

Parks and Community Services (PACS)

Guiding Values

How does a governmental body make informed decisions about funding parks projects for their community? By ensuring that they evaluate potential projects in line with values that help promote community wellness throughout Costa Mesa. The Commission has identified five key values to be considered when evaluating and prioritizing park projects. The first two values are foundational values as they stretch across all park projects, and should be understood as a keystone to other values.

1. Community-centered planning and engagement
2. Equity and access
3. Sustainability
4. Safety and maintenance
5. Creativity and innovation

Foundational: Community-centered planning and engagement

Park projects that center and engage community voices create greater investment in and preservation of local spaces, result in less waste, and demonstrate that Costa Mesa government values the voices of its citizens.

Attention to: Strong communications that include ample time for outreach and thoughtful internal analysis; a multi-modal communications strategy (including opt-in text message threads alongside online and in person activities) that thinks outside the traditional closed loop of social media followers; following through on communications throughout the life cycle of a project | Proceed slow and steady – privilege processes that involve voices early, over time, and on topics that genuinely benefit from engagement. Avoid “feel good” processes that don’t knowingly lead to impactful public inclusion | Engage different demographics across the City where they are, and in the ways that they need | Attentive to language diversity at every point of contact | Utilize cross-Commission collaboration around shared project interests.

Local example of excellence: Shalimar Park.

Foundational: Equity and Access

Public parks are for everyone. Always. Decisions made for one park should be considered as part of a holistic park strategy that recognizes different needs, equitably.

Attention to: Parks that represent and reflect neighborhood needs and personality | Park project decisions based upon the Park Needs Assessment, with attention to areas with longstanding unmet needs and citywide inequities | Equipment that supports differently abled as a necessary element in park (re)designs | Signage that reflects the evolving linguistic diversity of Costa Mesa | Responds to and predicts needs around the impact of high-density housing | Recognizes the varied needs according to different economic considerations, including renters, seniors, and lower-income citizens | Supports the range of ages from birth to our most senior of citizens, with attention to particular populations, like teens, that may not always be as visible.

Sustainability

Promote and ensure the long-term environmental health for generations of Costa Mesans (people, pets, wildlife, and plants) and the land we live on as part of a climate resilience strategy that stretches across all areas of City government.

Attention to: Utilizing green technology (like solar and stormwater) as we maintain and rebuild park infrastructure | Promote education and new work processes around sustainability that utilizes local expertise like environmental organizations, and that speaks to varied community interests | Transition to using solely native and/or drought-resistant plants. Though grass may be utilized in some parks, move away from an overreliance on grass. | Increase and support indigenous wildlife (through bat boxes and butterfly gardens, for example) | Staying up to date with research regarding which trees will be able to withstand our changing climate conditions.

Safety and Maintenance

Supporting the safety and maintenance of park infrastructure requires consistent investment.

Attention to: Improving safety features like lighting and signage | Consider long-term maintenance needs and issues of durability | Incorporate appropriate landscape design and plant choices | Promoting healthy tree growth early, and consistently, to protect public safety | Address immediate safety concerns | Develop an inspection regime to help assure the safety of all park equipment | Utilize Park Ranger knowledge to mitigate hazardous activities.

Creativity and Innovation

Strive to be a leader in community parks by pushing at the boundaries of what's possible, utilizing innovative technologies as well as time-tested knowledge and traditions.

Attention to: Continue developing Costa Mesa's uniqueness through its parks, and embrace the city's motto at a scale that speaks to the variety of creative hubs in the city | Utilize nature's strengths to minimize additional/unnecessary work | Prioritize grant opportunities that fund art projects for local artists and residents to increase park ownership and pride | Recognizing that innovation often comes from collaboration, develop processes for parks that necessitate cross-Commission collaboration and learning from others | Ensure that preservation and innovation work in tandem | Consider botanical parks, and their educative functions, as a model for what can be achieved in a park space that has layers of history and experiences | Set and maintain limits for privacy-invading technologies (such as drones in parks).