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Print Date: Wednesday, December 6, 2006

Last modified: Tuesday, December 5, 2006 3:28 PM PST

Parks, Rec master plan adopted

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Increased park and recreation facilities may soon be a reality for El Dorado Hills, thanks to adoption of the 2006 Parks and Recreation Master Plan by the EDH Community Services District Board of Directors last week.

Board members also adopted the Park Impact Fee Nexus Study, which broke down estimated plan costs.

Though the board itself is unable to implement increased park fees, members recommended the county Board of Supervisors adopt the fees suggested in the Nexus study.

The master plan, which took 18 months to complete, outlines a vision for enhancing parks and recreational facilities in El Dorado Hills over the next 15 years, when buildout is expected.

Impact fees will be applied to new development and are estimated at \$15,399 for a single-family household, an increase of 118 percent.

The total cost of the master plan was calculated to be \$131 million. Of that amount, \$94 million will come from new development.

CSD has been losing money on park construction because current park fees don't cover costs.

"Every day we delay the existing deficiency gets bigger," Director Joe Chinn said. "Now is the time to get fees in place."

"In 15 years, we will see our community double in population," CSD Vice President Larry Brilliant warned. "If you don't think we have enough parks and recreational facilities now, then hold on."

Brilliant called the parks not the backbone, but the heart and soul of a community. "It's the biggest tragedy that we have to send our children to park in another community's park," he said.

At a public hearing held before adoption, community members were split in their support of the plan. While some felt the plan should be adopted immediately to remedy the park deficit, others thought it neglected to recognize specific groups, like seniors and children.

Senior advocate and EDH resident Moni Gilmore called the plan a disappointment. "I feel like CSD doesn't understand the senior community's social and recreational needs," she told the board.

She called on CSD board members to revise the plan to "reflect the most realistic approach to fulfilling respect towards older people."

James Jory, a resident of the Promontory, said the plan failed to give priority to promised elements of Promontory Park, building only what he called adult, rather than child-friendly, facilities in Phase I.

CSD Planning Director Dianna Hillyer pointed out during the meeting that the public had been invited to comment through a variety of means, including an Aug. 17 open house, a comprehensive phone survey, a park survey, and committees.

The study, she said, had also been posted at the County Clerk's office and at CSD office.

Board members and residents eager for sports facilities felt that, though it may contain imperfections, the plan should not wait any longer.

Board President Justin Masters reminded those in attendance that the plan is "by no means static, and can be

modified in the future."

Some residents were concerned about the plan's costs, which are relatively higher than other communities. However, the study took into account unique features of EDH.

"The reason fees are high is that we've got hills, rocks in the soil, asbestos litigation to deal with. We have EID for water and sewage." Chinn said. Though large, he called the fees fundable.

"People moved here because it was a great place to be. Let's act now and continue to make this a great place to be," Chinn said.

President Masters added "the value of El Dorado Hills is high enough so the prices we ask for are commensurate to what people coming here want."

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