



PLEASANT HILL RECREATION & PARK DISTRICT

SPOTLIGHT PERSPECTIVE:

Master Planning for the District's Future

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Chairman, Board of Directors

Pleasant Hill Recreation & Park District



I like planning. For those reading this who know me, that may come as a surprise. Even if it's glancing at the hotel I'm going to stay at or seeing how I going to get some place, I need at least a little background instead of completely "winging it."

With respect to governing a Special District, "winging it" is pretty much out of the question. Plans and policies must be well thought out before they are implemented. Before that, input from staff and residents not only shape these plans, but also help ensure they can be as successful as possible going forward.

At the Pleasant Hill Recreation & Park District, planning is everywhere, from two-year financial budgets to our preschool instructors' daily lesson plans. Call it "organized chaos" or a "well-oiled machine," planning happens on an annual, quarterly, monthly, daily (and yes, sometimes hourly) basis.

The ultimate plan, however, is the Master Plan. Municipalities and special districts periodically create master plans that serve as a guiding document that reaffirm their missions and policies, detail their respective responsibilities and set the groundwork for defining the opportunities for future programming, facilities (and in our case) parks and open space.

By the end of this year, the District will begin working on its next master plan and I'm excited about the process. Developing this plan represents a unique opportunity to work with staff and residents to set the path for the District for the next 15-20 years. Even as staff remains mindful of existing needs, the master plan must consider what existing infrastructure will look like in 20 years as well as how other key socio-economic and demographic factors will affect and shape the type of program that could be offered.

While it's great to plan and dream for the future, the process of creating a master plan also sheds some light on identifying the most realistic funding sources. For example, are district residents willing to consider funding a type of bond to pay for future infrastructure and/or services? If so, what specifically are they willing to pay for? And are there other funding sources?

As I look ahead at the master plan process, it does have a daunting quality about it. There's so many considerations to factor in and you want to have everything in order. What alleviates these concerns and provides confidence for me is knowing that this District has provided a successful plan before and its benefits are being felt by residents and staff today. □ Master Plans Work

Previous District master plans have proven successful in determining future needs. The work put into of the 2003 master plan process set the course for important improvements, including:

- Adding a water play area and shade structures to Pleasant Hill Aquatic Park
- Renovating Pleasant Oaks Park to provide for more sports fields and to add picnic areas, playground and walking paths
- Expanding Pleasant Oaks Park by acquiring vacant 10-acre parcel
- Adding a gazebo at Frank Salfingere Park (adjacent to the Community Center)
- Replacing Senior Center and Community Center
- Developing management agreement with Friends of Rodgers Ranch for ongoing management of Rodgers Ranch
- Developing a Teen Center

Recognizing the overall interest in these initiatives combined with the need to create a revenue source for the bigger-ticket items, the District put forth Measure E. It passed in 2009 even in a down economy. The result of the faith that District residents put forth resulted in the new Senior Center, Community Center, Teen Center and the renovation of Pleasant Oaks Park. The other items on the list were also completed with the only change being that the District agreed to acquire a 5-acre parcel to expand our footprint near by.

In the next couple months, the District will begin the process of creating an updated master plan. The process will not be speedy but it will reflect the thoroughness that residents deserve as we work together to determine what the District will be like in the years ahead.

Do you have a suggestion? What is important to you that you would like to see the District address? Let us know by emailing us at masterplan@pleasanthillrec.com.