

2022 City Council Candidate Briefing

PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

The Burlingame Parks and Recreation Department's mission statement is, "Creating a better community in which to live and play through quality recreational environments, enriching opportunities, and empowering people."

The Parks and Recreation Department (P&R) is comprised of three divisions: the Parks Division, the Recreation Division, and the Aquatics Division. All divisions are under the direction of the Parks and Recreation Director. The Parks and Recreation Director provides management oversight of P&R and is responsible for preparing the annual budget for the Department. The Director also serves as an advisor to the City Manager, other departments, the City Council, the Parks and Recreation and Beautification Commissions, and the Parks and Recreation Foundation. A staff member guides the Youth Advisory Committee, an advisory body composed of students in grades 7-12, and the Senior Advisory Committee.

The Parks Division: The Parks Division is divided into Landscape, Maintenance, and Tree crews. These crews provide maintenance and upkeep of City parks, athletic fields, playgrounds, dog parks, the community garden, courts, medians, roundabouts, rights-of-way, and other City property. In addition, the Tree crew performs tree planting, trimming, and removals and fulfills service requests for tree maintenance. City trees are on a four to five-year trimming cycle, while the trimming and removal of large trees are contracted out. Administrative staff oversees private tree removals, permits for protected trees, and protection plans for trees during building projects. Parks staff work at the Parks corporation yard, which is located behind the baseball field in Washington Park. The Parks Division maintains:

- 62 acres of landscape maintenance
- 20 City parking lot landscapes
- 48 median street islands
- 7 City building landscapes
- 6 large parks with athletic fields
- 8 neighborhood parks and tot lots
- Mills Canyon Wildlife Area
- Bayside Community Garden
- Skyline Open Space Park
- Bayside Dog Park
- Ray Park Dog Park
- Burlingame Ave. landscaping & trees
- Broadway and overpass trees and landscape
- California Roundabout
- Meta Reality Labs (City land)
- Bayfront Bird Sanctuary
- Sanchez Creek
- 3 bocce ball courts
- 8 tennis courts
- 6 basketball courts
- 11 baseball and softball fields
- 16 miscellaneous game courts
- 125 + pieces of playground equipment
- 4 adult fitness equipment clusters

- 8 double restrooms
- 13 grandstands and bleachers
- 21+ pieces of rolling equipment
- 50+ pieces of power tools/equipment
- 15+ miscellaneous areas

The Recreation Division: In addition to City General Fund support, the Department relies on user fees, volunteers, donations, and the support of other community groups. The Recreation Division is responsible for programs, classes, the Village Preschool, seasonal youth and teen camps, senior trips, school-year youth athletic teams, adult sports and leisure programs, the Youth Advisory Committee, and the Senior Advisory Committee. The Recreation Division also manages the scheduling of facilities. Additionally, the Recreation Division coordinates the following special events: Movies in the Park, Music in the Park, Streets Alive, Family Campout, Royal Ball, Muddy Mile, and the Holiday Tree Lighting. This division also co-sponsors many community events, such as Howard Avenue Fall Fest, Burlingame on the Avenue, and the Pet Parade. Recreation Division staff work at the new Community Center, the Village Park Preschool, and Burlingame School District sites.

The Aquatics Division: In 1997, the City of Burlingame and the San Mateo Union High School District (District) collaborated to build a 25-yard swimming pool on the Burlingame High School campus. In 1999, during the planning of the facility, a private individual donated sufficient funds to increase the size of the pool to 50 meters. The City contributed \$1,166,695, the private donor contributed \$1,210,000, and the District contributed \$300,000.

The City has a joint-use agreement with the District that governs the pool's maintenance, operation, and use. P&R staff administers the agreement and serves as liaison to the District for pool-related issues. In 2019, the District completed an extensive rebuild of the pool, for which the City contributed \$2.7 million. The District and City split the cost of the pool 50/50 for capital work and a percentage share based on usage, which is updated annually.

The City contracts with the Burlingame Aquatic Club (BAC) to provide a full range of aquatic programming opportunities to the Burlingame community at the Burlingame High School pool. Before COVID-19, BAC offered swimming lessons, masters and youth swim teams, water polo, water safety classes, arthritis classes, fitness classes, lap and recreational swimming, and community events. Programs are assigned to either community programming or competitive programming. The City supports BAC's provision of community programming with a financial subsidy that is determined on an annual basis. BAC is in the process of rebuilding its programs after the extended pool closure and COVID-19.

COVID-19: COVID-19 continues to impact P&R. The Parks Division has seen a significant increase in the use of City parks, which has stretched staff ability to maintain the park system. The City hired additional Park Monitors to address challenges with increased usage. Additionally, the Recreation Division was required to adjust programming frequently to comply with COVID-19-related health orders. Accordingly, the City is still in the process of rebuilding recreation programs. All divisions are struggling with hiring and retaining qualified staff.

MAJOR DEPARTMENT INITIATIVES

Athletic Field Use: Since 2010, the City has experienced increased demand for City fields. To ensure the fields are apportioned fairly and equitably, and to provide for efficient usage of available field space, City staff began meeting with representatives from the user groups and developed a field use policy. More recently, the City has worked with Burlingame Girls Softball (BGS) and Burlingame Youth Baseball Association (BYBA) to ensure equitable use of the batting cages. A new batting cage has been added to Bayside, and plans are in the works to add an additional batting cage adjacent to the existing batting cage in Washington Park. The project will be funded by BGS with support from the City.

City Trees/Private Trees: The City has a long history of proactively planting new trees and protecting its urban forest. As a result, the City has been designated a "Tree City, USA" for 43 continuous years, the fifth-longest period in the state. The City understands the significant value that the trees contribute to the quality of life in Burlingame. Trees lower household energy bills, absorb the first 30% of precipitation through their leaves, protect residents from UV rays, and increase property values.

The City Arborist and the Parks Division staff help maintain City trees. In addition, the City Arborist works with the Community Development Department to ensure that trees are protected during construction projects and, if removal is approved, to ensure that trees are replaced.

New Community Center Project: In 2012, City staff, Group 4 Architecture, the Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC), and community members began working on plans for a new community center in Washington Park. The work included the development of a Master Plan for active areas of the Park, identification of site locations of amenities (Community Center Master Plan), and creation of conceptual designs of the proposed building within the Master Plan. The City Council approved the Community Center Master Plan on July 7, 2014.

At the July 2, 2018 Council meeting, the City Council chose to move forward with a pavilion style, 35,700 square foot community center with parking under and adjacent to the new center. The project included a relocated playground, picnic area, basketball court, and an indoor and outdoor stage. The tennis courts, Lions Club building, ballfields, and Parking Lot X were to remain unchanged.

On November 5, 2018, the City Council unanimously approved the schematic design and phasing for the new Community Center. At the July 1, 2019 Council meeting, the Council approved the Center’s \$52,214,500 budget, including funding for an emergency generator, a photovoltaic panel system, an indoor/outdoor platform, a green roof on Kids Town, and sprung wood floors in the Community Hall. The project broke ground in May 2020 and opened to the public on June 15, 2022.

The project was funded by a combination of monies from the City’s Capital Investment Reserve, community donations, and the 2019 issuance of a lease revenue bond. The City is paying the debt service for the lease revenue bond with an annual General Fund transfer of \$1 million and an additional annual transfer of \$1 million in Measure I quarter-cent sales tax dollars.

Dog Park Improvements and Off-leash Hours: Through an appointed Dog Park Task Force, P&R has worked with the community to gather input regarding access to off-leash areas in the park system. The City completed improvements at Bayside Dog Park, including additional paving, a new water fountain, a shade structure with new seating, agility equipment, and a dog wash station. In addition, off-leash hours were added during the school year from 6:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Washington Park and Cuernavaca ballfields. In 2019, the City completed Skyline Park, a new park that allows dogs off-leash. In early 2020, the City opened a new off-leash fenced-in area in Ray Park. A housing development in the Rollins Road area (Adrian Court) is currently under construction, and plans for the development include a public park with an off-leash area.

Parks Master Plan: In 2015, the City embarked on a community-wide visioning process connected to its General Plan Update to plan for future growth and development while protecting the small-town character that residents value. Through the planning and visioning process, the Burlingame community highlighted the importance of parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces to Burlingame’s quality of life. In January 2020, the City Council adopted the Parks Master Plan (PMP) to address planning, policies, and development of the City’s parks and recreation system for the next ten years. Since Burlingame is largely built-out, with limited additional land available for parks and

recreation, the City must be strategic and innovative in its approach to meeting future recreation needs.

Park and Playground Renovations: Staff has been systematically renovating aging City parks over the past five years. In 2019, the City completed the Ray Park Playground renovation and Washington Park Playground and Sports Court. In 2020, the City completed the Murray Playground renovation, and in early 2022, the City completed Victoria Park. The Alpine Playground will be renovated next. These projects are currently guided by and funded according to the PMP.

Top Golf & the Golf Center: Several years ago, the City issued a Request for Proposals for use of the existing Golf Center site. The City Council chose Topgolf as the successful applicant and entered into an Exclusive Negotiating Agreement in May of 2018. The State completed its CEQA analysis of the project, and the City anticipates that an agreement with Topgolf will go before Council in 2022. Once the agreement is approved, Topgolf anticipates that construction will be completed in approximately 33 months.

Fire Fuel Reduction: P&R continues to work with Cal Fire crews and private landscaping companies to reduce fuel loads near homes in Mills Canyon, the Sanchez Creek area, and the hillside around Murray Field. Cal Fire hand crews create a shaded fuel break in Mill Canyon and Sanchez Creek and remove the grasses from the Murray Field area. Cut material is generally chipped and spread uniformly on-site or hauled away.

Mills Canyon Maintenance: In 1952, the 28 acres adjacent to Mills Creek were set aside as a wildlife preserve. The City continues to maintain Mills Canyon in order to allow public access to nature and preserve flora and fauna throughout the area. In 2015, the City hired a consultant to perform research and prepare a scope of work for trail modifications, enhancements, and repairs. Pursuant to the consultant’s findings, the City made several improvements to Mills Canyon, including stairway rebuilding, retaining wall construction, trail tread improvement, drainage improvement, and the creation of stable surfacing for park users to traverse. The City continues to contract with the California Conservation Corps to complete the trail work.

Parks Division staff inspects Mills Canyon monthly, monitoring site conditions and clearing immediate hazards from the trail. In addition, staff return at least quarterly to remove tree hazards and vegetation encroaching the path or repair signs and other trail fixtures.

Parks and Recreation Foundation: The Foundation provides funds and support for special events and capital improvement projects in parks and recreation facilities as well

as enrollment assistance to families for parks and recreation programs. The Foundation donates \$5,000 annually to a scholarship fund and has recently purchased new bottle filling stations, chalkboards at Paloma Park, benches for the tennis courts, game tables in various parks, and a new BBQ and cornhole game in Washington Park.

Joint Use Agreement with the Burlingame School District: The City and District have been working together for many years to provide additional programming for community members. The Recreation Division provides after-school enrichment on all BSD sites, operates the after-school sports programs for the elementary and middle schools, and offers adult drop-in basketball at Burlingame Intermediate School.

Pickleball and Tennis Facilities: The new sports court in Washington Park includes lines for basketball, futsal, and three pickleball courts. At the time the pickleball courts opened, users needed to bring their own nets. To allow for play without owning a net, the Parks and Recreation Commission approved a drop-in program on Mondays and Wednesdays. Outside of those hours, members of the public could borrow pickleball nets and set them up on their own. The program was very successful, and there were long waiting times, so the Parks and Recreation Commission approved four more pickleball courts at Washington Park. This addition, while it helped, has not kept up with the requests from the pickleball community. As a result, the Parks and Recreation Commission is currently exploring adding pickleball lines to each tennis court at Laguna Park. While not the ideal height, the existing tennis net will allow pickleball players who do not own a pickleball net to play while still allowing users to play tennis. In addition, a subcommittee of the Parks and Recreation Commission has been assigned to work with staff and the pickleball community to explore other options, including potentially converting one tennis court at Washington Park into permanent pickleball courts.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information regarding the Parks and Recreation Department programs and projects, please contact Margaret Glomstad, Parks and Recreation Director, at 650-558-7307 or mglomstad@burlingame.org.