current data, and asset management tools to support informed and sustainable management practices of the park. In addition, the outreach process offered an educational opportunity for the community to provide input while learning about the unique features history, and the site's ecological role within the region and beyond.

Once adopted, the City will be in a strong position to implement the various elements of the Master Plan and enhance the visitor experiences at Fairview Park. The Master Plan will also serve as an important tool to acquire non-city funds to improve and enhance the park, including projects that have been conceptually identified in the original 1998 Master Plan but have not been implemented due to funding and outdated environmental documentation.

In conclusion, staff recommends the Parks and Community Services Commission:

1. Review and discuss attachment 1 – *Draft Fairview Park Master Plan Update* prepared by consultant Moore, Iacofano, Goltsman, Inc. (MIG) and;
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