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## Parks lagging behind growth

### City officials plan to address issue this summer with master plan

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Coachella, now the fastest-growing city in the valley, has less than half the park space it should.

Its parks also lack "essential" amenities such as drinking fountains, proper lighting and shade structures.

That's what residents said during a series of meetings with consultants hired to create the city's Parks and Recreation Master Plan, presented to the Coachella City Council and Planning Commission last week.

With 35,207 residents, the city should have 105 acres but currently has only seven parks totaling about 48.2 acres.

The master plan, prepared by PlaySafe of Albuquerque, N.M., recommends building more parks, creating a new position for a parks and recreation manager and improving the current park system.

Jason Munoz, 23, a Coachella resident thinks the recommendations are right.

"The playgrounds that are all out here are small," said Munoz, who is also a Coachella Kid's Club leader for the Coachella Valley Recreation and Parks District after-school program.

He has kids in his program whose parents take them to Civic Center Park in Palm Desert because Coachella doesn't have any that compare.

With 34 percent of the city's population 15 years old or younger and a population surge that is planned to continue, ensuring there are adequate parks and activities for youngsters is imperative, say city officials.

John Quinn, the Coachella finance director, said he expects the Coachella City Council to vote on the master plan by the end of the fiscal year June 30.

"It's in draft form but we're getting comments on it. We plan to get it approved before July 1," he said.

As per the master plan's recommendation, the city is also prepping to hire a parks and recreation manager.

City Manager Jerry Santillan said the city is already working on adding the new position into the city budget for fiscal year 2006-07 that begins July 1.

Ana Colls, special assistant to the city manager who helped lead the master plan charge, said she is interested in the position.

### Nothing new

Councilman Eduardo Garcia said the master plan results weren't surprising.

He said it's pretty well known that Coachella parks aren't what they should be.

What the city now has to do is play catch-up, he said.

The city has collected \$3.4 million in Quimby fees - the fee developers pay to the city in lieu of providing parkland - that the master plan recommends be used to identify and purchase new parkland.



Wade Byars, The Desert Sun  
(From left) Robert Galvan, Mairani Tafolla; age 7; and Hidelisa Mora visit Veterans Park in the city of Coachella on Friday. [See a map of the city's parks system inside, B5.](#)

### MULTIMEDIA

[Coachella parks \(681 KB PDF\)](#)

### PARKS PLAN

**PlaySafe, which also prepared master plans for Cathedral City and the Coachella Valley Recreation and Park District, created a parks plan for Coachella which advocated the following :**

- Build more parks
- Create a new position for a parks and recreation manager.
- Improve the current park system.
- Create park standards and requirements for developers to follow.

"They don't even have enough parks. It's always busy," said Carlos Castaneda, 41, whose daughter plays in a local softball league.

To ensure developers are contributing their fair share, the master plan recommends creating park standards and requirements for developers.

Garcia said part of the reason the city is so behind in servicing its parks and providing new ones is because developers weren't paying their fair share.

"They paid a fee, but it was an outdated fee. So we missed the boat on capturing quite a bit of money," he said.

The fee has since been updated, Garcia said.



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