



## CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

### PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION AND NEIGHBORHOOD ADVISORY COUNCIL REPORT

**AGENDA DATE:** August 22, 2018

**TO:** Parks and Recreation Commission  
Neighborhood Advisory Council

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

**SUBJECT:** Ortega Park and Dwight Murphy Field Conceptual Master Plans

**RECOMMENDATION:** That Commission and Neighborhood Advisory Council:

- A. Receive a presentation on the conceptual master plans for Ortega Park and Dwight Murphy Field; and
- B. Provide guidance on further development of Ortega Park Master Plan "Alternative Concept B" for review by the Architectural Board of Review; and
- C. Provide guidance on further development of a Dwight Murphy Field Master Plan preferred concept for review by the Historic Landmarks Commission.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

On May 1, 2018, the City Council authorized a professional services agreement with RRM Design Group to complete park master plans for Ortega Park and Dwight Murphy Field. During the next three months, RRM and the Parks and Recreation Department (Department) staff interviewed park user groups and neighbors, hosted four community workshops and conducted online surveys, and worked with other City departments to evaluate and develop two conceptual site plans for each park (see Attachments 1 and 2). The proposed site plans are comprehensive and provide for complete renovation of both parks due to the age of current infrastructure, updated building code requirements, and the community's desire to significantly improve recreational opportunities. A detailed overview of the community engagement process, descriptions of the alternative conceptual site plans, and the staff recommendations to advance these projects are covered in this report.

#### Stakeholder Interviews: Engaging Key User Groups and Neighbors

RRM and Department staff first met with park user groups and neighbors to identify recreational needs, key safety concerns, and other issues such as parking and circulation. Santa Barbara Pony Baseball and several youth and adult soccer leagues,

the Gwendolyn Strong Foundation, youth serving organizations such as Girls, Inc. and the Boys and Girls Club, Santa Barbara Zoo, Santa Barbara Junior High School, plus residents adjacent to Ortega Park, provided input to assist with the park visioning and design process. Specifically, these meetings included discussion of program participant park use, suggested improvements for recreation and site safety, potential new or expanded facilities, and pedestrian and vehicle circulation. These meetings were held in advance of the community workshops to ensure park neighbors and key user groups were brought into the design process early.

### Community Workshop #1: Visioning and Prioritizing New Park Improvements

The first round of community workshops provided participants with an overview of the current facilities and programs at each park, an explanation of the overall design process, and an interactive design exercise to generate both a “big picture” vision for the parks as well as specific quantitative data to show support for the proposed facilities and accessory amenities. The Dwight Murphy workshop was held on May 31, 2018, and the Ortega Park workshop was held on June 2, 2018. Both were well attended with 35 people and 53 people at each event, respectively. Direct mailers and emails, posters, advertisements in local newspapers, and radio advertisements provided advance notice of the meetings. Notifications were made in both English and Spanish, and Spanish language translation was made available at the workshops.

At these initial workshops, participants were encouraged to identify a vision for the parks’ character and ambiance, as well as specific features they would like to see in the redevelopment of the sites. Attendees were instructed to avoid focusing on day-to-day operations at the park, such as turf maintenance or recreation programming, but rather identify larger themes and amenities that would best serve the community now and into the future. During the first portion of the workshop, community members simply listed their desired park amenities and larger goals for the park. All the suggestions were written on large posters and then participants placed color-coded stickers (with the different colored stickers representing “weighted” priorities) on the park feature or “big picture” item that they felt was most important. The exercise allowed everybody to participate and have an equal voice in prioritizing park improvements. Furthermore, it allowed the design team to gather quantitative data that would later be used to develop the conceptual site plans.

The results of the first Ortega Park community workshop showed participants prioritized a new skate park, artificial turf multi-use fields, a new non-competitive swimming pool, and improved parking. Discussion at the workshop reinforced the need to improve parking and circulation, and safety and transient issues, while developing the character of the park as a family-oriented destination with an emphasis on sports and new recreational experiences. A summary of the interactive exercise results for Ortega Park is included in Attachment 1.

Community members at the first Dwight Murphy Field workshop prioritized better pedestrian connectivity to offsite paths, creation of new outdoor gathering and picnic areas, installing an artificial turf field for soccer, improving circulation for traffic associated with the zoo, and designating a venue for music and other events. Discussion at the workshop also included an emphasis on designing the park for families and sports, including an open space that could be reserved by permit for private gatherings or classes (such as yoga), increasing connectivity within the park and to adjacent areas such as the zoo and beach, and creating a new playground that sparks the imagination. A summary of the interactive exercise results for Dwight Murphy Field is included in Attachment 2.

### Community Workshop #2: Choosing the Preferred Site Plan

Following the completion of the first community workshops, the design team developed two conceptual site plans for each park that illustrate the park amenities and overall park character prioritized by the community during the first workshops. The alternative concept site plans were presented at the second round of workshops, and community members participated in another interactive exercise to identify which amenities and overall concept plan they preferred. For reference, the alternative concept site plans presented at the second workshops are in Attachments 1 and 2.

#### *Ortega Park – Alternative Concept A*

“Concept A” for Ortega Park focuses development on Ortega Street with the new playground, restroom and plaza, year-round non-competitive swimming pool and aquatic play features, basketball and ping pong, and the skate area concentrated on the western half of the park. The eastern portion of the park, fronting Cota Street, includes a new multi-sport synthetic turf field with lighting and a perimeter fence. Fitness stations are also included around the southeastern perimeter. In addition to concentrating new development on Ortega Street, Concept A also includes a new parking lot within the park, sited closer to Santa Barbara Junior High School. The proposed parking lot would be accessed via Quarantina Street at Ortega Street — there is no proposed parking lot access from Cota Street. Pedestrian access into the main portion of the park is primarily via Ortega Street and Salsipuedes Street.

#### *Ortega Park – Alternative Concept B*

“Concept B” for Ortega Park includes many of the same amenities as Concept A, but the main structures are focused on the Salsipuedes Street side. Concept B also proposes to reuse and retrofit the existing Welcome House as a gateway building into the year-round aquatics area, which is also larger than the footprint shown in Concept A. The restroom facility in both concept plans is designed to provide separate access to general park users and aquatic users. The proposed playground is smaller in Concept B, while the proposed skate area is larger and would accommodate more advanced skate features. Parking in Concept B is shown as new, angled street parking along Salsipuedes Street and Ortega Street. Unlike Concept A, there is not an additional

parking lot shown near the junior high school. Pedestrian entry into the park is more flexible than Concept B as there are mid-block entries into the park on Ortega Street and Cota Street, in addition to a wider park promenade at the Cota and Salsipuedes corner. This park promenade leads to an enhanced Sports Plaza with basketball, ping pong, pickle ball, and bocce ball.

*Ortega Park Workshop #2 Results: Alternative Concept B Preferred*

Over 100 people attended the second workshop for Ortega Park and overwhelmingly selected Alternative Concept B as the preferred site plan. The top five amenities selected include the multi-sport synthetic turf field with lighting, the skate area, a non-competitive lap pool, and basketball court. The quantitative results are summarized in Attachment 1.

*Dwight Murphy Field – Alternative Concept A*

“Concept A” for Dwight Murphy Field includes a multi-sport synthetic turf field with lighting and an 8-foot tall perimeter fence, a universally accessible playground and informal activity area lawn adjacent to the existing parking lot and playground, an expanded fitness area across from the Santa Barbara Zoo entrance, and a new BBQ/picnic area where the existing restroom buildings would be demolished. In addition, Concept A proposes a new restroom facility between the informal activity area and the playground. Traffic flow and parking are enhanced by converting the park road into a one-way-only flow of vehicles from the park entrance adjacent to the Zoo driveway towards Calle Puerto Vallarta. Angled parking and the one-way road would reduce travel speeds while maximizing available onsite parking. The existing parking lot would remain, but a row of parking adjacent to the new playground would be converted to ADA parking to accommodate an expected increase of visitors with disabilities visiting the playground. A network of pedestrian pathways would allow for recreation, better connectivity of park amenities, and enhanced access from off-site locations. A large informal activity area is shown on the eastern side of the park. This grass area is sized to accommodate a youth baseball field. However, the original concept plan does not show a baseball field.

*Dwight Murphy Field – Alternative Concept B*

“Concept B” for Dwight Murphy Field differs mainly in the location of the universally accessible playground and associated parking — the plan proposes a new parking lot on the eastern edge of the park, with the new playground closer to the Por La Mar Drive and Niños Drive intersection. The proposed entrance to the parking lot is located directly across from the Zoo entrance. A group BBQ/picnic area is located across from the Zoo entrance and adjacent to the new parking lot driveway. The proposed parking lot and playground in Concept B reduces the size of the grass informal activity area so it no longer could support a youth baseball field. Furthermore, a new restroom building is sited at the informal activity area just between the playground and a multi-sport synthetic turf field similar to the one proposed under Concept A. A one-way park road and angled parking is also proposed under Concept B. However, unlike Concept A, the

fitness area and a medium-size informal activity area is depicted next to the existing parking lot. A similar network of pedestrian pathways link amenities within the park and at the street crosswalks. However, under this concept plan, there is no direct pedestrian link into the park at Por La Mar Drive and Niños Drive unless one walks through the playground.

#### *Dwight Murphy Field Workshop #2 Results: Alternative Concept A Preferred*

Close to 50 people attended the second Dwight Murphy Field workshop and they favored Concept Plan A by a broad majority. The top park amenities selected include keeping baseball/softball at Dwight Murphy Field, improving the outdoor fitness equipment, adding a multi-sport synthetic turf field with lighting, and constructing the universally accessible playground. Concept A is able to include all of the prioritized amenities. However, as discussed below, there was subsequent support for Concept B in the community surveys despite the plan not allowing for development of a youth baseball field. The quantitative results of the Dwight Murphy Field Workshop #2 are summarized in Attachment 2.

#### Community Survey: Concept B at Ortega; Mixed Results at Dwight Murphy Field

Following the second set of workshops, the design team published an online survey to further refine specific elements of the concept plans, aid in selecting a preferred alternative, and to gather more information on project outreach and current park users. The survey was developed to generate a wider community response and gauge public sentiment regarding alternative plans, in addition to specific design elements and park amenities. Interestingly, less than five percent of the survey respondents attended the community workshops.

#### *Ortega Park*

Although full analysis of the survey results is not yet complete, preliminary results indicate overall support for Concept B at Ortega Park. In addition to a majority consensus on which concept plan is preferred, specific results indicate about half of respondents live within walking distance, off-site angled parking is slightly preferred over a new onsite parking lot, the proposed community swimming pool should accommodate a variety of aquatic features and programs, and nearly 40 percent of those surveyed support sports field lighting for nighttime use. There was also over 70 percent support for the new recreation features. For the sports field, there was an even split of support between a natural grass field versus an artificial turf field.

#### *Dwight Murphy Field*

For Dwight Murphy Field, the survey results do not show a clear consensus for a preferred concept site plan. In general, there are youth baseball advocates that support Concept A and universally accessible playground advocates that support Concept B. Although it would reduce overall park space, the creation of a new parking lot and the increased distance from the railway and Highway 101 was cited by Concept B

supporters as beneficial to playground users. Youth baseball advocates expressed wide support through the survey for Concept A, which has the space to develop a larger youth sized baseball field in the informal activity area. However, a question in the survey that asked if a baseball field should be added to Concept A was not broadly supported. Specifically, 55 percent suggested leaving as much informal sport activity area as possible by not adding a baseball field.

Interestingly, although over 60 percent of respondents (and their family members) do not play on a team or in a league that uses Dwight Murphy Field for sports, 70 percent support converting the existing soccer field to a multi-sport synthetic turf field. And 90 percent of respondents support adding field lighting for nighttime use of the sports fields. Additionally, there was over 65 percent support for including a fitness area. In general, these results show broad support for increasing the availability of recreational facilities for youth and adult fitness and sports, but as noted above, there was not widespread support for adding baseball to the plan.

Additional survey results for Dwight Murphy Field show 60 percent support for using a portion of the open grass area for a new parking lot. However, support for the new parking lot is likely tied to support for the playground location depicted in Concept B. Other survey results regarding parking and traffic flow indicate there is 75 percent support for changing the park road to one-way.

#### Concept Plan Review by Police Department and Public Works Transportation

Increasing park safety and reducing misuse behaviors are key objectives at Dwight Murphy Field and Ortega Park. These outcomes were also supported by the workshop participants. The Department met with staff from the Santa Barbara Police Department (SBPD) to review the proposed concept plans and identify potential design improvements that would potentially reduce park misuse. For example, increasing recreational opportunities throughout the daytime and evening hours, while eliminating hiding places and limiting access to the park at night when the park is closed, may reduce vandalism, illegal camping, and other park misuse. For reference, from August 2017 to July 2018, the SBPD reported 435 calls for service at Ortega Park and 207 calls for service at Dwight Murphy Field. Based on the number of incidents at both parks, the SBPD recommends installing perimeter fencing and park gates that would prevent public access when the park is closed. If incorporated into the park design, a perimeter fence and gated entries would need to be compatible with City design guidelines and overall neighborhood character.

Public Works Transportation staff reviewed pedestrian access, traffic flow, and parking modifications proposed by the alternative park concept plans. At Ortega Park, Concept B is generally preferred by Transportation staff due to the better pedestrian access and the creation of additional street frontage parking. The proposed parking lot in Concept A would potentially require two access driveways, but would not be able to exit onto

Cota Street since the Quarantina Street intersection would not align with the driveway and there is potential to increase conflicts with the Santa Barbara Junior High School student drop off and pick up locations.

At Dwight Murphy Field, Transportation staff generally support converting the park road into a one-way only flow of traffic. However, a traffic study would be required to quantify the number of trips that would be rerouted down adjacent streets as a result of the one-way park road conversion. And specifically for Concept B at Dwight Murphy Field, the new proposed parking lot would require modifications to the entry driveway in order to accommodate the turning radius of larger vehicles. Transportation staff also cited the potential for angled parking on the park side of Niños Drive as a possible way to increase parking. For the two preferred plans at both parks, additional analysis is required to determine the number of parking spaces created by the preferred concept plan, as well as increased connectivity and compatibility with the City's Bicycle Master Plan and Pedestrian Master Plan.

#### Next Steps: Selection of Preferred Site Plans, Design Review, and City Council

During the past three months, over 1200 community members provided valuable input about the future of Ortega Park and Dwight Murphy Field. The stakeholder meetings, community workshops, and online surveys resulted in conceptual park improvement plans that present exciting opportunities to reinvest in Santa Barbara's treasured park and recreation facilities and programs. While not all suggestions from the public engagement process can be realized due to limited space and funding, the alternative site plans represent a vision of how these important public spaces can be redeveloped to best serve current and future generations. Within the next month, the Department plans to advance one preferred site plan for each park to the respective design review board — the Architectural Board of Review (ABR) for Ortega Park and the Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) for Dwight Murphy Field. The ABR and HLC will be addressing overall architectural and landscape design, but also more general concepts such as neighborhood and historic compatibility. In order to focus the design review process, the selection of one site plan for each park prior to HLC and ABR review is preferable. The Department is seeking guidance and advisory comments from the Parks and Recreation Commission and Neighborhood Advisory Council (NAC) to aid in the selection of one preferred site concept plan for each park.

Based on the discussion among park users, community workshop participation, and survey results, it is clear there is consensus for Concept B at Ortega Park. Concept B provides for a variety of amenities that will support a broad range of neighborhood residents and community members. It also provides for additional parking, a key consideration for both park users and area residents. Although the public engagement process to date provided support for the overall concept plan, specific topics such as fencing the park, artificial turf, the specific sports amenities proposed in the "Sports Plaza", and other neighborhood compatibility issues will require further analysis.

Due to the different priorities of the workshop participants and survey respondents, the public engagement process did not result in a clear preferred site plan for Dwight Murphy Field. Additional design work is needed if youth baseball is to be included in the preferred plan, along with an assessment of neighborhood compatibility of a second parking lot and the playground location proposed in Concept B. The Department is specifically seeking guidance from the Commission and the NAC on how the redeveloped park can best serve a variety of users given its long history of providing softball and baseball, adult fitness, and its primary role as the City's primary soccer field. In addition, a potential partnership with the Gwendolyn Strong Foundation to develop the City's first universally accessible playground presents unique design challenges and recreational benefits.

Following the concept design reviews by HLC and ABR, the Department will present the park master plans to City Council in December 2018. Council direction on the park master plans will provide the opportunity to seek funds to prepare preliminary designs in 2019 and include both projects in the upcoming FY 2020-2025 Capital Improvement Program.

**ATTACHMENTS:** 1. Ortega Park Alternative Concept Plans and Workshop Results  
2. Dwight Murphy Field Alternative Concept Plans and Workshop Results

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