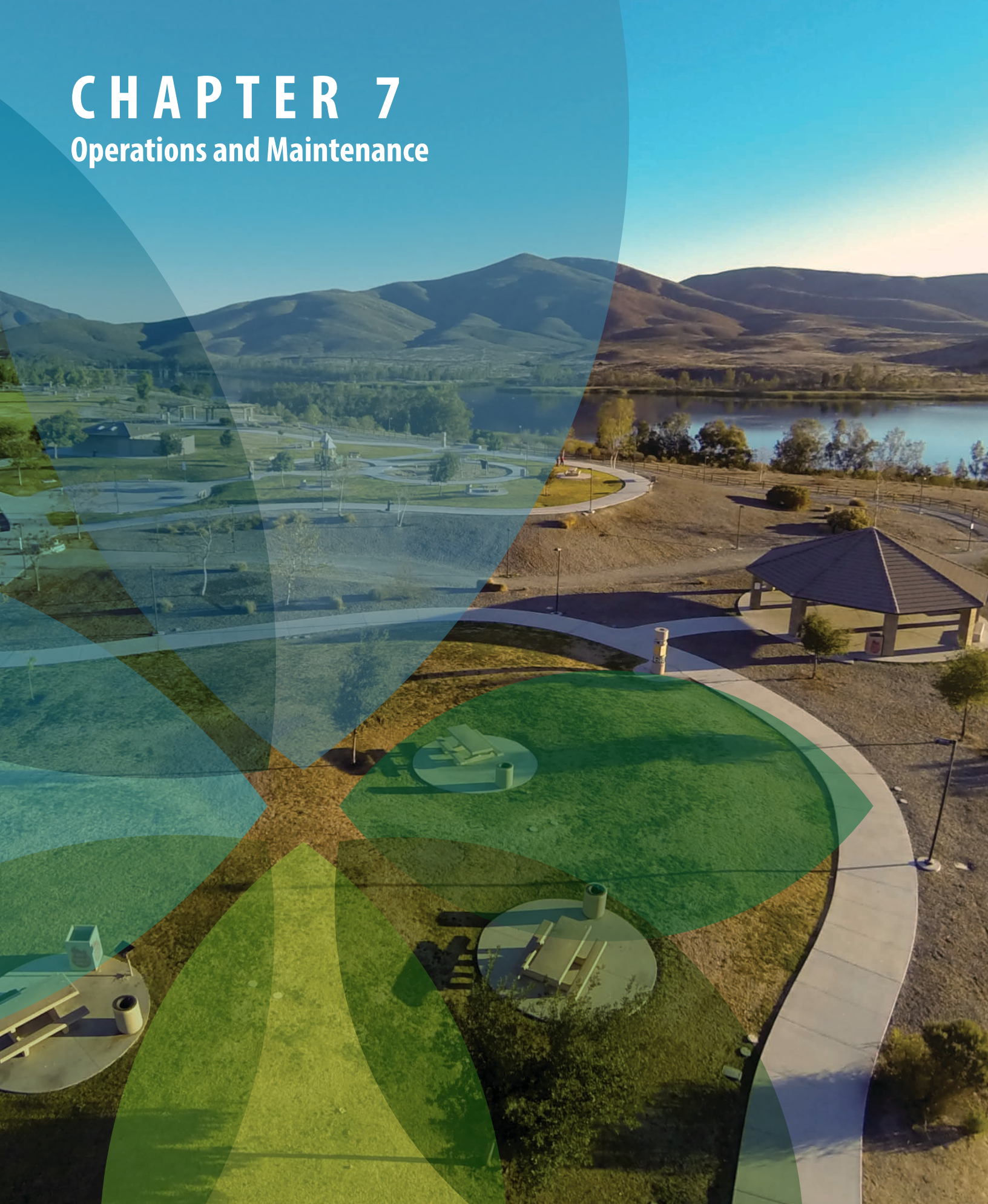


CHAPTER 7

Operations and Maintenance



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CHAPTER 7

OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

A. Overview

Of the overall 718 developed acres within the City of Chula Vista parks and recreation system, City staff operates and maintains 498 acres which is currently comprised of 65 parks and open spaces and 9 recreation facilities. The Parks & Recreation division of the Community Services Department manages programs offered to the community within the Recreation Centers and the park grounds. Parks and Recreation maintain the grounds while the Public Works Department maintains the buildings and other park-related structures, such as picnic shelters.

The FY16/17 budget for Parks maintenance and administration for 498 acres was approximately \$14,050 per acre. The cost per acre has been incrementally rising each year since a major staff downsizing occurred in 2008.

B. Staffing Needs

The “Great Recession” of the late 2000’s reduced staff levels by approximately 25 percent, drastically affecting level of service in the parks. Restrooms are cleaned and stocked once a day rather than twice daily, trash and weed abatement have been reduced in priority. Although, these aesthetic items do not affect the long-term service life of the parks, the overall quality of the park users’ experience is degraded. Preventative maintenance such as painting bleachers, gazebos, tables, and benches has also been impacted. Routine maintenance such as tree trimming, parking lot surfacing and striping, and signage, all have been deferred.



High use of the parks, coupled with rising costs of utilities, increased park acreage, and fixed funding, challenges the staff's ability to maintain the park resources at current levels, while seeing an increased demand for higher quality. As further development and expansion of the park system is anticipated, acceptable service levels will need to be developed and park amenities balanced against available resources.

C. Programming

Recreation classes and activities are programmed in nine Recreation facilities and 2 Aquatic facilities. Over 3,000 programs are provided by these facilities, serving over 29,000 participants annually.

D. Funding

The build out of the citywide park system, as envisioned in the Master Plan would result in approximately 1,237 acres of parkland, 972 acres of which are estimated to be publicly maintained. At an average cost of \$14,050 per acre per year to maintain and operate parkland, the estimated annual cost to maintain the city park acreage inventory (at build out, in 2018 dollars) is \$13.7 million. The operation and maintenance of park and recreation facilities in the City is primarily funded through general fund revenues. This estimated amount does not include costs for facilitating recreational programs. Recreational programs are funded through a combination of user fees, grants, and general fund revenues. The cost to implement, operate and maintain the system contemplated in the Master Plan will be dependent upon future budget capacity.

General fund expenses are presented annually as a part of Parks and Recreation's division of the Community Services departmental budget for consideration by Council. User fees are collected for various park amenities, but only cover a portion of the overall Park Maintenance costs. However, in recent years, certain development projects have established park agreements whereby funding is provided either partially or in whole by a Community Facilities District (CFD). The parks within the Millenia development are examples where funding operations and maintenance funding is provided by 50 percent General Fund and 50 percent CFD. The future Freeway Commercial North (FC-2) park, Centerpark, will be 100 percent funded by the CFD established for that neighborhood.

As park acreage, tied to new development, is constructed and added to the system, commensurate increases in maintenance resources should be considered. These new parks may initially need fewer amenities to ensure they are sustainable. Alternative funding sources may be necessary to support park maintenance resources until general fund revenues catch up to demand and are sustainable.

E. Cost Recovery, Resource Allocation and Revenue Enhancement Study

The Recreation Department has been working with consultants preparing a study with recommendations on this topic. Community meetings were held on the pricing philosophy for programs and their cost recovery percentage. Those recommendations were then presented at the Parks and Recreation Commission on May 21, 2015. The Commission approved the recommendations. The consultant has been working with the Recreation Department and Public Works Department/Park Operations regarding facility use fees (community centers and picnic shelters). The Cost Recovery, Resource Allocation and Revenue Enhancement Study was approved by the Parks and Recreation



Commission on September 5, 2017. Community meetings will be held prior to forwarding the recommendations and Master Fee Schedule update to the City Council for approval. The Cost Recovery, Resource Allocation and Revenue Enhancement Study with PROS Consulting, Inc. will include fee recommendations for facility use, as well as a pricing philosophy for programs with associated tools to evaluate true cost of programs and their cost recovery percentage.

F. Turnover of Parks

City staff typically begins operating and maintaining parks one year from a date established during the final walkthrough meeting. A lesser time period could be negotiated but would need to be stipulated within each park's development agreement. The planting of sod turf versus seed is one method by which turnover of parks could be reduced to less than one year. This approach would shift the focus to outcomes in determining acceptability, rather than timelines. In either case, the contractor would have to demonstrate plant materials are well established (healthy, in a favorable growing environment and roots have anchored into the surrounding soil).

G. Conclusion

At buildout, it is projected that the City could have approximately 1,237 acres and 130 parks and recreation facilities in its inventory. To successfully operate and maintain such an expanded system of community, neighborhood, mini, and urban parks, the Community Services and Public Works departments will depend upon adequate budgets and personnel if they are to keep pace with the recreational demand of Chula Vista residents. As the City continues to grow, those budgets and staffing levels will need to be periodically evaluated and adjusted to ensure the parks and recreation system of facilities, programs, and services are able to meet the recreational demand of Chula Vista's residents.



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