Marana, Oro Valley turn to residents for parks and recreation plans

Justin Sayers

Feb 24, 2020 Updated May 22, 2020

1 of 2

Jackson Richardson, 7, goes through an agility drill under the watchful eye of his dad, Jason, at Crossroads at Silverbell District Park, 7548 N. Silverbell Road. The park is in Marana, which is taking suggestions from residents about what they'd like to see in the town's parks by 2030. A similar but separate effort is taking place in neighboring Oro Valley. Both communities are northwest of Tucson.

Mamta Popat / Arizona Daily Star

Jose Campa drills a shot to the outfield. He was one of the more than 20 players that turned out for the first Beyond Tucson Kickball Tournament sponsored by the Oro Valley Parks and Recreation Department. The tournament was held earlier this month at Naranja Park.

Kelly Presnell / Arizona Daily Star

As more and more people continue to **relocate to Tucson's northwest side**, the parks and recreation departments of both Oro Valley and Marana have opted to turn to the public to determine what the towns' parks should look like by 2030.

Both towns have recently launched similar yet separate efforts to solicit input on everything from recreations programs, trailheads and sport courts. They'll be taking that feedback and compiling it into solidified plans that will be presented to the separate town councils later this year. But despite the simultaneous endeavors, they stressed it's not a competition.

"We do a number of programs and activities together," said Jim Conroy, Marana's parks and recreations director. "We're willing to team up and work together. I do want to emphasize there is really excellent coordination between the town of Marana and Oro Valley."

For Marana, which has added more than 30,000 people since 2000, parks and recreation department representatives have been meeting with residents, either through public presentations or via booths at major parks events, like soccer tournaments. They've also been obtaining feedback through a **survey** on their website, which had received more than 1,400 responses as of last week, Conroy said.

It's all part of the engagement process for Marana's 10-year parks and recreation master plan, he said, adding that the feedback has differed "across the board," chalking that up to the town's changing demographics. But what they have found is that responses line up with national trends regarding public parks, including the demand for dog parks and pickleball.

"We have such a balance of demographics, as far as people raising their families to people retiring to Marana and everything in between, that we're really looking at everything across the board, from youth programs to senior programs to aquatic facilities to recreation centers," he said.

Marana is going to take that feedback and work with an 18-member advisory committee before submitting its report to the mayor and council for review and discussion, hopefully in May, Conroy said.

While there is no cost estimate yet for future projects, Conroy said they'll be done based on "prioritization."

Quality journalism doesn't happen without your help.

Support local news coverage, and the people who report it, by **subscribing to the Arizona Daily Star**.

"We work hard at public engagement in Marana. It's a major priority," he said. "We have a great relationship with our residents and we've received a lot of good input."

In Oro Valley, which has added more than 10,000 residents since 2000, the parks and recreations department staff is also taking both an in-person and online approach. The staff has set up a **website** devoted to the parks and recreations needs assessment and

master plan. It has also set up booths around town and let people know where they will be on the website.

Oro Valley parks director Kristy Diaz-Trahan said the goal is “to create a doable and implementable plan.” They’ll do so by compiling the more than 700 responses they’ve already received into a survey; the responses from that survey will be compiled into a comprehensive master plan that is expected to be completed in the spring.

It’ll also include questions about preferred funding methods — a necessity after voters turned down a **$17 million bond in 2017** for one park.

“The community spoke, and so that’s why we’re looking at it again, holistically, not in this sort of microscope, one single location,” said Diaz-Trahan, adding that the new mayor and council have made a parks and recreation master plan a priority.

So far, she said, the feedback Oro Valley has received has ranged from “anything and everything recreation you can think of.” That includes requests for a dirt trail pump track, a skateboard park and an indoor basketball court, Diaz-Trahan said.

They’re also soliciting input regarding the future of the town’s community center as improvements to the center were a piece of the Town Council’s **decision to keep its golf courses open**.

She emphasized that the feedback is important and that some people don’t necessarily want a community center “that’s glitzy and brand new.”

“The best community center and the best park and the best trails are the ones that are being used,” she said.

Contact reporter Justin Sayers at **jsayers1@tucson.com** or 573-4192. Twitter: @_JustinSayers. Facebook: JustinSSayers.