

May 15, 2023

Hon. Mayor and City Councilmembers
City of Escondido

RE: Comments on the Grape Day Park Master Plan

Dear Hon. Mayor and Councilmembers,

We understand the city is updating its master plan for Grape Day Park to add a new pool. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the plan update.

The Escondido Creek Conservancy (Conservancy) was founded in 1991 with a mission to preserve and restore the Escondido Creek watershed, including that portion of Escondido Creek which runs in a concrete ditch through the center of the city of Escondido. Multiple studies, including the *Escondido Creek Watershed Opportunities Analysis (2015)* identified creek channelization and loss of wetland habitat as leading to degradation of water quality, wildlife habitat, and loss of a park and recreation for residents and visitors.

Cities all over the world have used creek and river restoration projects to drive economic development and housing as, when creeks and rivers are restored, and new park space is created, neighborhoods become more inviting and welcoming, and developers more eager to invest. Over the past decades, a new and broader view of parks has emerged that goes well beyond the traditional value of parks as places of recreation and as visual assets to communities, and focuses on how policymakers, practitioners, and the public can begin to think about parks as valuable contributors to larger urban policy objectives: job opportunities, youth development, public health, and community building. (Urban Institute 2004).

More green space is especially needed in Escondido where urban residents are park-poor compared with other cities. For example, Escondido's parks per 1,000 people score is .62; Vista is 1.52, Los Angeles is 1.88. (California State Parks, Community Fact Finder)

To enhance the quality of water and life for people in Escondido, the Conservancy worked with city staff and other stakeholders to develop the *Grape Day Park Water Quality Improvement & Green Space Enhancement Project (June 2021)*. The city of Escondido has a tremendous opportunity with the updating of the Grape Day Park Master Plan to implement improvements suggested in this document and the associated economic study to create a water quality improvement and urban green space enhancement project to both reduce and treat water pollution into Escondido Creek while also creating a new park for Escondido's residents and visitors. The Maple Plaza entry area would be an excellent focal point to draw pedestrians to an enhanced Grape Day Park. The Conservancy has provided both documents to the city for your consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

5/15/2023

Ann Van Leer
Executive Director

