

Livermore Area Recreation and Park District

STAFF REPORT

TO: Chair Pierpont and LARPD Board of Directors

FROM: Mathew Fuzie, General Manager

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DATE: May 4, 2026

SUBJECT: Parks, Recreation, and Trails Master Plan Update
Phase 4: Policy Workshop

RECOMMENDATION:

Review key policy areas identified through the Master Plan process and provide direction. This input will be used to develop goals, policies, and implementation strategies for the updated Master Plan.

BACKGROUND:

Livermore Area Recreation and Park District is currently updating its Parks, Recreation, and Trails Master Plan to guide the future development, maintenance, and programming of parks and recreation services over the next ten years.

The update process has included multiple phases, including baseline system assessment, community outreach and engagement, and stakeholder input. Through this process, staff identified key policy areas where Board direction will help guide development of the draft Master Plan

The Master Plan is intended to establish a long-term framework for how the District prioritizes investments, delivers services, and responds to community needs. The policy discussions in this report are intended to inform the development of goals, policies, and implementation strategies to be incorporated into the updated Master Plan.

DISCUSSION:

The following policy questions are intended to focus Board discussion on key decision areas identified through the Master Plan process, with an emphasis on trade-offs that will guide future decisions.

Policy Question 1: How should projects be evaluated and phased within the Master Plan?

Staff has developed a proposed Project Readiness Framework to guide how projects are evaluated and phased within the Master Plan based on three key factors:

- Priority – Alignment with District goals and community needs
- Funding – Identified capital and/or operational funding
- Title (site control) – Ability to implement the project

This approach is intended to provide a consistent method for determining project readiness across a range of project types.

Project Readiness Framework

- Near-Term: Projects with all three factors
- Mid-Term: Projects with two of the three factors
- Long-Term: Projects with one of the three factors

This framework can be applied to a variety of project types, including facilities, trails, and other capital improvements, and is intended to provide a transparent structure for how projects move forward over time.

Policy Direction: Project Readiness Framework:

Staff is seeking Board direction on whether to use this Project Readiness Framework to guide project evaluation and phasing within the Master Plan.

Potential Approaches for Board Consideration

- *Structured Framework Approach:* Use the proposed three-factor framework as the primary method for evaluating and phasing projects
- *Flexible Framework Approach:* Use the framework as a general guide, allowing exceptions based on strategic opportunities or shifting of Board priorities
- *Priority-Driven Approach:* Place greater emphasis on project priority, with funding and site control addressed after a project is identified as a high priority

Policy Question 2: How should the District define priority when evaluating trail and facility projects?

As part of the Project Readiness Framework, “priority” is a key factor in determining how projects are evaluated and phased. Establishing clear criteria for priority will help ensure consistency and transparency in decision-making.

Staff identified initial considerations for both trail and facility projects as a starting point for discussion.

Initial Considerations for Trail Prioritization:

- Closing system gaps and improving connections
- Expanding access to underserved areas
- Pursuing opportunities to add meaningful trail segments efficiently, such as securing longer sections through a single property owner

Initial Considerations for Facility Prioritization:

- Addressing aging or end-of-life facilities
- Meeting unmet program needs or capacity constraints
- Improving access in underserved areas or for underserved user groups

These are provided as a starting point for discussion. The Board may identify additional considerations that should be reflected in how trail and facility projects are evaluated within the Master Plan.

Potential Approaches for Board Consideration

- *Maintenance and System Completion Focus:* Prioritize closing gaps, addressing aging facilities, and completing existing systems before expanding
- *Balanced Approach:* Balance reinvestment in existing assets with strategic expansion to meet emerging needs
- *Expansion and Opportunity Focus:* Prioritize projects that expand the system or take advantage of strategic opportunities, even if existing needs remain

Policy Question 3: What role should partnerships play in addressing community needs relative to District-led facility development?

Staff identified partnerships as a key strategy for addressing community needs. Partnerships can provide access to existing facilities, shared funding opportunities, and more efficient project delivery.

In some cases, partnerships may allow the District to meet needs without developing new facilities. In others, District-led development may be necessary to ensure access, control, or long-term reliability.

This question focuses on how partnerships should be prioritized relative to new facility development when addressing identified needs.

This strategy may be particularly relevant in coordination with local partners, such as the Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District, the City of Livermore, and other public agencies and community organizations.

Policy Direction: Partnership role in addressing community needs

Staff is seeking Board direction on the role partnerships should play in District-led facility development to address community needs. Each approach reflects a different balance between efficiency, control, and long-term responsibility.

Potential Approaches for Board Consideration

- *Partnership-First Approach:* Prioritize partnerships as the primary strategy for addressing facility and program needs. New District-owned facilities would be pursued when partnership opportunities are not available or do not fully meet the need.
- *Balanced Delivery Approach:* Consider partnerships and new facility development concurrently, evaluating each opportunity based on factors such as cost, control, access, and long-term sustainability. No single approach is prioritized by default.
- *District-Led Approach:* Prioritize development and operation of District-owned facilities to maintain greater control over programming, scheduling, and long-term use. Partnerships would be used selectively to supplement District capacity.

Policy Question 4: How should the District balance cost recovery with providing access to programs?

Programs serve different purposes and, therefore, can be differentiated financially. Some are expected to recover a higher share of their costs, while others provide broader community benefit or improve access.

One approach is to define general program categories to guide cost recovery and subsidy. These categories are not tied to specific programs, but rather to the primary purpose each program serves:

- *Individual Benefit:* Programs that primarily benefit the individual participant and are generally expected to recover a higher share of their costs. (e.g., *specialty classes, camps, fee-based sports leagues*)
- *Community Benefit:* Programs that provide broader community value and may be partially subsidized to encourage participation (e.g., *community events, general recreation programs, drop-in activities*)
- *Access Programs:* Programs designed to reduce barriers to participation and support underserved populations, typically supported through subsidy (e.g., *scholarship-supported programs, adaptive recreation, targeted outreach programs*)

These categories typically operate at different levels of cost recovery. Individual benefit programs are generally expected to recover a higher share of their costs, while community benefit and access-focused programs may be intentionally subsidized to support broader access and participation. This would consider the full cost of delivering programs, including direct costs, facility use, and overhead.

Policy Direction: Cost Recovery Philosophy

Staff is seeking Board direction on the overall approach to cost recovery and subsidy across programs, including whether to formalize program categories and how cost recovery expectations should vary between them. This direction will inform the development of a more detailed Cost Recovery Policy as part of the Master Plan implementation.

Potential Approaches for Consideration

- *Cost Recovery-Focused Approach:* Emphasize higher overall cost recovery across programs, with subsidies applied selectively to targeted community benefit or access programs
- *Balanced Approach:* Maintain a mix of cost recovery and subsidized programs, with clear categories guiding how costs and subsidies are applied
- *Access-Focused Approach:* Prioritize broad access and affordability, with a greater share of programs receiving subsidies to support participation across the community

Policy Question 5: What role should LARPD play in providing arts opportunities in the community?

LARPD provides a wide range of recreation programs, including arts-related classes, workshops, performances, and cultural experiences. Through the Master Plan process, staff identified the need to more clearly define the District's role in arts programming.

Historically, arts programming has been delivered as part of the District's broader recreation offerings, focused on community participation, learning, and enrichment. This approach emphasizes accessible, entry-level experiences rather than the development of professional or commercial arts infrastructure.

There is currently no formal policy framework in the existing Master Plan guiding the District's role in this space.

Clarifying this role will help guide future decisions related to:

- Program offerings and priorities
- Potential facility needs
- Partnerships with arts organizations and providers

Policy Direction: Role in Arts Programming

Staff is seeking Board direction on the role LARPD should play in providing arts opportunities, including the balance between direct programming, partnerships, and potential facility investment.

Potential Approaches for Consideration

- *Recreation-Focused Approach:* Continue to provide arts opportunities as part of the District's recreation offerings, focused on participation, learning, and community

enrichment through classes, workshops, and performances. This approach does not include the development of dedicated arts facilities or support for commercial or studio-based artists.

- *Expanded Programming and Partnership Approach:* Maintain a recreation-based foundation while expanding arts opportunities through partnerships, enhanced programming, and potential use of dedicated or shared spaces. This approach may include deeper collaboration with local arts organizations and exploration of facility needs over time.
- *Facilitator / Partnership-Focused Approach:* Shift toward a more limited direct role in arts programming, focusing primarily on partnerships, space provision, and support for community-based arts providers, with reduced emphasis on District-led programming.

Policy Question 6: What role should LARPD play in the provision, expansion, and long-term management of open space and trails?

LARPD currently plays a role in providing open space, trails, and related programming, including ownership and management of sites such as Sycamore Grove and development of local trail connections.

The current Master Plan includes a range of goals and policies related to open space, conservation, and regional trail connectivity, with a strong emphasis on coordination with partner agencies, including the East Bay Regional Park District, City of Livermore, Alameda County, and others. These policies generally reflect a collaborative approach, where LARPD supports access and connectivity while regional agencies take the lead in providing and managing extensive open space areas.

As part of the current Master Plan update, staff identified the need to clarify the District's long-term role in open space, particularly given evolving opportunities, ongoing coordination with regional partners, and the potential implications of expanded responsibilities.

This includes consideration of land acquisition, trail development, and the long-term maintenance and operational commitments associated with open space assets.

Key Policy Considerations:

- **6a. Role in Open Space:** What role should LARPD play relative to regional partners in providing open space?
- **6b. Land Acquisition and Expansion:** Under what conditions should LARPD pursue acquisition of open space or trail corridors?
- **6c. Long-Term Responsibilities:** How should long-term maintenance and operational responsibilities factor in these decisions?

Policy Direction: Open Space Role and Responsibilities

Staff is seeking Board direction on how LARPD should define its role in open space and trails moving forward. This input will guide how the Master Plan addresses future opportunities in acquisition, development, partnerships, and maintenance responsibilities.

Potential Approaches for Consideration:

- *Expanded District Role Approach:* Take a more active role in the acquisition, development, and long-term management of open space and trail systems.
 - Under this approach, LARPD would:
 - Proactively pursue land acquisition and trail development
 - Take the leadership role in projects with regional partners
 - Increase ownership and management of open space assets
 - Assume greater responsibility for long-term maintenance and operations
- *Partner-Focused Approach:* Continue to emphasize a collaborative approach, where LARPD focuses on local access, trail connections, and programming, while regional agencies take the lead on larger-scale open space acquisition and management.
 - Under this approach, LARPD would:
 - Prioritize coordination with partners
 - Focus on completing local trail connections
 - Limit expansion of owned and maintained open space
- *Balanced / Strategic Expansion Approach:* Maintain a partnership-based foundation while selectively pursuing opportunities to expand LARPD's role in open space and trails where it aligns with District priorities and capacity.
 - Under this approach, LARPD would:
 - Continue coordination with regional partners
 - Pursue acquisition or trail development when opportunities are strategic and feasible
 - Allow for modest expansion of ownership, operation and maintenance of open space

NEXT STEPS:

Following the Policy Workshop, staff will use Board direction to develop draft goals, policies, and implementation strategies for inclusion in the updated Master Plan.

In addition, staff will return to the Board at the May 13, 2026, meeting with two additional policy items for focused discussion:

- **System Condition Standard:** Establishing a long-term target for the condition of District parks and facilities
- **Lifecycle-Based Funding Approach:** Defining how the District funds ongoing maintenance and replacement of assets over time, including consideration of lifecycle costs and potential funding strategies

These items are more implementation-focused and will build upon the broader policy direction provided through the Master Plan process.

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