



SPOTLIGHT PERSPECTIVE:

Power of Parks

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**Parks
Make
Life
Better!**SM

Imagine Pleasant Hill without all our beautiful parks and open spaces...inconceivable! Our parks are an integral part of what makes our city a better place to live in. Parks are a place where people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds can gather together to socialize, relax, exercise, learn, celebrate and most importantly, play in the great outdoors. July is “Parks Make Life Better” month so I would like to take this opportunity to share the power of parks and the value they bring to our lives and our community.

Parks have health power. They are places where everyone can play and exercise, especially children. Every day I look out my office window and watch all the healthy action in Pleasant Hill Park. It’s better than watching a Warriors game...almost! The park is filled with children climbing on play structures, digging in the sandbox and running freely on the lawn (usually with a parent in hot pursuit). Teens are playing hoops or strolling and chatting with friends along the paved pathway. Grown ups are walking, jogging, exercising or playing sports like bocce, volleyball and baseball. And I love that no tickets or fees are required. All people have equal and open access to our public parks. This open access leads to a healthier community by increasing the number of people who will exercise 3 or more days a week. This regular exercise helps control obesity, boosts the immune system, reduces risk of disease and extends life expectancy. Our parks are the best free “gyms” around!

Parks have economic power. According to National Recreation & Park Association studies, the proximity to a well-maintained park directly increases residential property values. One Colorado study found that property values decrease \$4.20 for every foot further away from a green belt or park. In California, this decrease in value would be...considerably greater. Parks also help generate new revenue for local businesses by providing a venue for large-scale recreation events. Pleasant Oaks Park, our renovated sports complex, for example, brings hundreds of visiting baseball and soccer teams into Pleasant Hill for competitive tournaments. These visitors stay in hotels, eat out in restaurants and shop in local stores. Our parks benefit the Pleasant Hill economy.

Parks have community power. Our parks and facilities bring people out of isolation to socialize, to connect and to build lasting ties. New moms, for example, come to parks with their children to escape the oftentimes-lonely confines of raising a child at home. They need to reconnect, seeking companionship and friendship with other new moms they may meet



at the park. Parks not only bring individuals together but they also bring large and diverse populations together to share a common experience, creating lasting ties with the community. We host a lot of amazing community events in our parks that do just that. Our 9th annual Blues & Brews festival on July 20-21, for example, is an opportunity for families from all over Northern California (and beyond) to come together in Pleasant Hill Park and enjoy a day of live music, dancing, eating and playing in the park. A shared experience I will definitely participate in this month. Our parks are fantastic people magnets.

Parks have environmental power. They protect and conserve biodiversity in a city while helping to keep our air and water clean. Consider all the trees in our parks and open spaces. They are not just providing beauty, shade and places to climb. Just one acre of trees absorbs the carbon dioxide produced by driving a car 11,000 miles! With over 265 acres of parkland filled with trees, that's a lot of natural filtering power! Parks also provide a peaceful place to de-stress, relax and explore the natural world around us. Our parks give us space to breathe (cleaner air).

Parks do make life better.

Visit our local parks and feel the power all summer long.

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