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City Managers Office

Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Julie Edmonds-Mares

SUBJECT: GROUP PICNIC SITES
FOR RESERVATION

DATE: November 19, 2012

Approved

Date

11/20/12

INFORMATION

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update on a project initiated by the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS) to develop group picnic sites at neighborhood parks that can be reserved by the public. The project was envisioned to allow park users to have convenient access to these picnic sites through an organized reservation system.

BACKGROUND

PRNS's vision is to be the National Leader of Parks and Recreation in cultivating healthy communities through quality programs and dynamic public spaces. As a strategy to build healthy communities, PRNS manages programs and facilities that together increase community livability. In addition to community centers and trails, PRNS develops and operates parks that range in size from a half acre to hundreds of acres. There are neighborhood parks and regional parks. Residents can enjoy everything from a leisurely stroll through the park enjoying the outdoors to participating in more physical activities such as tennis, basketball or soccer. The City currently has over 200 parks.

One of the most popular park amenities is picnic sites. A picnic site typically consists of picnic tables, barbecues and benches. Their sizes and configurations vary depending on site constraints and the size of the park. The public uses many picnic sites free of charge and has access on a first-come first-serve basis. Due to their popularity and heavy use, they require constant upkeep and repair, and have consequently placed financial burden on the budget for parks operations and maintenance. Furthermore, at the most popular sites, residents typically arrive at the site in the very early hours of the morning just to be the first in line to use the site. Residents and park users suggested that the City develop picnic areas that the public can reserve. As a result, staff began to explore strategies that would accommodate these requests for reservable picnic sites.

ANALYSIS

As part of the Fiscal Year 2010-2011 budget process, Council approved staff's recommendation to implement a pilot project to develop 10 neighborhood picnic sites across the City that can be

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reserved by the public. The scope consisted of renovating existing picnic sites at minimal cost to convert them into sites that would appeal to the public for reservation. Staff developed these sites and had them ready for reservation in the summer of 2011. Fees were determined based on capacity of the sites. Utilizing the PRNS Pricing Approval Worksheet, staff processed approval of fees through the City Manager's Office. The initial strategy was to implement a pilot project of 10 sites and then track and monitor residents' response to this new idea.

The first 10 sites were developed at the following neighborhood parks: Rainbow (CD 1), Ramblewood (CD 2), Selma Olinder (CD 3), Cataldi (CD 4), Capitol (CD 5), River Glen (CD 6), Edenvale (CD 7), Fowler Creek (CD 8), Kirk (CD 9) and Cahalan (CD 10). These existing picnic sites were renovated and upgraded to convert them into reservable sites. It is important to note that if these sites were not reserved on a given day, they were available on a first-come first-serve basis. In addition, the above neighborhood parks retain other picnic sites that are free to the public without the need for reservation.

Initial results were positive. In its first year of operation, from July 2011 to June 2012, PRNS received 185 paid reservations. Similarly, PRNS received positive feedbacks from neighborhood residents indicating that fees were reasonable and that being able to reserve a site in advance was more convenient.

NEXT STEPS

Key next steps for PRNS:

1. Develop second phase of 10 additional reservable sites. Due to the success of the pilot project, staff recommended and Council approved (through the budget process) the development of 10 more sites in Fiscal Year 2012-2013. These sites will be developed at these parks: Calabazas and Murdock (CD 1), Los Paseos (CD 2), Flickinger (CD 4), Alum Rock (CD 5), Bramhall (CD 6), Ramblewood (CD 7), Silver Creek Linear Park (CD 8), De Anza (CD 9) and Almaden Lake (CD 10). These are existing sites that will be upgraded and renovated into reservable sites. The site selection District 3 is still under development.
2. Continue to evaluate group picnic site project. Staff will continue to evaluate and monitor the progress of this project and will make appropriate recommendations to Council as part of the annual budget process.

/s/

JULIE EDMONDS-MARES
Acting Director of Parks, Recreation and
Neighborhood Services

For questions please contact Steve Hammack, Deputy Director, at 408-793-5579.