



## CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

### PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

**AGENDA DATE:** June 22, 2016

**TO:** Parks and Recreation Commission

**FROM:** Administration Division, Parks and Recreation Department

**SUBJECT:** Proposed Playground and Facility Improvements at the Municipal Tennis Center

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- A That the Commission receive a presentation on the proposed playground and facility improvements; and
- B. Make the following findings pursuant to Santa Barbara Municipal Code Section 28.37.025 and approve the proposed playground at the Municipal Tennis Center:
  - i. That the proposed park and recreation improvements are appropriate or necessary for the benefit of the community and visitors;
  - ii. That the proposed park and recreation facilities, including lighting, play areas, parking facilities and associated landscaping, will be compatible with the character of the neighborhood;
  - iii. That the total area of the site and the setbacks of all facilities from the property lines and street are sufficient, in view of the physical character of the land, proposed development and neighborhood, to avoid significant negative effects on surrounding properties;
  - iv. That the intensity of park use is appropriate and compatible with the character of the neighborhood;
  - v. That the proposed park and recreation facilities are compatible with the scenic character of the City; and
  - vi. That the proposed structures or buildings are compatible with the neighborhood in terms of size, bulk, and scale or location.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

##### Project Description – Playground and Facility Improvements

A new playground and facility improvements are proposed at the Municipal Tennis Center. The playground is 2,800 square foot and is designed for 5-12 year old children. The design features several climbing structures, a double slide, swings (including one for

toddlers), and rubber safety matting. A new pathway, drinking fountain, lighting, trash cans, benches, ornamental iron fencing, and landscaping are also proposed to complement the new playground.

The playground is sited in a corner of the existing parking lot that is farthest away from the tennis courts, yet most accessible to the adjacent neighborhood. Existing landscaping will buffer the playground from neighboring properties and Highway 101, and the proposed lighting is designed to not cast light off the property. The proposed playground site is located outside of setbacks from property lines and the street to avoid significant negative effects on surrounding properties.

The Municipal Tennis Center was chosen as the preferred location for a new playground due to its proximity to a dense residential neighborhood and relatively far distance from existing playgrounds. In addition, the underutilized parking lot already serves as an impromptu play area for neighborhood children. According to a recent census there are approximately 600 children under 11 years old in the adjacent neighborhood (2009-2013 American Community Survey).

Various facility improvements are also proposed to increase site safety, increase accessibility for people with disabilities, support tennis activities, and to complete regular infrastructure maintenance. A new 540 square foot patio is proposed to support tennis activities and provide an improved resting area for players in between matches. The patio will feature bench seating and a new drinking fountain. Site safety improvements include removing the block walls surrounding the two exterior restroom entrances and adding lighting, installing a gate at the parking lot entrance that will be locked at night, and erecting two lockable pedestrian gates along the tennis practice area walkway. Most of the existing angled parking spaces will also be re-stripped to create 90-degree parking spaces, thereby improving circulation in the parking lot. Accessibility improvements include creating a van-accessible parking space, grinding and resurfacing worn out asphalt pathways, and extending a pathway to the corner of Park Place and Old Coast Highway.

### Pedestrian Safety Improvements

The Public Works Department is also finalizing design of pedestrian safety improvements along Old Coast Highway. A new crosswalk featuring flashing beacons is proposed at Old Coast Highway just east of the Park Place intersection. New sidewalk is also being developed along the north side of Old Coast Highway from Harbor View Drive to Salinas Street. These public improvements will provide safer access for neighborhood children walking to the proposed playground. The proposed crosswalk was developed with input from neighbors, City staff, and Park and Recreation Commissioners.

### Project Permitting and Construction

The various improvements proposed at the Municipal Tennis Center and along Old Coast Highway require different levels of development review and will be implemented in phases. The following section outlines the project design approvals and findings needed. Tentative construction funding levels and timelines are also outlined for all aspects of the various proposed improvements.

#### *Playground and Facility Improvements*

In accordance with Santa Barbara Municipal Code (SBMC) §28.37.010, both the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Planning Commission review projects proposed on land zoned P-R that require a Coastal Development Permit (CDP). Furthermore, both bodies are required to make the same findings when approving projects per SBMC §28.37.025. The specific project components under consideration for the findings include the new playground and associated improvements, the parking lot gate, the new tennis patio, restriping a majority of the parking lot, and the proposed pedestrian gates along the tennis practice walkway.

The proposed playground and the new facility improvements were presented to the neighborhood at a community public meeting held on June 10, 2015. Neighbors generally supported the project, but did raise concerns about availability of parking at the existing lot. The need for increased pedestrian safety on Old Coast Highway was also a concern. The Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) reviewed the project on July 29 and September 9, 2015 and provided positive comments on the design and architectural compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood. The Parks and Recreation Commission visited the site and subsequently reviewed the project on September 23, 2015. The Commission voted 7/0 that City staff finalize the design and submit a CDP application.

Staff finalized design for the playground and associated improvements, patio, and gates and submitted a CDP application in April. The project is also currently undergoing review by the City's Land Development Review Team. Environmental review of the project is occurring concurrently and is expected to be categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act. Following the Parks and Recreation Commission's findings and approval, the project will be reviewed by the Planning Commission. The project will also require final design approval by HLC. The timing for project construction is not yet known since it is not fully funded.

#### *Pedestrian Safety Improvements*

The pedestrian safety improvements on Old Coast Highway are being developed and reviewed under a separate permit since they are in the public right-of-way, under the purview of the Architectural Board of Review (ABR), and can qualify for a CDP exemption. The Parks and Recreation Commission is not required to make any findings

for the adjacent Public Works improvements. Public Works staff will be taking the Old Coast Highway pedestrian safety project to the ABR in July. Construction of the new crosswalk is expected to begin in January 2017.

#### *Municipal Tennis Pathway Repairs and Accessibility*

The existing asphalt pathway repairs, extension of the pathway to Old Coast Highway, removal of the exterior block walls surrounding the restrooms, and restriping of the parking spaces directly in front of the tennis office are considered maintenance activities. These improvements qualify for a CDP exemption and thus no findings by the Commission are required. The HLC administratively approved these items, and construction is expected to start in mid-July and finish in mid-August.

#### **BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

The asphalt pathway maintenance, pathway extension to Old Coast Highway, accessibility improvements to the parking lot, and safety and accessibility improvements to the two exterior restroom entrances is estimated to cost \$50,000. FY 2016 General Funds are allocated for these improvements.

The playground and associated improvements are estimated to cost \$300,000. This does not include the patio, which is estimated to cost approximately \$50,000. A \$53,000 grant from the Wood-Claeyssens Foundation will help fund the playground equipment. The remaining project cost is currently unfunded. Since the City Council reallocated the Department's \$300,000 request to the Streets Fund, the Department will seek grant funding during FY17 for the project, with construction expected to begin in late-2017, if funds are awarded.

The total cost of constructing the pedestrian improvements is \$304,000. Parks and Recreation and Public Works staff submitted a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application for the playground and pedestrian safety improvements in December 2015 and \$126,000 was awarded to partially fund the pedestrian safety improvements. It is anticipated a combination of grant funds and General Funds will enable construction to proceed, with ground breaking occurring in January 2017.

**ATTACHMENT:** Proposed Playground and Facility Improvement Plans at the Municipal Tennis Center

**PREPARED BY:** George Thomson, Capital Projects Supervisor

**APPROVED BY:** Jill E. Zachary, Parks and Recreation Director