



Town of Danville DRAFT Staff Strategy Session Summary August 2016

Introduction

On July 20, 2016, the Town of Danville held its Staff Strategy Session for the Danville Parks, Recreation and Arts Strategic Plan Update. Approximately 22 staff participated in the session, representing a wide range of departments and responsibilities across the Town. The primary goals of the staff strategy session were to:

- Inform Town staff about the **community engagement and Environmental Scan results** to date;
- **Share best practices and trends** in parks, recreation and arts systems across the county;
- Generate discussion around **ideas and strategies for strengthening Danville’s parks, recreation and arts system.**

I. Community Engagement and Environmental Scan Results

Henry Perezalonso, Recreation, Arts and Community Services Manager for the Town of Danville, welcomed Town staff to the strategy session and asked staff members introduce themselves and their role to the group. Then, Jamillah Jordan, lead facilitator from MIG, provided an update of community engagement efforts completed to date, including:

- Intercept events
- Stakeholder interviews
- Focus groups
- Online questionnaire
- Community workshop

One staff member asked how the participants in engagement efforts are representative of Danville residents, and the impact of online versus in-person outreach. Lauren Schmitt, Principal at MIG, explained how the past engagement activities collected demographic information, so that the Town can ensure that the sampling of those involved are representative of the larger Danville community. Jamillah Jordan also explained the role of intercept events to reach those that do not normally attend formal outreach events such as community workshops by “meeting people where they are” including at coffee shops, parks, and other community events. One attendee indicated he would like to see outreach flyers posted at parks to promote community input opportunities, similar to the Osage Station Park Master Plan Update process.

II. Current Trends and Best Practices

Lauren Schmitt presented current trends and best practices for parks, recreation and arts systems across the country.

1. Programming is the biggest determinant of park use.
2. Park and recreation partnerships can increase system capacity.
3. Parks can aid in successful aging.
4. Diversifying arts programs can support economic development and social change.
5. Parks can address public health issues.
6. Street connectivity can improve park use.

Henry Perezalonso remarked that it was encouraging that many of these best practices are already being implemented or discussed by Danville staff. Staff highlighted that the most recent scavenger hunt with businesses as part of the “May the Fourth” event was an example of a partnership that is in line with national trends.

III. Connectivity, Access and Partnership Analysis

Using an interactive mapping tool, Jamillah Jordan and Lauren Schmitt walked participants through a visual exercise on connectivity and access. By clicking on and off quarter mile, half mile, and mile “travel sheds” around parks’ access points, participants could see what areas in the Town are served at different distances, and where there are facility gaps (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). Lauren Schmitt highlighted how thinking about connectivity projects and organizational partnerships can increase people’s access to the parks, recreation and arts system.

Figure 1. Half Mile Connectivity of Town, Regional and School Parks in Danville.

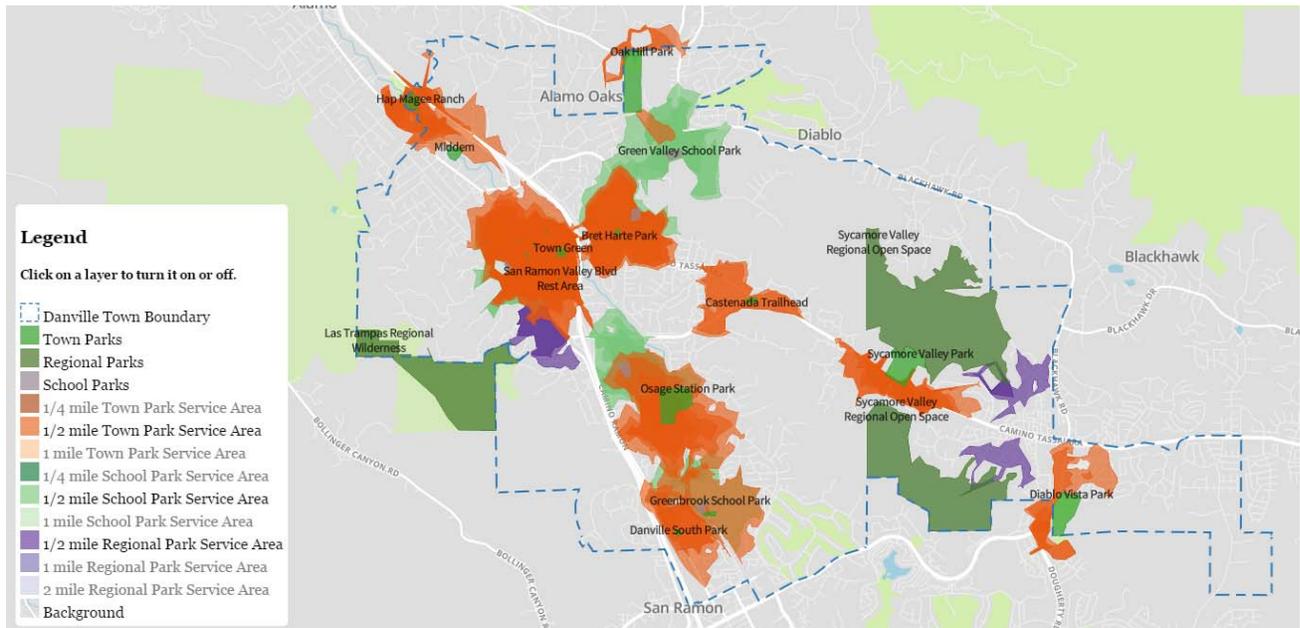
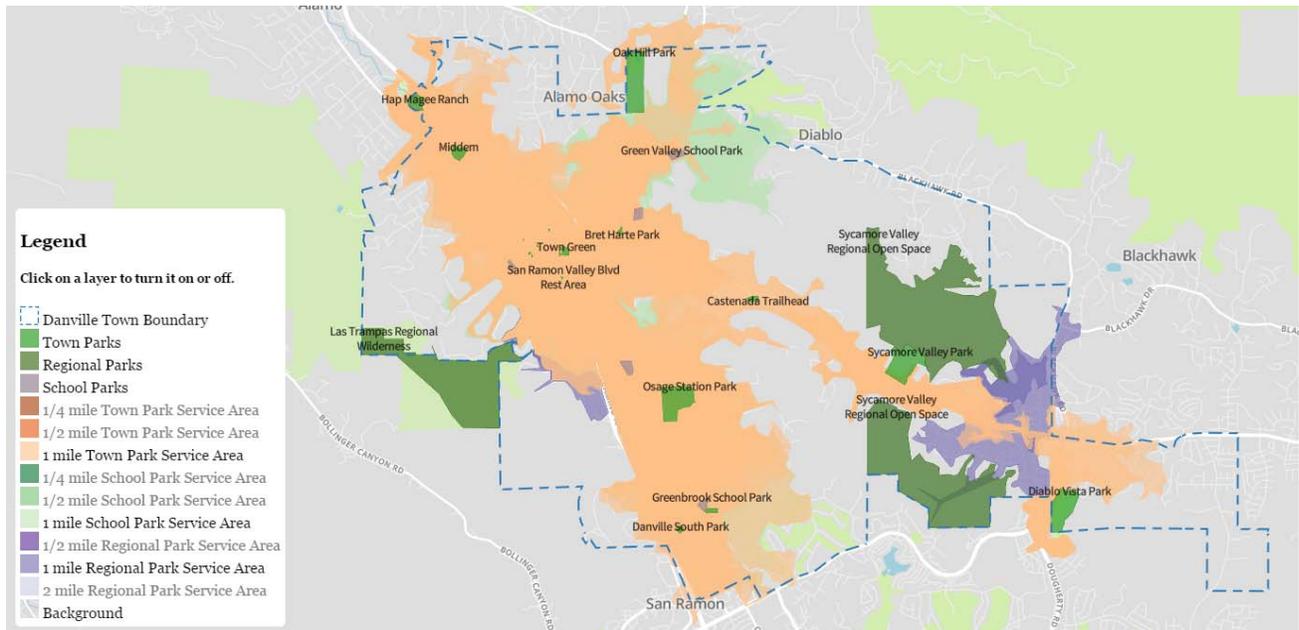


Figure 2. One Mile Connectivity of Town, Regional and School Parks in Danville.



IV. Staff Discussion

Following presentations to staff, MIG facilitated a staff discussion to hear from staff about their ideas for projects and partnerships that should be included as part of the Update. The following ideas gained momentum within the conversation:

- **Increasing visibility of existing trails.** Staff highlighted that there are many connecting trails around Town, but residents are currently unaware of these trails. Tai Williams, Administrative Services Director at Danville, indicated that she has explored many of “hidden” trails with her running group.
 - Staff noted they would like to see a trail map developed, and it should include trails owned and maintained by the Town, HOAs, and other local agencies.
 - One staff noted that there is an opportunity to create social or interactive places at trail heads, through art exhibits, picnic benches, and creative signage.
- **Piloting outdoor recreation projects.** Staff members expressed interest in the idea of piloting a portable pump track and other outdoor recreation projects, that could be geared towards helping younger children learn basic skills. Other projects that were discussed included mobile climbing walls, mobile BMX equipment, and other “special event” activities at parks and outdoor venues.
 - Another staff recommended that outdoor recreation projects be introduced through pilot projects – so that the Town can test popularity and identify any issues before committing substantial staff and financial resources.
 - Staff members also expressed concerns regarding liability issues for pilot projects.
- **Developing community-built and maintained projects.** Staff members discussed the possibility of creating community-built projects, such as a parks, community gardens, or pump tracks. One attendee noted that it would be helpful to have a “community

maintenance group” or an “adopt-a-park” group that is invested in maintaining the Hap Magee dog park- a constant area of complaint for residents.

- **Engaging the health community.** Henry Perezalonso proposed the idea of further engaging the health community, especially the Palo Alto Medical Center which is located within Danville. He sees alignment between the parks programming work Danville is doing, and the efforts of local medical centers to promote healthy lifestyles and preventive health measures.
- **Building interactive public art.** A few staff members noted that they would like to see more interactive art around town, such as climb-able structures.
- **Maximizing use of the Town Green.** Staff members commented that the Town Green is an under-utilized space. By adding a few additional features such as a stage or mobile seating options, the Town Green could become a popular destination for Danville residents, and serve as the Town’s “living room”. In this capacity, the Town Green could be a multi-use space used both for special events (such as music in the park and the Farmers’ Market) and for informal social gatherings with move-able outdoor seating.
 - The City of Concord hosts a Farmers Market music series at Todos Santos Park and this was mentioned as a model for Danville to replicate.
 - A participant proposed looking at the Farmers’ Market at Arcata Plaza as a venue with a strong sense of place, lively music, vendors and leisure recreation activities, such as Frisbee and hula hoop.

Figure 3. Danville staff discuss projects and ideas that can increase the capacity of Danville’s parks, recreation and arts system.



- **Expanding theater spaces.** Staff noted that the Village Theatre downtown is often over-programmed, and there is a capacity issue at the facility preventing additional programming. Henry Perezalonso noted that with the opening of a theater at the new Kids Country facility, some of the kids programming may move there, freeing up the Village Theatre facility.

- In addition, staff members talked about the possibility of building an outdoor venue or amphitheater for additional performing arts.
- A staff member proposed a 1% art fee that is collected from local real estate developments to help fund new art facilities and programs.
- After the Strategy Session, a staff member also proposed expanding the “Thursdays at the Village Theatre” program to show more recent films that have left first-run theaters at reduced prices.
- **Considering temporary art.** Some staff members felt that the Commissioners and the public may react well to temporary art exhibits. One attendee highlighted the recent Sweater Tree exhibits in Livermore, where the City featured knitted “sweaters” wrapped around downtown trees for about a month.
- **Creating a Town meeting space with built in infrastructure.** Staff noted that it would be helpful to have more spaces where seating, stages, and sound equipment were already built into Town facilities.
- **Programming informal art performances.** One staff member recounted the informal art performances located at street corners that he experienced when visiting France. Other staff agreed that cultivating mini-performances around Town could be a low-cost and high impact way to bring more performing arts viewing opportunities to residents.
- **Showcasing visual art in restaurants.** Staff discussed how the Town could further showcase and support local visual artists. One of the ideas included creating a formalized Town program that created a directory of businesses that are showing artists work around Town.

Figure 4. Lauren Schmitt of MIG and Danville staff discuss successful parks and recreation practices from other areas across the country.



V. Next Steps

The ideas and discussion generated at this Staff Strategy Session will be used to shape the recommendations outlined in the Parks, Recreation and Arts Needs Assessment currently being developed by MIG.