




## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and City Council

**THRU:** Christopher Shorter, Assistant City Manager

**FROM:** Kimberly McNeeley, CPRP, Director  
Austin Parks and Recreation Department 

**DATE:** August 3, 2020

**SUBJECT:** Park Planning Efforts – Term Definitions and Approval Process

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The purpose of this memorandum is to inform you of changes in terminology that the Parks and Recreation Department (PAR) is implementing in current planning efforts, and to restate the process for park and facility plan adoption.

Most recently, stakeholders expressed concerns over the use of the term “master” in referring to park master plans. The term is perceived by members of the community as offensive and derogatory. In addition, the term lacks specificity, requiring additional description depending on the type of project. PAR understands the concerns and has changed the terminology that describes park and facility plans to provide greater clarity and to acknowledge the power words have in cultivating understanding and shaping the way we perceive the world and participate within it.

Below is an updated list of planning terms with their definitions that PAR uses in conducting business and communicating with the public

### **Planning Term Definitions**

**Comprehensive Plan:** used when referring to a citywide plan that includes multiple elements such as land use, transportation networks, public infrastructure, parks, libraries, etc. *Imagine Austin* is the City’s comprehensive plan.

**Strategic Plan:** most commonly relate to internal operations and outline how internal processes are organized to handle day-to-day operations.

**Long Range Plan:** long term vision plan for the entire organization with a typical timeframe of 10 years. PAR’s Long Range Plan – *Our Parks, Our Future*, includes recommendations for land acquisitions, park amenities, trails, redevelopment initiatives, programming, and partnerships, as well as implementation strategies.

### **Park Plans:**

- **Vision Plan:** typically reserved for metropolitan parks, district parks, and greenbelts, and may include implementation strategies, as well as phasing and funding recommendations. A Vision Plan may include other plans such as Programming Plan or Operations and Maintenance Plan.
- **Concept Plan:** typically reserved for downtown squares, neighborhood parks, pocket parks, and school/special parks. Concept Plans may lead directly into development of the park or portion of the park.

### **Facility Plans:**

- **Facility Plan:** created for new cultural or recreational facilities, or major renovations of facilities, such as the Seaholm Intake on Lady Bird Lake.
- **Facility Expansion Plan:** address expansion plans for existing facilities. Recent planning efforts for the MACC, Carver, or AARC would be described as Facility Expansion Plans.

### **Other Specific Plans:**

- **Operations and Maintenance Plan:** may be included as a component of a Vision, Concept or Facility Plan, or be a stand-alone plan for a park or facility.
- **Programming Plan:** may include goals and objectives associated with programming of a recreational or cultural facility.
- **Land Management Plan:** outlines goals and objectives and provides guidance for resource management activities on parkland such as preserves, greenbelts and natural / forested areas of parks.
- **Preservation Plan:** reserved for historic properties and may be a component of a Vision or Concept Plan or a stand-alone plan. A recent example of a stand-alone plan is the Historic Cemeteries Plan.

PARD will be submitting two Vision Plans to Council for consideration of adoption that will reflect the terminology change. The Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park Vision Plan is expected to be on the Council agenda in August 2020, and the John Trevino Jr. Metropolitan Park at Morrison Ranch Vision Plan, is anticipated to be on the Council agenda in September 2020.

PARD would also like to outline the established plan adoption process.

During the planning process, PARD implements an extensive and inclusive public engagement process to solicit community input and feedback. From the onset of the planning process, PARD identifies stakeholder groups that represent diverse community interests, and builds a collaborative environment that actively involves the community throughout the process. Public meetings, forums and workshops, as well as surveys via the internet and social media, aim at understanding the community's values and preferences, building consensus and arriving at a final plan proposal that serves the community's needs. PARD embraces community engagement and transparency and is committed to offering a variety of opportunities for public input throughout all planning efforts.

### **Plan Adoption**

- Vision, Concept or Facility Plans for **metropolitan parks, historic downtown squares and cultural facilities** will be presented to the Parks and Recreation Board and subsequently to City Council for approval prior to adoption.

- Vision Plans for **district parks** will be presented to the Parks and Recreation Board for recommendation prior to adoption.
- Approval of Vision and Concept Plans for **neighborhood parks, pocket parks, and other green spaces** (greenbelts, school parks, etc.) will be at the discretion of the PARD Director. However, the Director may choose to request a recommendation from the Parks and Recreation Board, prior to adoption.

Approval for the implementation of park improvements that are **not consistent** with the adopted park or facility plan will follow the same process as the original plan adoption. Park improvements for metropolitan parks, historic downtown squares and cultural facilities will be presented to the Parks and Recreation Board and seek approval from City Council. Park improvements for district parks will seek recommendation from the Parks and Recreation Board, while improvements for neighborhood parks, pocket parks, and other green spaces will remain at the discretion of the Department Director. Throughout the process, PARD will work with stakeholder groups and the community to understand preferences, build consensus, and arrive at a plan that serves the community's needs.

Maintenance tasks (irrigation, court resurfacing, replacement of fixtures, upgrades to restrooms and trails, etc.), health and safety improvements, or installation of furnishings are considered "normal park operations," and approval remains under the discretion of the Department Director.

Should you have any questions, please contact my office at (512) 974-6717.

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager