



City of Santa Barbara
Neighborhood Advisory Council
Staff Report

AGENDA DATE: December 9, 2015

TO: Neighborhood Advisory Council

FROM: Administration Division, Parks and Recreation Department

SUBJECT: Cabrillo Ball Park Renovation Project

RECOMMENDATION: That the Neighborhood Advisory Council (NAC):

- A. Receive a presentation on the Cabrillo Ball Park Renovation Project; and
- B. Provide advisory comments to the Parks and Recreation Commission.

DISCUSSION:

Background

The Cabrillo Ball Park is used as a playing field for softball and drop-in soccer, as well as other informal recreational activities. The site has bleachers, field lighting, restrooms, a perimeter sidewalk, landscaping, and the Herbert Bayer Chromatic Gate sculpture. The park is on Cabrillo Boulevard, between Milpas Street and Calle Puerto Vallarta.

In 2010, the Parks and Recreation Department (Department) developed a comprehensive proposal 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 improve park aesthetics. This plan was developed with input from a diverse group of park stakeholders, including hotel and area business owners, representatives from Casa Esperanza, Major League Softball, Pony Baseball, and the Santa Barbara Police Department. Additional input was provided by stakeholders at a Franklin Center Advisory Committee meeting in August 2010 and a City Council sponsored community meeting in November 2010. From 2011-2014, the Department completed the first phase of site improvements, including installing fencing around the restrooms and bleachers, fixing drainage issues, and upgrading field lights. Several of these improvements helped address concerns about drug use and other illegal activity. The Chromatic Gate was also refurbished in 2013 by the County Arts Commission.

On January 28, 2015, the Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) reviewed preliminary concepts for park improvements that would further enhance recreational use of the park and improve the park entrances, circulation, and landscaping. The Commission evaluated various recreational opportunities and recommended additional evaluation of the following options:

1. Fitness and Play Area
2. Basketball Court
3. Fitness Area and Basketball Court

Proposed Park Site Improvements

The following improvements are proposed to enhance park aesthetics, increase safety, and enhance existing recreational activities. The overall design is still at a conceptual stage.

- *Ball Field:* Renovation of the softball field, including new turf and a more efficient irrigation system. Installation of a six-foot tall homerun fence in the softball outfield to separate softball from other park uses. Relocation of fencing around the restrooms, bleachers, and back stop to improve access, circulation, and aesthetics.
- *Park Entrances and Circulation:* Improvements to the two Milpas Street entrances to create more open, inviting transitions into the park. Widening of sidewalks around and within the park to eight-feet. Add paths within the park to increase circulation and create an informal circuit.
- *Landscaping and Trees:* Re-landscape new recreational sites and improved entrances. Nine trees will be replaced or relocated to address better site design or poor tree health. A net increase of three trees is proposed.

Potential Expanded Recreation Options

The southwestern section of the park provides an opportunity for expanded recreation with approximately 16,000 square feet available. It assumes a buffer area from both streets as well as from the Chromatic Gate.

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 three hotels, single family residences, a grocery market, Chase Palm Park, and East Beach.

1. *Fitness and Play Area:* Fitness stations, open lawn area, and landscape mounds are proposed to encourage outdoor exercise and casual play. The fitness stations can be positioned to follow a set exercise routine that can be accessed through a smartphone on the manufacturer's website. The play area is an informal area designed for a variety of ages and uses.
2. *Basketball Court:* This option proposes a junior high school-sized basketball court (74 feet long and 42 feet wide). The surface would likely be an all-weather material designed specifically for outdoor basketball courts and the hoops would be at regulation height (10 feet tall).
3. *Fitness Area and Basketball Court:* This option includes one junior high school-sized basketball court, a small paved area, several fitness stations, flat lawn areas, and a lawn mound.

Over the years, there have been various discussions of developing outdoor basketball courts in the City's waterfront. Considerations for a basketball court include site compatibility, including visual impacts, noise, time of use, and lighting. Un-programmed, drop-in use would be promoted (i.e., no tournaments or other events would be able to reserve the court). Additional lighting for the basketball court is not proposed. For context, there are 19 full basketball courts and four half courts at nearby school sites and parks. However, none of these are in close proximity to the beach.

Community Input

On January 22, 2015, the Department held a meeting with community members that attended a similar meeting in 2011. Previous park improvements were discussed along with the proposed enhancements. The majority of attendees supported overall park improvements, along with outdoor fitness equipment. However, hotel representatives did not support basketball at the site stating conflicts with noise generated by a ball bouncing and yelling on the court.

Another community meeting was held October 15, 2015 at the park and about 25 people attended with participants in favor of the overall improvements. The Fitness and Play Area design was strongly supported. There were some concerns and opposition to the basketball court due to potential noise and neighborhood compatibility. The Department also received comments via email regarding the proposed project.

Parks and Recreation Commission Review

On October 28, 2015, the Commission reviewed the proposed park renovation design and the options for expanded recreation. The Commission focused much of its discussion on whether basketball would be a compatible activity on the site. Members of the Commission were divided and did not have a majority to support one of the expanded recreation options. Three Commissioners supported the Fitness Area and Basketball Court design, while three other Commissioners did not support basketball, stating concerns with noise and site compatibility. Department staff is further evaluating all the proposed recreational options, and will be returning to the Commission on December 16, 2015 for additional direction.

Neighborhood Advisory Council Review:

Staff is seeking comments from the NAC on the expanded recreation options that will be forwarded to the Commission for further review on December 16, 2015. Following Commission review and recommendations, the project will proceed to Historic Landmarks Commission for design review and the Planning Commission for a Coastal Development Permit. Without any significant obstacles, it is anticipated that design and permitting could be complete within one year. Construction could start in late 2016.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

The Department's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) includes \$860,000 for the design and construction of the project. The preliminary cost estimate for construction could range from \$913,000 to \$978,000, depending on the added recreational option chosen. This includes \$738,000 for the overall site improvements, such as the softball field improvements, landscaping, and entrance and circulation modifications. The cost for the Fitness and Play Area Option is estimated at \$175,000. The Fitness Area and Basketball Court Option is estimated to be \$240,000. These costs will continue to get refined as the project further develops. If needed, the Department would seek grant funds and/or additional General Fund allocations to complete the project.

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