



Culver CITY PARKS, RECREATION & COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMISSION

ParksandRecreationCommission@culvercity.org

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TO: CULVER CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS
FROM: PARKS, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMISSION
RE: PRCS BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 – COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS
DATE: March 29, 2025

Dear City Council Members:

Thank you again for inviting our Commission to share recommendations for budget enhancements for the Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Department (PRCS). We appreciate that over the past few years the Council has adopted many of our requests. We hope you will continue to support our vision to improve Culver City parks facilities and to implement the recently adopted Parks Master Plan.

Our recommendations focus both on needs to begin implementation of the Parks Master Plan, and to strengthen ongoing PRCS operations. Throughout our recommendations, we have followed the decision framework outlined in the Parks Master Plan.

We organize this letter by discussing staffing needs, then budget items needed to fund existing operations and parks, and, finally, discussing a proposed plan to begin to implement the Parks Master Plan.

Staffing

Fund Additional Management Staff (Ongoing)

The Parks Master Plan notes on page 234: "Sufficient funding and availability for staff for the parks system is limited. The current staff is stretched to capacity, and additional specialized staff would be needed for park improvements such as native planting areas, public art pieces, and new programming. Currently, the parks demonstrate overstressed budgets and overstretched staff."

Nowhere is this overstretched staffing more apparent than in the position of Management Analysts. Currently, the department only has one Senior Management Analyst and two Associate Analysts. While these staffers are exceptional, they cannot begin to implement the Parks Master Plan without additional assistance. Also note that, by comparison to other City departments with a similar depth and breadth of assets and programming responsibilities, PRCS is understaffed.

In addition to implementing the Parks Master Plan, PRCS management staff has now been tasked with two additional duties: the annual updating of fees and charges, and a strategic plan for the department. As part of the strategic plan, the department must contemplate succession planning. Providing more senior staff positions and creating a Deputy Director would provide a clear succession plan.

Furthermore, through the development of the Parks Master Plan, it is clear that there are significant grant and fundraising opportunities to fund new construction, updates to parks, and new and ongoing programming. PRCS is currently losing out on these grants and fundraising

opportunities as there is not enough staff capacity to find and apply for them. This includes necessary pairing for grant opportunities with other City partners, such as the Culver City Arts Foundation.

If the City Council and City residents want to implement the new Parks Master Plan and fully support our parks, the Council must fund additional management staff. While these positions may be costly in the short term, we expect that they will be revenue enhancing over the long term, given the increased capacity they would bring to win grants and fundraise.

We recommend the following.

- Reclassify the current Senior Management Analyst position to a Deputy Director position (Ongoing)
- Fund a Senior Management Analyst position (Ongoing)
- Fund a Management Analyst position (Ongoing)

Funding for Other Staff Members

Fund Two (2) Additional Maintenance Workers I (Ongoing)

PRCS staffing continues to be a challenge in the Maintenance Division. The Parks Plan notes on page 233, "Prior to significant capital investments, it is critical that additional funding for general maintenance be secured for PRCS."

As we noted in our budget letter last year, the current staffing levels only allow for the department to fix things when they break, which results in higher expenses for the City. With proper staffing, we believe that the ability to provide comprehensive preventative maintenance will result in improved safety, lower repair costs, and extend useful life of our facilities and equipment. We recommend that the Council fund two (2) additional personnel positions of Maintenance Worker I.

Additional Salary and Benefits for Part-Time Staff, Especially for the Plunge: \$304,650 (Ongoing)

Staffing part-time positions, especially for the Plunge, continues to be a challenge for PRCS. This past summer the Plunge closed due to staffing shortages, rendering one of our facilities unusable. Such closures have continued into the Spring of 2025.

Due to a nationwide shortage of lifeguards, PRCS must compete with neighboring jurisdictions that offer higher salaries and benefits for part-time staff. Without raising our salary and benefits, we will continue to be at a disadvantage to these other jurisdictions and this will harm our ability to offer pool time, camps, and other much needed programming. These funds would provide increases and partial benefits for lifeguards, pool managers, swim instructors, and others.

Expenditures to Fund Existing Operations

Increase in Playground Maintenance in the PRCS Operating Budget: \$75,000 (Ongoing)

We thank the Council for the ongoing funding for playground maintenance in the PRCS operating budget approved last year. Unfortunately, due to both the age of the equipment and inflation, we request additional funds to make up for shortfalls.

Fund In-house Youth Sports Programs: Staffing: \$21,471 and Supplies: \$7,029 (Ongoing)

We thank the Council for funding our in-house Youth Sports Program. It is off to a rousing success. To keep the momentum and increase the program size and offerings, PRCS needs additional funding to further develop and maintain these activities. This funding would allow PRCS to build on the success of the program thus far.

Ensure Compliance with California's Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELO) (\$600,000 over multiple years)

We again thank the Council for providing funds for a consultant to ensure our City's compliance with the statewide Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELO). As the consultant completes their recommendations, PRCS will need additional funds to implement the recommendations.

Tellefson Park Renovation (Approximately \$1,368,790)

Now that we have the Parks Master Plan, it is vital that the City begins to implement its recommendations. The renovations suggested for Tellefson Park are a good place to start for several reasons.

1. Tellefson Park meets the criteria laid out in the decision framework in the Parks Master Plan: it is in an area with historically lower investment, in proximity to an Equity Focus Neighborhood, increases services in parks with high pressure, and helps achieve the Parks Master Plan Vision, Mission, and Goals. In addition, there are likely to be available local, state, and federal funding opportunities.
2. The renovation includes racket sports courts, including pickle ball courts. Pickle ball is a growing activity in our community with a very active and loyal participant base. Currently, there is great pressure in our parks system for pickle ball courts and pickle ball play at the Elenda Courts continues to create tensions between paddle tennis players, pickle ball players, and the neighbors. Creating a dedicated pickle ball space would relieve these pressures. In addition, the corner of the park where these courts will be placed is relatively far from residences and should reduce concerns about noise.
3. The renovation is relatively small and does not require major construction. For these reasons, the renovations could be completed relatively quickly and inexpensively. This would show the community that the Council and City are serious about implementing the Parks Master Plan.

Items included in the renovation:

- Two pickleball/ paddle tennis courts with spectator seating (Courts: \$686,400/ Seating: \$124,500)
- New picnic groves (\$76,960)
- Sand Volleyball court (\$52,800)
- New exercise equipment (\$38,000)
- Upgrade restrooms (\$190,450)
- Extended sidewalk and accessible walking paths throughout (Sidewalks: \$65,280/ Walking Paths \$120,400)
- Thin out tree canopy, remove unhealthy trees, and plant new trees in line with recommendations to replace trees with native species (\$14,000)

2025 is shaping up to be a very active year for PRCS, with many exciting opportunities to support and sustain PRCS recreational facilities and programming for the community for decades to come. We are not so distant from the height of the Covid pandemic for us to remember just how vital these outdoor spaces are for the ongoing physical and mental health of our community.

We thank the Council for your approval of many proposed initiatives over the last few years and hope that you will continue to support our vision to evolve Culver City PRCS as an exemplar of recreation and community service in our region.

Respectfully submitted,

PARKS, RECREATION & COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMISSION