



# City Council Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

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**TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL**                      **DATE: MAY 15, 2020**

**FROM: PARKS, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT**                      **WARD: 1**

**SUBJECT: OPTIONS FOR RE-OPENING MT. RUBIDOUX PARK FOLLOWING COVID-19 RELATED CLOSURE WITH RECOMMENDED CRITERIA, ROUTES AND SIGNAGE TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF WALKERS AND HIKERS**

**ISSUE:**

Consider options for re-opening Mt. Rubidoux Park following the COVID-19 related closure with recommended criteria, routes and signage to ensure the safety of walkers and hikers; and provide direction on these options with a recommended re-opening date.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That the City Council:

1. Review options for the re-opening of Mt. Rubidoux Park following the COVID-19 related closure; and
2. Provide direction on the re-opening of Mt. Rubidoux Park, including a recommended re-opening date.

**BACKGROUND:**

Mt. Rubidoux Park is one of the most popular trail destinations in Southern California, attracting thousands of walkers and hikers daily during peak months. On March 27, 2020, at sunset, following an outbreak of the COVID-19 virus and in an abundance of caution, the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department (PRCSD) closed the park to the general public. This was due to the surge in use of the park and violations of the State of California and Riverside County Health Department’s “stay-at-home” order and social distancing criteria set in place to slow the spread of COVID-19. Water filled barricades were used to block entry points along with signage placed throughout the trail system indicating that Mt. Rubidoux was closed.

Although these measures were unpopular among users of the park, it was a necessity to help flatten the curve of the potential surge of COVID-19 cases and the spread of the virus and remain in compliance with social distancing recommendations. Narrow trails leading up and down Mt. Rubidoux (approximately 8 feet in width) make it difficult to maintain the recommended 6 feet social distancing criteria. This is especially true when hundreds of walkers/hikers are traveling up and down the trails in large clusters. Additionally, to visit Mt. Rubidoux, the large majority of

trail users park their vehicles at Ryan Bonaminio Park which is in close proximity to Mt. Rubidoux. Per State and County orders, parking lots were identified as gathering places and it was recommended that when possible, parking lots should be closed to discourage large gatherings. By keeping parking lots open at Ryan Bonaminio Park, not only would walkers/hikers be encouraged to visit Mt. Rubidoux, thousands would visit the playgrounds, picnic shelters and outdoor basketball courts at the park, violating the stay-at-home order and social distancing requirements. The PRCSD took all measures possible to remain in compliance with State and County criteria, with public safety being of the highest priority.

On May 8, 2020, the State of California allowed counties to move into stage 2 of a 4-stage reopening plan, with strict criteria outlined by the Governor.

On May 8, 2020, the County of Riverside Board of Supervisors rescinded previous County Health Department orders related to COVID-19. In response to the modifications to State and County orders, the PRCSD has prepared two options for re-opening Mt. Rubidoux Park that will continue to promote public safety.

## **DISCUSSION:**

With a continued presence of COVID-19 cases surfacing throughout the City and County, the following options and criteria have been prepared with public safety being priority number one. It is recommended that if criteria is not followed by the trail users and social distancing is not practiced, that the trails be closed once again in the interest of public safety.

### **Option A**

Full opening of Mt. Rubidoux Park including the opening of parking lots at Ryan Bonaminio Park to accommodate parking for walkers/hikers. Below are modifications to the trail system that are recommended under Option A:

1. The trail will be opened at the Glenwood Drive entrance and 9<sup>th</sup> Street entrance with split lanes to maximize social distancing. The lanes will be painted with a dashed line in the center of the trail with directional arrows on each side of the lane from the gate entrances to the “cross-road”.
2. **At the “cross-road” beyond the entrance gates, walkers/hikers will be diverted to the “up road” for traffic going up the trail. All down traffic will be diverted to the “down road”.**
3. Strollers and pets will be discouraged in order to minimize slower foot traffic up and down the trail.
4. Throughout the trail system, signage will be posted reminding walkers/hikers to maintain their social distance and to follow guidelines to help keep the trails open.
5. All trail users will be asked to leave immediately following their walk/hike to minimize unnecessary gatherings.

### **Option B**

Full opening of Mt. Rubidoux Park including the opening of parking lots at Ryan Bonaminio Park to accommodate parking for walkers/hikers. Option B includes modifications 1, 3, 4, and 5 from Option A. The difference between A and B is modification 2 as outlined below:

**2. At the “cross-road” beyond the entrance gates, walkers/hikers will be free to choose either trail maintaining their social distance.**

It should be noted that a Riverside Public Utilities project along the 9<sup>th</sup> Street entrance of Mt. Rubidoux will impact the opening of the 9<sup>th</sup> Street gate until at least the end of May. Once approval is received for re-opening, it will take a minimum of 72 hours for staff to prepare the site (mark lanes, directional arrows and post signage).

In consideration of the above options, the PRCSD is seeking Council direction by selecting one of the following plans for proceeding with opening Mt. Rubidoux:

1. Open Mt. Rubidoux Park and parking lots at Ryan Bonaminio Park beginning Tuesday, May 19. This will provide ample time for signage to be posted and trail modifications to be made.
2. Revisit opening Mt. Rubidoux Park at the June 2 City Council meeting pending potential modifications to the Governor’s orders and transition into advanced stages of the COVID-19 plan.
3. Revisit opening Mt. Rubidoux Park at the June 16 City Council meeting pending potential modifications to the Governor’s orders and transition into advanced stages of the COVID-19 plan.

Until all orders are completely lifted, there is no guarantee that COVID-19 will stop spreading throughout the City and County. The above recommendations are reasonable measures that the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department can make to maximize public safety while they use a popular amenity within the City of Riverside.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no direct fiscal impact associated with the re-opening of Mt. Rubidoux Park.

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Approved by: Rafael Guzman, Assistant City Manager  
Approved as to form: Gary G. Geuss, City Attorney

Attachment: Presentation