

# Council listens to ideas for parks

By Keri Heath The Herald-Zeitung | Posted: Thursday, November 30, 2017 12:00 am

The New Braunfels City Council heard recommendations for a Parks and Recreation Master Plan during a special session on Tuesday night at city hall.

The presentation urged council members to think seriously about buying land to build additional parks, in addition to updating current parkland.

New Braunfels' park acreage currently falls short of the National Parks Service's (NPS) recommendation. This is based on area population.

In fact, the city's behind by about 500 acres, said Michael Svetz, senior project manager at Pros Consulting.

The group is partnering with the city to develop a Parks and Recreation Master Plan for the next 10 to 15 years.

"You're not a small town," Svetz said. "I know you have very small-town values but when you look at it in terms of population, you are growing and growing significantly. You're responsible for meeting a lot of needs."

Svetz pointed out that the core areas of the community are well served with parks such as Landa, but that the regions outside of central New Braunfels need more community and neighborhood parks.

Most cities in Texas have about 10 to 15 acres of park per 1,000 residents, Svetz said. New Braunfels has 4.96 acres per thousand.

He suggests expanding New Braunfels parkland to 10.1 acres per thousand within the next 10 years.

A master plan of this magnitude would include current upkeep, expansion of services, and new or major projects, Svetz said. This would cost about \$96 million over the next 10 years.

Svetz's statistics suggested the city will grow 41 percent in the next 15 years, so New Braunfels not only has to catch up to its current parks demand, but also plan for future growth. He noted that building the Das Rec Center is a huge step in that direction.

But what the city really needs to do, he said, is acquire land, even if a park isn't developed on it for years.

"If you don't buy land now, you're kicking the can down the road and the cost is going to go up incrementally every year and the availability of it (the land) will become more and more scarce," Svetz said.

Other suggested priorities over the next 10 years included a trail master plan, land acquisition, the Landa Park Master Plan and Kerlick Avenue Park.

“The public very much values your (the city’s) parks and recreation system,” Svetz said. “They feel that parks provide community connectivity.”

This statement is based on an online survey conducted last year that asked participants to consider their priorities for parks and recreation facilities. About 400 people responded to the survey.

Several council members noted this expansion of parks services would bring additional concerns. More parks would require more parks and recreation staff. Funding sources would need to be identified. It was also suggested that updates for Cyprus Bend Park be added as a priority.

In addition, council members noted that within the next 20 years, the Veramendi project will add about 400 acres of park land. However, Stacey Dicke, parks and recreation director, pointed out that the development will also bring new residents, who will need more park services.

Pros Consulting will take suggestions from the council on Tuesday night to develop a new recommended master plan. This will be presented to the council, most likely, in January 2018.

On Tuesday, the city council also named Harry Bowers as the new member of the planning commission. He is currently on the Community Development Advisory Committee.

Bowers’ term will end May 31, 2019.