



# County of San Mateo

## Inter-Departmental Correspondence

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**Department:** PARKS COMMISSION

**File #:** PARKS-19-004

Board Meeting Date: 2/19/2019

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**To:** Honorable Parks Commissioners

**From:** Peggy Jensen, Interim Parks Director

**Subject:** The I.D.E.A. Initiative, Making San Mateo County Parks Accessible and Welcoming to all County Residents

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

7.1 Accept the report regarding the I.D.E.A. Initiative.

### **BACKGROUND:**

The I.D.E.A. Initiative is being developed by the San Mateo County Parks Department to improve Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (I.D.E.A.) in County parks. The initiative is in response to research conducted by San Francisco State University that found while park visitors enjoyed their time in County parks, some community groups were under-represented among parks guests. Members of these under-represented groups cited language, lack of information about the parks, and access and transportation as barriers to their use of County parks.

At a study session in December 2018, the Parks Commission heard speakers present on the importance of community partnerships and providing programs relevant to different communities as keys to improving inclusiveness. The Commission also heard about the importance of welcoming everyone to the parks, especially young people who may not have spent much time participating in outdoor activities.

Parks staff, under the leadership of the Visitor Experience team headed by Laurel Finnegan and including Katherine Wright, are leading the I.D.E.A. Initiative and have developed the following plan. Parks staff welcomes the Commission's comments on the I.D.E.A. Initiative and looks forward to implementing the plan and reporting back to the Commission on accomplishments.

### **DISCUSSION:**

The I.D.E.A. Initiative is comprised of five strategies: (1) outreach, (2) events, (3) environmental education, (4) access, and (5) staff. These strategies complement each other, and leverage partnerships to achieve the initiative's objectives. Below, the Department has outlined the goal of each strategy and how it will be accomplished.

1. **Outreach:** Promoting San Mateo County Parks by using various media channels and providing

information in the languages of our residents

- Translating brochures and self-guided tour sheets into Spanish, Chinese, and Tagalog
- Offering translated versions of the Department's website in Spanish, Chinese, Filipino, Myanmar, Portuguese, and Russian
- Fostering relationships with youth, environmental, and community organizations
- Quarterly event schedule brochure
- Use of social media to engage with youth

2. Events: Host a variety of events that celebrate the diverse communities, interests, and cultures in San Mateo County

- Themed hikes offered in English and Spanish
- Sam McDonald History Hike for Black History Month
- Dia de los Muertos at Friendship Park
- Kite Festival at Coyote Point
- Movies in the Park
- Art activities at various locations

3. Environmental Education: Engage youth in science-based learning and connect them with the outdoors

- Title I schools - Ranger in the Classroom (Title I schools - at least 40% of students are considered low income)
- Title I schools field trips to parks
- Partnering with various Friends groups to support large field trips
- Vida Verde partnership on Thursdays
- Junior Ranger program at rotating locations

4. Access: Making parks more accessible to all County residents by removing financial, transportation, and physical barriers

- Library partnership will allow patrons to check-out annual park passes and backpacks with maps and hiking resources
- Partnering with the San Mateo County Parks Foundation to fund transportation costs for Title I schools field trips to Parks
- Working with Parks Foundation on sponsoring "free days"
- Considering eliminating entry fees at Flood County Park
- ADA improvements to bring existing amenities into compliance

5. Staff: Develop a Parks staff that is culturally aware and represents the diversity of the County

- Continued commitment to hiring a diverse staff
- Expanding bi-lingual pay
- Puente park aide
- Bi-lingual Internship for the Interpretive program - bilingual events
- Future Peninsula Working Group training for multiple agencies regarding Unconscious Bias, Cultural Competency, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion