



CITY OF VENICE

401 W. Venice Avenue Venice, FL. 34285-2006

Phone: (941) 486-2626 Fax: (941) 480-3031

Development Services Department

Memorandum

TO: Planning Commission Members

FROM: Jeff Shrum, AICP, Development Services Director

SUBJECT: Summary - Planning Commission and Staff Review of Draft Parks Master Plan

DATE: August 10, 2016

On August 2, 2016 as part of a comprehensive plan update workshop meeting the Planning Commission reviewed the draft Parks Master Plan (PMP). This memo provides a staff summary of the Planning Commission discussion as well as comments from staff. This memo is provided to help facilitate development of final recommendations to City Council regarding the content and specific development proposals within the Plan. It is important to emphasize that the majority of the comments are focused on where the PMP data and analysis, findings, and recommendations have a relationship to the ongoing update to the comprehensive plan.

Planning Commission Comments (staff summary):

1. Acreage / LOS – The Planning Commission decided to retain the existing comprehensive plan level of service standard of seven acres of parkland per 1,000 population. The Planning Commission did not agree with the PMP recommendation to limit the level of service standard to “developable parkland”. In reaching its decision on this matter the Planning Commission noted the difficulty in differentiating developable and non-developable parkland, and felt that “non-developable” parkland like the beaches should be accounted for as parks for the purpose of calculating level of service.
2. Private Recreational Facilities – The PMP did not analyze or provide any data and analysis for private recreational facilities in residential communities or acknowledge these facilities for addressing park/recreational needs for citizens residing in these communities. The Planning Commission consensus on this issue was a concern that the PMP ignores this significant contribution provided by private developments for the purpose of a city wide parks master plan. Ignoring this contribution could result in erroneous conclusions and recommendations from the Plan.
3. Use of Subareas for Parks Planning (general discussion no consensus) - The Planning Commission discussed the option of subareas as proposed in the PMP for the purpose of parks planning. This technique could establish areas that differ with regard to geography (e.g. east and west of I-75), land use (e.g. density), amount and type of existing recreational facilities, presence of private recreational facilities, etc. The Planning Commission felt that the number of subareas should be limited to two or at most three in order to not be overly complicated.

4. Maintenance with emphasis of Quality instead of Quantity – Related to the Planning Commission discussion on level of service, the Planning Commission felt strongly that the plan should focus on maintenance and enhancement of existing facilities with much less emphasis on needing additional acreage for parks. In doing so, the Planning Commission recognized that new sources of funding that were not specifically identified in the plan would need to be identified. During this discussion the current interlocal agreement with Sarasota County was discussed and the Planning Commission felt the agreement should be revisited to address maintenance shortfalls in City parks maintained by the County.
5. One-Quarter Mile Policy – The Planning Commission discussion on this issue resulted in a consensus to remove the distance element for the purpose of a level of service standard. In coming to this consensus there was discussion about access and transportation to facilities being more readily available diminishing the need for the distance element.
6. Natural Areas and Habitat (discussion no consensus) - The Planning Commission had a brief discussion about the appropriateness of discussing wildlife corridors and habitat in a parks master plan. No consensus was reached on the topic.

Staff Comments:

General Comment - The question asked of staff at our last meeting: which document drives the other or which is subordinate to the other? The comprehensive plan is the City's long range vision for the City including analysis of future populations and needs based upon future population and established level of service standards. Specific topic master plans such as airport, parks and recreation, and water supply plans provide much more detail for how the City should address those specific topics than is typically found in the comprehensive plan. In this regard, the comprehensive plan provides the statutory framework and general guidance for the entire City on all topics. Master plans dealing with comprehensive plan topics should be consistent and are often incorporated by reference into the comprehensive plan. For this reason, the timing and direction of further detailed plans should typically be derived from the findings/policies from the comprehensive plan. While the timing issue is not absolute in this regard, it does create a situation of potentially having to update and revise the PMP upon completion of the comprehensive plan update to maintain consistency.

1. Maps/Data – As the Planning and Zoning staff have not been involved in the development of the PMP, all maps and data and analysis (digital Arc/View format where appropriate including meta data) is requested to be submitted to Planning staff for inclusion or use in the ongoing comprehensive plan update.
2. Demographic Data - Section 1.2 of the draft PMP (pages 10-20) presents demographic data. Data in the PMP needs to be consistent with data in the comprehensive plan update. This is particularly important for use of population projection data.
3. One-Quarter Mile Policy – The PMP discusses a level of service standard of ¼ mile in the current comprehensive plan. While the Plan does reference several policies related to parks being within ¼ mile from residential uses, a clear level of service standard for distance is not identified. Regardless of its status in the existing comprehensive plan, the Planning Commission decided and staff concurs that this standard is not required and the direction indicated by the Planning Commission is to move toward recommending removal of the standard from the comprehensive plan.

6. Other Topics: The PMP focuses on several topics that while they may be related to parks, deviate from the primary purpose of a parks master plan. Identification of other issues from public input is fine in the context that those issues should be addressed via other plans, regulations, or by other city action. The PMP appears to spend more effort on these issues detracting from the primary purpose of the plan. Noted sections/topics of this nature in the PMP include:
 - a. Architectural Design Standards - Other than for consistency for benches, equipment, or signage, the PMP should not include any discussion of architectural standards. The PMP should focus on the topic intended which is parks and not get bogged down in other topics that are covered by other plans/regulations. Particularly when these topics are already covered by the comprehensive plan and land development regulations. Page 70 of the report is an example of getting outside of what the scope of a parks master plan should be.
 - b. Trails and Bikeways – The topic of trails and bikeways blurs the line between being a park issue or a transportation issue. Certainly internal to parks, the topic is relative and for connectivity it has merit for general discussion. The PMP would be more productive and useful if more discussion/detail was provided on enhancement/development of internal trails and bikeways of existing facilities providing general input for the comprehensive plan to deal with connectivity and mobility issues city wide.
 - c. Natural Areas and Habitat - This issue is directly related to the comprehensive plan and there has already been much input and discussion for this topic. This topic blurs the line between is it a park or is it a conservation area which is a significant discussion ongoing in the development of the comprehensive plan update. Comments in the PMP on this topic would be premature at this point.
7. Page 13 of the PMP should remove the discussion of ethnicity and race as this discussion is inappropriate. A more appropriate approach to determining the type of facility needs would be to rely on public input to determine the specific needs for types of facilities. It is understood this may be an industry standard approach but one could easily interpret the information to be insensitive.
8. Page 99 of the report provides a table detailing the ‘Order of Magnitude’ which lists tasks and projects with a nominal (low, medium and high) cost range. The value of this master plan would be greatly enhanced if there was at least some minimal indication of priority to the projects/task. Further, for consistency and to ensure access to funding opportunities, capacity related projects should be prioritized and indicated for inclusion into the comprehensive plan Capital Improvement Schedule (CIS).