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Hallandale officials pitch plan for improved parks

MICHAEL W. SASSER Special Correspondent

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Hallandale Beach recently contracted with a consultant for the development of a citywide Parks Master Plan.

The City Commission in late February approved a \$249,592 contract between the city and Bermello Ajamil & Partners Inc. The contract was recommended by the city administration and stemmed from a request for proposals.

"This city is in transition from a sleepy beachside town to a vibrant destination," said City Manager Administrator Jennifer Frastai. "We want to make sure we maintain our quality of life, and one important way to do that is parks."

A centerpiece of the master plan is likely to be recommendations for the city's main park, Peter Bluesten Park, and two parcels adjacent to it. Bluesten Park is considered a key component to the possible development of a town center. However, the use of all parks citywide will be evaluated in the master plan process.

"We want a full evaluation of parks, to get community input and to create a comprehensive citywide parks system," Frastai said.

The need is prompted by growth. Frastai cited as an example the city's Police Athletic League sports program. A couple of years ago, she said, the program was servicing 200 to 300 people. Today, that number is up to 1,500.



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"We really have to find out what is needed at parks and what the community needs and wants," Frastai said. "We have a lot more young families now and a more-diverse population."

Frastai said the consultants would have meetings with residents in each quadrant of the city to collect input before finishing any plans to present to the city. Some residents are anticipating the process.

"Some of our parks get so crowded, it's a challenge at times to even safely jog around," said resident Mario Jimenez, 34. "Other times, I will drive by a park and there will be only a couple of kids and a lot of open space."

Usage is one aspect that the Parks Master Plan will take into consideration. Frastai said the spaces "have to be complementary. We can't have a baseball field in every park."

The consultant's eventual proposed master plan will include design, a capital improvement schedule, construction costs and operating expenses.

"It will be a very comprehensive plan," Frastai said. She added that the city has funds remaining from the Parks Bond that permitted the acquisition of the two parcels adjacent to Bluesten Park.

The time frame for the Parks Master Plan development is uncertain, Frastai said. She said that the consultants should be scheduling community meetings in the next few months.

Jimenez is eager to see what may be in store. "We've got very good parks here now," he said. "But they could always be improved."

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