



Memorandum

TO: PARKS AND RECREATION
COMMISSION

FROM: Nicolle Burnham

**SUBJECT: PARK DESIGN GUIDELINES
PROGRESS REPORT**

DATE: August 16, 2021

Approved

Date

RECOMMENDATION

Accept this Progress Report on the Park Design Guidelines that serve as a planning tool for the development of new park facilities and enhancement or reconstruction of features at existing parks.

OUTCOME

The Park Design Guidelines (Guidelines) are intended for staff from the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (the Department) and Public Works to reference when studying, planning and designing projects. They will also set expectations for the development community in the design of turnkey park projects. The Guidelines are intended as a flexible resource document detailing the preferred approaches for park development to support sustainability, functionality and affordability. The Guidelines have been drafted to be accessible to the community, City Council and other stakeholders of the parks system.

BACKGROUND

In 2019, the Department secured Council approval for ActivateSJ, its 20-year Strategic Plan. The plan will guide work plans for the wide range of projects and services offered by the Department. The strategic plan calls for work plans to be framed per five Guiding Principles: Stewardship, Nature, Equity & Access, Identity and Public Life. Delivering a park system that is strongly committed to these guiding principles will require Department staff, partner departments and consultants work from a clear framework that balances high expectations with available resources.

The Department identified the need to develop guidelines for persons responsible for planning, design, cost estimating, construction, maintenance and operation of the parks system to work

from a common understanding and expectations with a national-leading parks system as the objective.

The vision for the Guidelines is to balance sophisticated design with ease of maintenance and longevity of assets.

The goals for the Guidelines are:

- Ease of use for Planning & Design
- Allow flexibility and creativity
- Advance the Guiding Principles (ActivateSJ Strategic Plan)
- Provide guidance to address common park assets

Staff presented a progress report to the Commission at its December 2, 2020 meeting and received the following input from commissioners:

- Standardization is appreciated
- Guidelines should allow for creativity and uniqueness
- Concerned that approach may lead to parks looking the same
- Creative placemaking solutions should be included in the document

ANALYSIS

Staff prepared content for the Park Design Guidelines by forming a multi-department team to explore standardization of park elements when feasible and supportive of varied and creative spaces. Park Designers and Landscape Architects from the Department’s Capital Team and Public Works’ City Facilities Architectural Services (CFAS) team met with Parks Maintenance staff to identify challenges and successes in the park system that could inform the development of best practices.

The project team established a vision for the Guidelines. They were to balance sophisticated design with ease of maintenance and longevity of assets. With this first version of the Park Design Guidelines (Attachment A), the most common park assets were identified, and best practices were documented for each of those assets. Examples of best practices included optimum placement of amenities, defined relationships between assets, proper use of surfacing, and minimum size and shape requirements for new facilities.

After the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting in December of 2020, the team added clarity and further guidance to the document to ensure the following:

Standardization is appreciated	The Guidelines provide a common approach for asset selection, a catalog of preferred amenities, and design standards.
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Guidelines should allow for creativity and uniqueness	The document encourages design professionals (Park Designers and Landscape Architects) to be creative in the planning, design and selection of park features. The guidelines provide design parameters supporting affordable and long-term maintenance. The guidelines establish a protocol for testing new ideas in a cost sensitive manner.
Approach may lead to parks looking the same	Guidelines do not supersede Master Plans for site-specific design informed by the community. The guidelines reinforce that design professionals should create projects with a strong commitment to Identity (per ActivateSJ).
Creative placemaking solutions should be included in the document	The Guidelines reinforce that design professionals should create projects that support Public Life (per ActivateSJ).

This final Progress Report to the Commission addresses the commission’s prior input and reports on progress made on the following points:

- Rationale for Park Design Guidelines
- Goals for the guidelines
 - Design or renovate parks to be maintenance-friendly and high-quality parks
 - Design oversight and design parameters
 - Align to guiding principles of ActivateSJ Strategic Plan
 - Quality assurance
 - Reference for best practices
 - Preferred products
 - Guidance for and when customization is desired
- Park assets to be included and defined in document
- Process for development of the Park Design Guidelines
- The Guidelines are intended to be a living document which will be updated annually. The following park elements were not included in this draft due to budget constraints:
 - Park Signage Standards
 - Restroom Standards

Staff seeks the Commission’s input in order to finalize Version 1.0 of the Guidelines. The completion date for the Park Design Guidelines is scheduled for October 2021. This is intended to be a “living document” and staff expects to add chapters to the Guidelines over time and adjust guidance to reflect best practices, lessons learned, and changing trends in the industry.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Park Design Guidelines were presented to the PRC on December 2, 2020 in a public forum meeting. The Guidelines are a development tool to help manage resources. Public outreach that guides park development occurs as part of the Master Planning for each park site.

CEQA

Not a Project. File No. PP17-009, Staff Reports, Assessments, Annual Reports, and Informational Memos that involve no approvals of any City action.

Nicolle Burnham
Deputy Director of Parks,
Recreation and Neighborhood Services

For questions, please contact the Project Manager, Sara Sellers at sara.sellers@sanjoseca.gov.

Attachment:

- A. Draft Version 1.0 of Guidelines per link: <https://bit.ly/parkdesignguidelines>

SAN JOSE
PARKS, RECREATION &
NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

PARK DESIGN GUIDELINES

Parks and Recreation Commission: September 1, 2021

Presenters:

Sara Sellers, Parks Manager, sara.sellers@sanjoseca.gov

Yves Zsutty, Division Manager, yves.zsutty@sanjoseca.gov

PROJECT VISION & GOALS

- VISION
 - Balance sophisticated design with ease of maintenance and longevity of assets
- GOALS:
 - Easy-to-use guidelines for Planning & Design
 - Allow flexibility and creativity
 - Advance the Guiding Principles (ActivateSJ Strategic Plan).
 - Guidance for common park assets

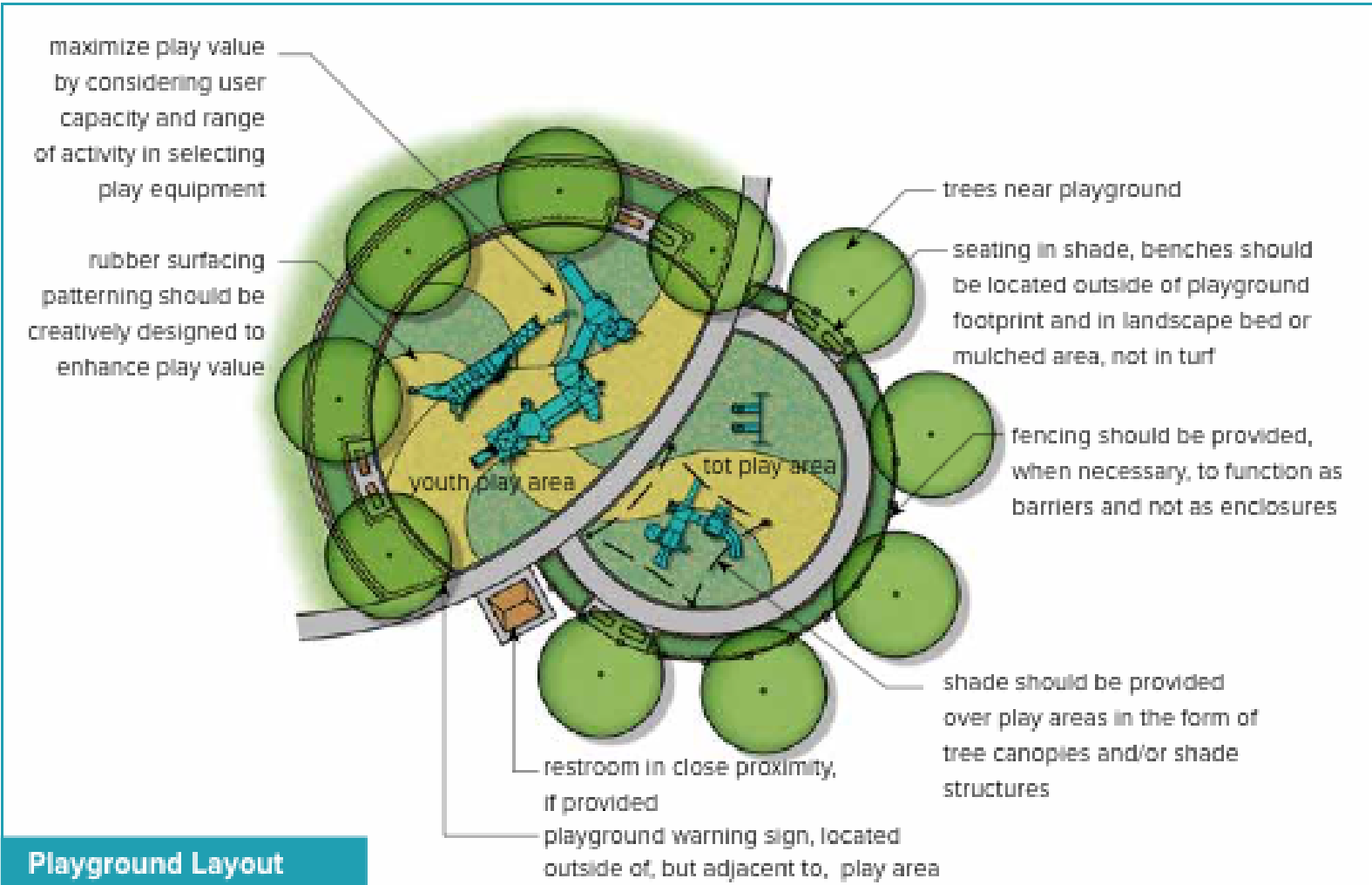
SCHEDULE

- June 2020: Project Start up
- Dec 2020: Steering Committee completes its work
- Feb 2021: Draft Guidelines
- June 2021: PRC Presentation
- June 2021: Neighborhood Services and Education Committee
- September 2021: PRC Presentation
- October 2021: Finalize Guidelines, Version 1.0

APPLICATION OF GUIDELINES

- **RESPONSIVE:**
 - Clarity of approach
 - Equitable distribution of assets
 - Establish suitable conditions (ie. appropriate size and park type)
- **FOCUSED:**
 - Park Planning and Design
- **FLEXIBLE:**
 - Version 1.0 Guidelines anticipates additions, lessons learned and best practices

ASSET EXAMPLES: Playground

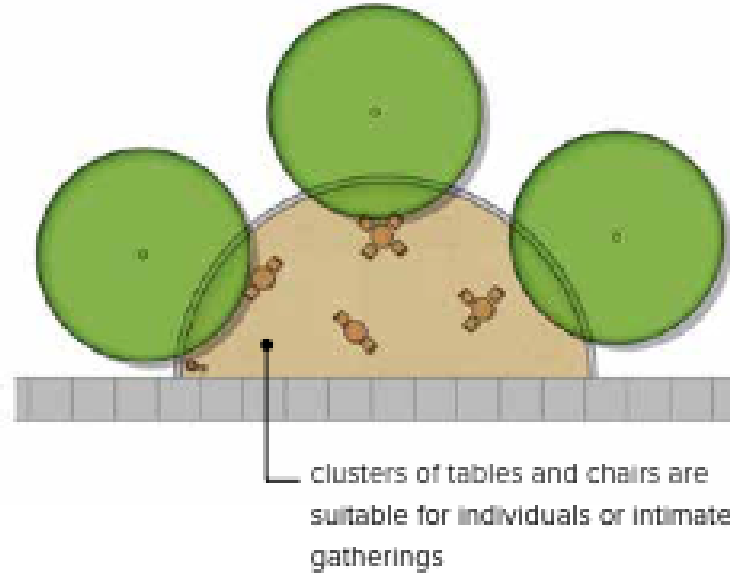
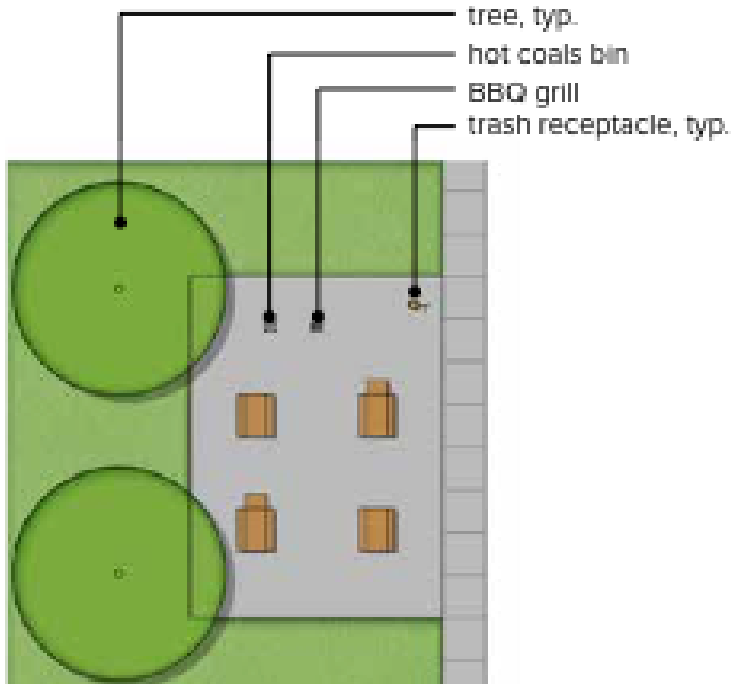


Playground Layout

Flexibility & Creativity

- Theming
- Number of assets
- Footprint size
- Landscape
- Location

ASSET EXAMPLES: Small Picnic Area



Small Picnic Area Layouts

Flexibility & Creativity

- Visual character
- Tree selection
- Footprint
- Configuration

CREATIVE PARK SPACES



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