



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

AGENDA DATE: January 28, 2015

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Administration Division, Parks and Recreation Department

SUBJECT: Cabrillo Ball Park Renovation Project

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission receives a presentation on the conceptual park improvements for the Cabrillo Ball Park Renovation Project and provides recommendations on renovation options for further evaluation and preliminary design.

DISCUSSION:

Background

In fall 2010, the Parks and Recreation Department (Department) developed a comprehensive proposal to renovate Cabrillo Ball Park for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2012-2017 Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The proposed capital project included a range of improvements to increase park safety, address declining infrastructure, improve park aesthetics, increase ball field programming, and expand recreation opportunities. Park safety, in particular, was of increasing concern due to a significant presence of transients engaged in illegal activities in the park. Around this time, the Department met with a number of park stakeholders, including hotel and other area business owners, and representatives from Casa Esperanza, Major League Softball, Pony Baseball, and the Santa Barbara Police Department, to discuss the challenges and options for improving park conditions and public safety. Concern about drug use and other illegal activity as well as harassment of park users had also been raised at a Franklin Center Advisory Committee meeting in August 2010 and a City Council sponsored community meeting in November 2010.

The Parks and Recreation Commission held a public hearing to discuss potential park improvements on February 23, 2011. A number of potential site and recreation improvements were discussed during public comment and Commission discussion. (Attachments 1 and 2 include the February 23, 2011, staff report and Commission meeting minutes.)

From 2011 to 2013, the City completed a number of needed improvements. These included the installation of a six-foot high chain link fence around the restrooms and bleachers in January 2011, replacement of the restroom roof in 2012, and construction

of field storm drainage improvements and replacement of the ball field pole lights in 2013. Also in 2013, the County Arts Commission oversaw repairs and repainting of the Chromatic Gate, the Parks Division replaced the landscaping around the sculpture, and the Public Works Department replaced the sculpture lighting.

In FY 2014 the City Council allocated \$338,000 for the renovation project. The Council subsequently allocated an additional \$375,000 toward the project during adoption of the FY 2015 budget. The current funding of \$713,000 enables the Department to proceed with developing other improvements to enhance the park and expand recreational use.

Park Background

The 5-acre Cabrillo Ball Park, located at the intersections of Milpas Street, Cabrillo Boulevard and Calle Puerto Vallarta, includes a ball field, portable bleachers, restroom facilities, a concrete perimeter sidewalk, trees and landscaping, and the Herbert Bayer Chromatic Gate (Attachment 3. Site Plan). The land that comprises the park today was purchased by the City from 1925 to 1927. The primary function of the park has been a ball field since its inception. During World War II, it was used by teams from the armed services and for housing United States Army men from Camp Cooke.

Long considered one of the premier softball fields on the Santa Barbara south coast, the park currently serves both adult and youth recreational and competitive sport programs. The field is scheduled for organized sports programs on a year-round basis. The ball field is also used for weekend softball tournaments, year-round drop in soccer and softball practices and unscheduled drop-in use activities such as soccer, softball, and Ultimate Frisbee.

Renovation Project Objectives

The primary objectives of the Cabrillo Ball Park Renovation Project (Project) are to maintain and enhance the function of the park as a premier ball field, expand recreation opportunities, promote and maintain park safety, upgrade park infrastructure, and enhance park aesthetics.

Preliminary Concepts

To inform the renovation scope of work, in October 2014, Department staff began developing preliminary concepts and evaluating the feasibility of various park improvements. To develop preliminary concepts, staff reviewed the park needs as well as the range of potential recreation opportunities previously discussed in 2010 and 2011. Staff researched examples from other communities and considered a number of factors, including site location and constraints, size requirements, park compatibility,

neighborhood compatibility, potential construction and maintenance costs, management requirements, safety, project complexity and permitting requirements, and anticipated use. Staff also considered whether similar improvements already exist in close proximity to the park or have the potential to be developed in other park locations.

The following discussion outlines considerations for general overall improvements to the park, and evaluates specific options for enhancing park entrances and expanding recreational use of the south east corner of the park, outside the active ball field area. These options include the development of a fenced dog off-leash area, basketball court, youth skate plaza, adult fitness area, and a combined adult fitness and children's area.

General Overall Park Improvements

There are a number of general overall improvements that would enhance park aesthetics, make the park more inviting, increase safety, and enhance recreation. These include:

- Renovate/redesign park entrances at both Milpas Street and Calle Puerto Vallarta and Milpas Street and East Cabrillo Boulevard
- Expand and enhance the sidewalk surrounding the park
- Install additional walking areas within the park
- Plant new trees and landscaping
- Upgrade and enhance park signage and lighting
- Redesign/relocate the fence and gate at the park restrooms and bleachers
- Install a homerun fence to separate the active ball field from other park uses

Due to its triangular configuration, the park has three primary entrances. Each entrance is defined by its features including: 1) the park restroom, home plate and bleachers at Milpas St. and Calle Puerto Vallarta, 2) mature trees and landscaping at Milpas Street and Cabrillo Blvd, and 3) the Chromatic Gate at Cabrillo Blvd and Calle Puerto Vallarta. As shown in Attachment 4, improvements to the two entrances from Milpas Street such as sidewalk and landscape enhancements, as well as the relocation and redesign of the fence, would open views into the park and improve park access, circulation, and aesthetics.

Similarly, although there is a sidewalk that surrounds the park, pedestrian access would be improved through widening the sidewalk along Calle Puerto Vallarta and integrating interior walkway connections. Pedestrian access as well as park aesthetics would also be enhanced with the development of a parkway along Calle Puerto Vallarta with new trees and landscaping.

A partial 6-foot home run fence would achieve a number of park improvements including enhancing the ball field function, supporting multi-use of the outfield for other sports, such as soccer, differentiating the active playing field from other recreational areas, and increasing safety. The fence would be located just outside the ball field pole lights and open access to the field would be maintained along Calle Puerto Vallarta and Milpas St. Fence design would balance aesthetics and function while minimizing visual impacts.

Expanded Recreation Options

The south western section of the park provides the most opportunity for expanded recreation. As outlined above, development of this area with a new recreation use will depend on a variety of factors. The potential area available is 16,000 square feet. This area takes into consideration the construction of an internal walkway and a ball field home run fence. It assumes a buffer area from Cabrillo Blvd. and Calle Puerto Vallarta as well as from the Chromatic Gate. All options discussed below could fit within this foot print. In a similar vein, since Cabrillo Ball Park experiences periodic flooding during storm events, any improvements would need to withstand seasonal standing water or could be designed to minimize the potential for flooding to damage the infrastructure. Further design will determine whether this is feasible. For the purposes of the analysis as this time, it is assumed that the options below could be designed and constructed with these site constraints.

Of primary consideration is the extent to which these options are compatible with the park and neighborhood, are cost effective to develop and maintain, respond to recreation needs, and can be designed and operated safely.

Surrounding park uses include two hotels, single family residences, a grocery market, and Chase Palm Park/East Beach. Although there are no specific parking requirements for park and recreation facilities, it is also assumed that there is ample parking in the vicinity of the Cabrillo Ball Park. This includes street parking on Calle Puerto Vallarta and on Milpas Street. A small public lot is located at Milpas and Calle Puerto Vallarta, and the east parking lot at the Cabrillo Pavilion and Bathhouse is within easy walking distance to the park. A waterfront shuttle stop is located at the corner of Cabrillo Blvd. and Calle Puerto Vallarta.

Fenced Dog Off-Leash Area

Community interest in designated dog off-leash recreation in public parks is growing in Santa Barbara. The Department is currently investigating the feasibility of providing some new off-leash areas, both fenced and unfenced, in a variety of City parks. Some parks, such as Cabrillo Ball Park, would need to have a fenced dog off-leash area due to the other park uses and proximity to busy roadways. Considerations for a dog off-leash area at Cabrillo Ball Park also include noise from barking dogs and human

owners, aesthetics, maintenance requirements, and potential for conflict between dogs as well as between the dog uses and active ball field. The Department is also reviewing whether Dwight Murphy Ball Field and other City park locations would be more appropriate for a fenced or unfenced dog off-leash area. The Commission will receive a report on the draft Dog Off-Leash Feasibility Study at the February 25, 2015, meeting.

Youth Skate Plaza

Due to the popularity of the Skate Park, the development of additional youth skateboarding recreation opportunities is also gaining interest within Santa Barbara. The interest is focused on younger skaters that need to develop basic skills and strength as well as learn skate etiquette in a safe and age appropriate environment. A small skate area would need a sloping topography and enough features to generate use. Considerations for this type of recreation at Cabrillo Ball Park include noise, maintenance requirements (potential for recurring graffiti), and compatibility with the neighborhood and active ball field use. A skate area may need some fencing and security lighting. The Department has also included the development of additional youth skate areas in the FY 2016-2021 Capital Improvement Program. Other potential locations include neighborhood parks and other public areas outside of the City's waterfront.

Basketball Court

Over the years, there have been various discussions about development of outdoor basketball courts in the City's waterfront, with the most recent focused on Leadbetter Beach Park. A basketball court at Cabrillo Ball Park could be similar in design to the courts at Girsh Park in Goleta. Given the size of the area it could include one full court or two junior high courts. Consideration for outdoor basketball courts includes noise, use policies and management, and site requirements for development. The need for fencing and lighting would also have to be evaluated. In a separate effort, the Department has prioritized the renovation of the historic Carrillo Gym in the FY 2016-2021 CIP. This project includes both the renovation of the first floor indoor basket ball court and re-opening of the rooftop basket ball court. Although currently in need of significant improvements, the Carrillo Gym has a prime downtown location and a long history of providing public basketball recreation.

Adult Fitness Area

Outdoor adult fitness areas are becoming increasingly popular for a number of reasons. They can be enjoyed by people of all abilities and fitness levels, provide a social outlet for exercise, and are free to users, among others. For the past five years, the Department has evaluated opportunities to install adult fitness equipment in various park locations. These locations included Eastside Neighborhood Park, Bohnett Park, Bath Street Pocket Park and, most recently, the Andrée Clark Bird Refuge. While the initial focus included neighborhood parks in higher density residential areas, the Department has received a

number of requests for adult fitness areas in the waterfront. City waterfront parks and beaches are increasingly popular locations for walking, running, biking, and organized fitness activities. Cabrillo Ball Park may provide a unique location for a fitness area that could cater to both drop-in and more organized use as well as integrate with other recreational activities in the area. Considerations for a fitness area include design, type of use/use policies, and maintenance. This type of recreation is not likely to generate noise and other compatibility concerns. Although it would not likely need to be fenced or require site lighting, the area may encourage loitering.

Adult Fitness/Youth Play Area

A final consideration is the development of an area for both adult fitness and youth play opportunities. The primary focus would remain for adult fitness. Some youth elements could be integrated to support use by families. Youth play concepts would be smaller in scale than a formal playground and could focus on strength, agility, and fitness. Age designation and a formal separation of the adult and youth area would be required. The need for fencing and security lighting would be further evaluated.

Next Steps

The purpose of this staff report and Commission discussion is to refine park renovation objectives. With refined objectives, the Department will develop a scope of work and secure professional parks planning and engineering technical services to develop preliminary design plans. Further design and engineering will refine project design options and support project design review and additional community discussion. The project will require Architectural Board of Review approval and a Coastal Development Permit. Without any significant obstacles, it is anticipated that design and permitting could be complete within one year. Construction could occur in 2016.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. February 23, 2011, Parks and Recreation Commission Staff Report (w/o attachment)
2. Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes for February 23, 2011
3. Cabrillo Ball Park Existing Site Aerial
4. Concept Base Plan and Entrance Improvements
5. New Recreation Concepts

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