

# MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and Council  
**THROUGH:** Keith Burke                      Community Services Director  
**FROM:** Craig Hayton                      Parks Manager  
**DATE:** April 4, 2019  
**SUBJECT:** Rio Salado Implementation Plan



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## PURPOSE:

Staff is following up on the adopted Rio Salado Master Plan with an implementation plan.

## RECOMMENDATION OR DIRECTION REQUESTED:

1. Develop conceptual plans for the top 2 scoring activity zones, identifying individual element prioritization, costs & funding options.
2. Develop design guidelines for the Rio Salado, including signage, plant palette, site furnishings, and other design element details.

## CITY COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITY:

Quality of Life:

3.16 – Achieve ratings of "Very Satisfied" or "Satisfied" with the Quality of City recreation, arts, and cultural centers greater than or equal to the national benchmark cities as measured in the Community Survey.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

### Master Plan Review:

The Rio Salado Master Plan, adopted by Mayor and Council on November 29, 2018, represents the future development and improvement of Tempe's Rio Salado parks. The Master Plan is a comprehensive and inclusive roadmap for public and private development surrounding the Tempe Town Lake for the next 20-30 years, fulfilling Tempe's vision for the Rio Salado as a grand public amenity, desirable destination, and point of pride for the community. Central to the plan are five guiding principles, each of which ensures diversity in design and planning, while maintaining consistent vision and level of quality. They include:

1. Public Ownership: Balance between special events and everyday experiences.
2. Connectivity: Multimodal access from near and far; connections to various networks and neighborhoods.
3. Shade: Trees as primary source with supplementary structures related to new developments.
4. Opportunity: Vibrant combination of active and passive activities for all walks of life.
5. Sustainability: Environmental stewardship, flora and fauna conservation, ease of maintenance.

These guiding principles set the stage for the identification and planned development of twelve distinct activity zones (see Appendix A), covering the project's boundaries: the north and south sides of the Rio Salado, from Priest Drive on the west to McClintock Drive on the east. Each activity zone includes possible elements and uses, consistent with either the current or future use and feel of each area of the Rio Salado parks. The plan concludes with several implementation strategies, stressing the importance of ensuring consistency with the adopted plan, while focusing on the exploration of programming and activity zone/node improvements. The plan also references a variety of sources to fund the improvements and recommends further research to determine their potential.

### **Implementation Plan:**

To ensure continued momentum from the recently adopted master plan, staff has followed up with an *implementation plan*. This plan provides strategies to assist key collaborators in attaining the vision of the adopted Rio Salado Master Plan through initial and long-term actions related to programming, improvements, and funding. The goal of the Rio Salado *implementation plan* is to focus on the critical first steps, ensuring overall continuity with the master plan, while recommending a clear pathway forward for this important and generational planning and development effort.

### Programming:

Though the adopted master plan primarily focuses on physical improvements to the Rio Salado and its parks, the plan recommends building up the active environment of the park by exploring programming possibilities and options that have proven successful in other parks. Because much of what the Rio Salado parks offer currently are passive experiences, this key recommendation seeks to build the recreational capacity and value of the park through additional active uses. Initial programming plans proposed by staff include making the four sand volleyball courts on the north side of the Rio Salado into reservable courts. Other minor court improvements could be made to increase court use, as identified in the recent Council Working Group, like changing the court configuration to north/south, adding lights, and increasing the quality of the court drainage and sand. Staff has also explored making Tempe Beach Park a stop for the Play Mobile, which seeks to increase the activity index of a park by providing active elements and supporting staff to areas that are currently underserved. Finally, yoga in the park is being considered for larger lawn areas in the Rio Salado, like Tempe Beach Park. This has proven successful in other Tempe parks, like Clark and Papago, as well as other waterfront parks nationally, including New York City. Other programming options will be explored with the Downtown Tempe Authority to increase the Rio Salado's connectivity with downtown Tempe.

### Improvements:

Much of the adopted Rio Salado Master Plan focuses on physical improvements to the Rio Salado parks. As a first step, a quick review of the City's approach to capital improvements is helpful to properly frame the types of improvements proposed, and where they fit in with the current capital improvement program (CIP) approach.

The current asset management approach to CIP projects includes four levels:

1. Public Health & Safety
2. Existing Assets (i.e., take care of what we have)
3. Customer Enhancements
4. System Expansion & New Amenities

Levels 1 and 2 focus on assets that already exist within the Rio Salado parks, and will continue to be addressed and prioritized based on condition rating. The condition of these existing assets will be assessed alongside similar infrastructure categories in the entire park system. Levels 3 and 4 focus on new assets being added into the park system and catalogue, and this is where the improvements identified within the Rio Salado Master Plan fit. These improvements are similar to the Recreational Value CIP, which fund park improvements to generate different opportunities for playing, interacting, and drawing people of all ages to visit a park. Additional amenities will improve park user experiences and therefore, add to the recreational value of the Rio Salado park system.

The Rio Salado park system is the largest in the City, exceeding 135 acres, and implementation of the master plan will take place over the next 2-3 decades. It is critical that the planning effort include a systematic and well-thought out methodology for evaluating the improvements to be made.

Therefore, as part of the implementation plan, staff has generated a matrix to score and prioritize the twelve different activity zones. Each activity zone has been scored and prioritized by gauging the impact and potential of possible improvements. Each of these two categories represents 50% of an activity zone's total score.

1. **Improvement Impact** – the level of impact that improvements would have in an activity zone. The more developed the zone is currently, the less of an impact an improvement would have on it (and the lower the score for this category).

2. **Improvement Potential** – the type and amount of improvements an activity zone could receive. Points are awarded for improvements that include active activities, passive activities, special event use, everyday use and the the inclusion of restrooms as a support amenity

Each activity zone has been scored using these two categories. The scored and prioritized Activity Zone Matrix can be found in Appendix B. Based on this methodology, the top two scoring zones are ENTERTAINMENT NORTH SHORE and RECREATION/ADVENTURE.

Funding:

A planning effort as extensive in scale and scope as the Rio Salado Master Plan requires researching multiple funding options, as outlined in the plan's implementation strategy. In order to gauge the overall possible cost of the improvements to the Rio Salado parks, staff researched comparable water or riverfront park projects, which are similar in scope and scale to Rio Salado's individual activity zones. These comparable park projects provide helpful reference points for the type of amenities, how they were planned, and overall construction costs. A list of comparable projects can be found in Appendix C. The average cost of these comparable projects is \$2.6 M per acre and this provides an order of magnitude of the range of costs for developing the Rio Salado. See Appendix D.

Funding options for implementing the improvements can be placed into two general categories: Public and Private.

Public options include:

- CIP sources such as General Obligation Bonds, Development Impact Fees, and the Community Facilities District;
- Grants, such as Indian Gaming Grants as well as other local, state and federal grants;
- Revenue from future land sales.

Private funding was used for portions of the projects in other cities. Private options include:

- Private development funding for improvements bordering their properties (examples are Guiliano Park and the current Watermark project);
- Public Private Partnerships (PPP) for projects that provide both a public benefit and recurring revenue stream for the private company (allowing them to recoup their investment);
- Sponsorships and naming rights – these have been used in the midwestern and east coast projects.

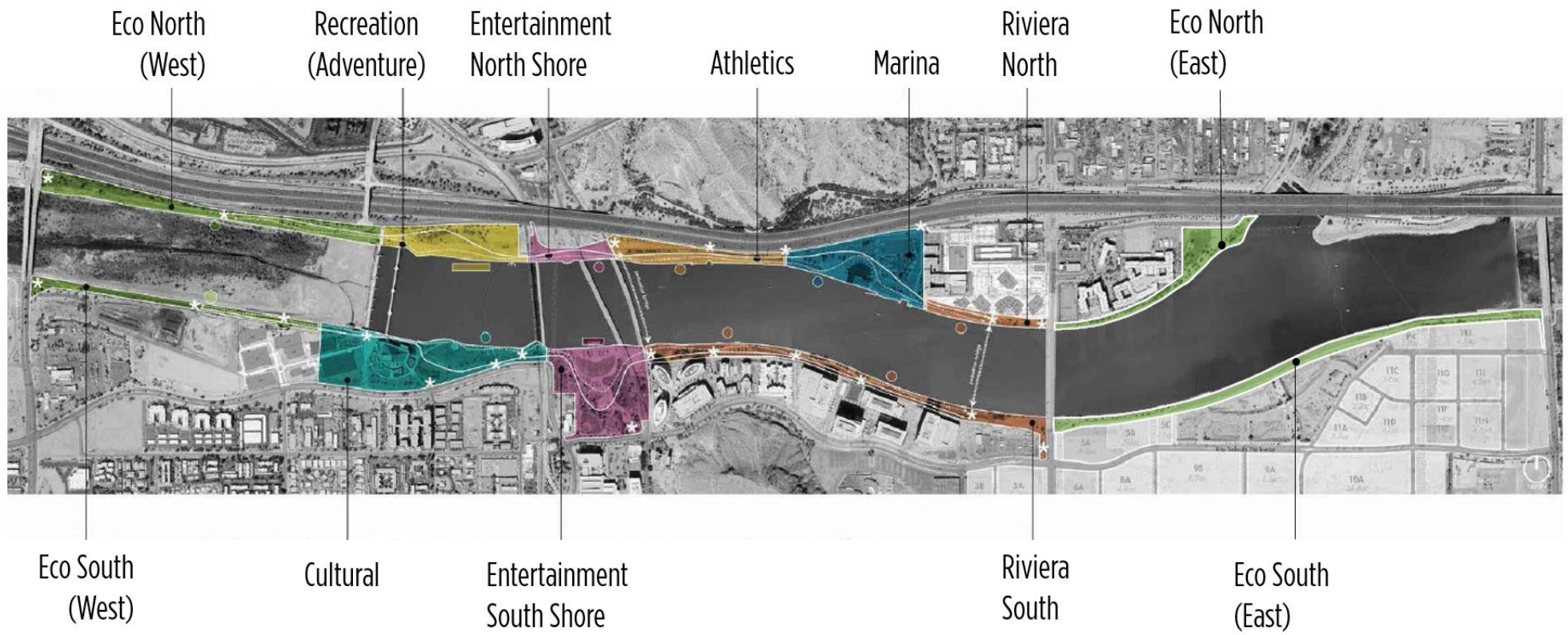
**FISCAL IMPACT or IMPACT TO CURRENT RESOURCES:**

An estimated \$50,000-\$75,000 funded through Development Impact Fees could be utilized to develop the top two activity zone concepts (Entertainment North Shore and Recreation/Adventure) and create design guidelines for the Rio Salado.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Appendixes A, B, C & D

Appendix A:



Appendix B:

		Improvement Impact					Improvement Potential							
		Current Status					Uses/Elements							
Area	Side	Undeveloped <--> Developed					Improvement Impact Score	Active Elements	Passive Elements	Events/Tournaments/Revenue	Everyday Use	Restrooms (additional)	Improvement Potential Score (1 pt. per dot)	TOTAL SCORE
		5	4	3	2	1								
Entertainment North Shore	North	•					5		•	•	•	•	4	9
Recreation (Adventure)	North		•				4	•	•	•	•		4	8
Athletics	North			•			3	•	•	•	•		4	7
Eco South (east)	South	•					5		•		•		2	7
Entertainment South Shore	South			•			3	•	•	•	•		4	7
Riviera North	North	•					5		•		•		2	7
Marina	North				•		2	•	•	•	•		4	6
Eco North (east)	North				•		2	•	•		•		3	5
Eco North (west)	North			•			3		•		•		2	5
Eco South (west)	South					•	1	•	•		•	•	4	5
Cultural	South					•	1		•	•	•		3	4
Riviera South	South				•		2		•		•		2	4

Appendix C:

City	Park Name	Park Type	Year Completed	Parks Description	Park Elements	Size (Acres)	Total Cost	Cost/Acre
Baltimore	Rash Field Park	Inner Harbor Park	TBD	Rash Field, located on the south side of the Inner Harbor will be redesigned into an active and attractive park space that will serve a diverse user base through added amenities and increased programming.	The Rash Field Park experience is at its core about connection, serving as a city-wide hub of innovation supporting education & ecology, health & wellness, recreation & play, and programming & entertainment.	8	\$20M	\$2.5M
Cincinnati	Smale Riverfront Park	Riverfront Park	2015	Smale Riverfront Park reconnects downtown to the Ohio River and links the chain of parks along the water. It is a park of vistas, of gatherings and celebrations, of recreation, contemplation, and inspiration. The River is always alive here, and this place is a kind of community epicenter for our River City.	Located on 45-acres along Cincinnati's downtown riverfront, park features include splash grounds and water play areas, playground, picnic area, Carol Ann's Carousel, Moerlein Lager House and more.	45	\$92M	\$2.0M
Columbus	Bicentennial Park	Riverfront Park	2015	Historically one of Columbus' most popular parks, Bicentennial Park has been transformed to a downtown destination offering something for everyone.	The addition of a one-of-kind fountain, park restaurant and eye-catching performance pavilion. From flower gardens to fountain play and concerts to culinary delights.	11	\$42M	\$3.8M
Louisville	Waterfront Park (Phase IV)	Riverfront Park	TBD	This 22-acre expansion of Waterfront Park will extend public open space along the Ohio River corridor, uniting downtown and West Louisville along the waterfront, becoming the newest addition to this world class park.	Programmable space & activation, observation pier; railyard plaza, experiential learning area, confluence plaza, Fort-On-Shore Plaza, Foundry Commons, Midway Connector, exerscape	22	\$35M	\$1.6M
Pittsburgh	Riverfront North Shore	Riverfront Park	2001	The North Shore Riverfront Park is the result of a \$35 million investment in rehabilitation and reconstruction on the northern banks of the Allegheny and Ohio Rivers.	The park includes 11.25 acres of public and green space. Specifically, the park contains 3.1 acres of lawn and 2.1 acres of planting area. The remaining acreage is dedicated to a riverwalk, walkways, memorials, and public art.	11.25	\$35M	\$3.1M
							<b>Average Cost/Acre</b>	<b>\$2.6M</b>

Appendix D:

<b>Area</b>	<b>Side</b>	<b>Size (Acres)</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Possible Renovation Cost (\$2.6M/Acre)</b>
<b>Entertainment North Shore</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>\$9.M</b>
<b>Recreation (Adventure)</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>10.8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>\$28.1M</b>
<b>Athletics</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>\$18.7M</b>
<b>Eco South (east)</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>12.8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>\$33.4M</b>
<b>Entertainment South Shore</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>18.7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>\$48.6M</b>
<b>Riviera North</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>\$8.7M</b>
<b>Marina</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>\$41.5M</b>
<b>Eco North (east)</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>\$20.5M</b>
<b>Eco North (west)</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>12.8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>\$33.2M</b>
<b>Eco South (west)</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>\$16.1M</b>
<b>Cultural</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>23.0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>\$59.7M</b>
<b>Riviera South</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>12.9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>\$33.4M</b>
		<b>135.0</b>		<b>\$351.1M</b>