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toolkit

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**Parks  
Make  
Life  
Better!**<sup>SM</sup>

## Every Brand Needs a Voice<sup>1</sup>: Key Messages

Consistency and repetition are the keys to effective branding. This applies not only to the look of our colorful new Parks Make Life Better!<sup>SM</sup> logotype, but also to the language of the brand, known as **brand messages**.

Remember: Our goal is to build the strongest case possible with the public and with public officials. We want to move from being seen as “valuable” to being viewed as “essential.” Parks and recreation services are essential to our lives because they MAKE LIFE BETTER.

### ***Messages are the Voice of a Brand***

Messages provide the words that help users, customers, stakeholders, and visitors understand our brand’s value from 2 perspectives:

Why it is useful: Parks & Recreation makes [your] life better

What it values: what the profession believes in

Messages lead the “charge.” They are intended to capture the most important elements of the brand promise. They are brief. They convey the most important values as identified through our customer research.

Six main message concepts emerged from the research: **Play, Nature, Exercise, Positive Spaces, Gathering Places, and Forever.**

Where to use the messages? The list is endless! They can be used singularly or in combination in:

- Report headings
- Details for press releases; for example, to emphasize the features of a new park being opened or renovations to a community center, etc.
- Subheads/callouts in community focused materials such as
  - Event promotions
  - Activity guides
  - Flyers
  - Ads
  - Agency website
  - Presentations
  - Participant shirts
- Business cards
- Email signatures
- Signage

### ***The Rationale Behind the Parks Make Life Better!<sup>SM</sup> Key Messages***

The Parks Make Life Better!<sup>SM</sup> brand promise has two components: parks and recreation make lives and communities better **Now** and In the **Future**.

1 Hinge Marketing, <http://www.hingemarketing.com>

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By providing

- Access to the serenity and inspiration of nature
- Outdoor space to play and exercise
- Facilities for self-directed and organized recreation
- Positive alternatives for youth which help lower crime and mischief
- Activities that facilitate
  - o social connections
  - o human development
  - o therapy
  - o the arts
  - o lifelong learning

The research showed of the 98% of Californians who use parks and recreation services, 55% go to park with spouse/partner, 53% with kids, 48% with family, 46% with a friend, with only 5% going alone.

The implication for message development is “We” statements:

- Emphasize FAMILY and FRIENDS
- PERSONAL over SOCIAL benefits
- SELF-DIRECTED over DIRECTED uses of parks
- Discuss the FUTURE – “connection to the future” is important to parks users
- “A BETTER PERSONAL FUTURE and a BETTER PLACE TO LIVE”

The benefits that motivate these preferences include:

- These types of spaces make a community a better place to live now and future
- Serenity and awe of nature is available (tactile) now and future
- People (children especially) NEED outdoor spaces
- Friends and family need these spaces for group sports and exercise

Thirty-one different statements were asked in the online survey. Each statement was scored on two perspectives: how important it was rated and was it being delivered. The highest scored statements from both perspectives were:

1. Provide places where children are free to play and be active
2. Places (facilities, trails) where you can exercise on your own
3. You and friends, neighbors or family can get together
4. Group and individual sports and activities facilities such as gyms, pools, baseball diamonds, etc.
5. Open spaces that beautify community
6. Access to calm natural settings (get away from chores)
7. Preserve land in its natural state for the future
8. See, hear, touch and smell nature
9. Awe-inspiring places of natural beauty
10. Preserve land in its original state and protect wildlife to reduce human impacts on our environment

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11. Make your community a better place to live now and in the future
12. Provide places/activities during non-school hours for kids/teens that are safe, healthy and fun

These statements have been woven into the brand promise.

### ***From Concepts to Messages***

The brand messages are based on a one or two-word answer to the question: how does parks and recreation make my life better?

#### **PLAY**

##### ***Safe, outdoor space***

For us, the biggest benefit is a safe, outdoor play space for our kids today... and as they grow.

#### **NATURE**

##### ***Beauty and serenity***

Being in nature makes me feel alive. I feel lucky to have this beautiful, serene place so close to home. I want my grandkids to have the same appreciation for parks.

#### **EXERCISE**

##### ***Healthy movement***

Parks are made for moving at my own pace -- our family walks, plays and cycles. The recreation programs make it easy to stay healthy.

#### **POSITIVE SPACES**

##### ***Free-time fun***

My neighborhood park is more than a place to chill. It keeps me thinking straight and away from trouble. It's free -- and it's really fun.

#### **GATHERING PLACES**

##### ***Socializing and learning***

Parks are like holidays, bringing us together to share good times. They are the common ground that connects us all.

#### **FOREVER**

##### ***Valued today and always***

Parks enrich our lives. They add value to our homes and neighborhoods. Individually and as a community, we'll always have that need.

These messages use the words that residents and elected officials used when discussing parks and recreation. These messages sum up the experiential characteristics of our brand promise. These messages bring forth the values as identified in our research. These messages are concise as our goal is to be remembered and desired. They are deliberately brief. These messages are authentic and focus on user experiences.

These messages have been incorporated into a community-centric PowerPoint presentation contained in this ToolKit. The images in the presentation can be changed to