



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

AGENDA DATE: March 26, 2014

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Administration Division, Parks and Recreation Department

SUBJECT: New Pocket Park at Bath and Ortega Streets

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Commission review the proposed pocket park conceptual design and recommend that the Parks and Recreation Department finalize the design to include a playground for either 2-5 year-old children or 5-12 year-old children.

DISCUSSION:

Background

The proposed pocket park at Bath and Ortega Streets was first identified in the late 1990s during the environmental review and permitting phase of the Lower Mission Creek Flood Control (LMC) Project. The property was acquired for the purposes of the LMC project, and the City's Redevelopment Agency Board approved the funds for park development. At the time, it was not known whether acquisition of additional adjacent parcels would increase the size of the park. Construction of the park was intended to occur after construction of the Ortega Street Bridge, which was completed in December 2011. With the dissolution of the City's Redevelopment Agency in December 2011, development of the park was put on hold. After completion of the state mandated dissolution process, funding was re-secured in 2013. In December 2013, the Successor Agency to the Redevelopment Agency approved \$250,000 for park design and construction. Work on the project began in February 2014.

Project Purpose and Goals

The purpose of the project is to design and install a small pocket park for West Downtown neighborhood families. Located in a high density residential neighborhood at the corner of Bath and Ortega Streets, the project site is only 2,700 square feet and located adjacent to Mission Creek. The project concept is based on a number of factors, including: the need for a safe park design, lack of existing play areas for children, and the need for additional park space in a high density neighborhood. Since the project site is very small, it is not appropriate for more active use. The goals of the

project are to enhance the neighborhood, provide safe recreation opportunities, and achieve a sustainable park design. A sustainable park design would maximize the aesthetics benefits of the park, while minimizing maintenance requirements and ongoing use of resources, as well as support the City's water quality objectives.

Project Description

The proposed pocket park includes the installation of a playground, lighting, fencing, landscaping, mulch, irrigation, and site amenities including permeable pavers, benches, trash/recycling cans, and signage. The playground, including the required surrounding safety area, will require between 870 and 1,100 square feet of the project site. The site would be fenced using decorative iron similar to the fence at Parqué de Los Niños in the lower Westside neighborhood. The park will have one entrance on Ortega Street. Park lighting will match the existing street lighting. The project also includes new landscaping, mulch and installation of pavers in the adjacent parkways. Given the City's recent Stage One Drought declaration and the significant potential for prolonged drought conditions, as well as mandated reductions in water use, the project design does not include turf and includes permeable surfaces.

Project Concept Design Development

Department staff developed three project concepts in preparation for a neighborhood meeting held on March 13, 2014. The intent of the concepts was to illustrate and solicit feedback on three potential options for park design. The options included: 1) a playground for 2-5 year-old children, 2) stationary adult fitness stations, and 3) a passive park with boulders and sitting benches. All three concepts included similar other amenities including trash/recycling cans, benches, lighting, landscaping, permeable pavers, and fencing.

Neighborhood Outreach and Project Concept Review

Department staff developed and distributed a flyer to 335 residential addresses via U.S. Postal Service first class mail (Attachment 1). The mailing area was bounded by Haley, Chapala, and Carrillo Streets and U.S. Highway 101. Staff also posted the flyer on Next Door, and circulated the announcement to the Parks and Recreation Commission and Neighborhood Advisory Committee.

The neighborhood meeting included an estimated 24 adults and 8 children as well as 5 City staff. Adults included Parks and Recreation Commissioners Beebe Longstreet, Lesley Wiscomb, Olivia Uribe, and Jim Heaton. Neighborhood Advisory Committee members included Brittany Heaton and Sebastian Aldana. Councilmember Gregg Hart also attended the meeting.

After the staff presentation and a period of questions, meeting attendees provided input on their concerns and preferences for park design. There was a range of support for the three concepts as well as suggestions for park designs that could combine one or more of the concepts. Key discussion points included:

- Limitations associated with the small area available for park development
- Considerations for safety (traffic, lighting, fencing, gates, and potential for illegal activity)
- Landscaping options, including tree and plant selection, and mulch
- Benefits of various design options
 - Need for children’s play areas
 - Opportunities to promote adult fitness
 - Ability to mix adult fitness and children’s play
 - Advantages of an open space respite, and potential for dog use
 - Ability to mix open space with some play elements

After much discussion, meeting attendees voted on the three concept proposals as well as three additional proposals developed through the meeting discussion. Each attendee could vote for up to two options. As shown in the table below, the majority of attendees selected a park design with a children’s play structure. There was almost equal support for a play structure that would serve older children as one that would serve younger children. While there was some support for adult fitness equipment in general, many attendees suggested that one of the City’s beach parks would provide a better location and serve more residents.

Options	Vote Count
Children’s Play Structure (2-5 year-olds)	10
Children’s Play Structure (5-12 year-olds)	8
Adult Exercise Equipment	3
Passive Space	3
Hybrid – Adult Equipment and Children’s Play area	6
Hybrid – Open Space and Children’s Play Sculpture	1

Revised Project Concept Design

Based on the input from the neighborhood meeting, staff revised the project concept design (Attachment 2). Revisions include relocation of the park entrance to Ortega Street, inclusion of an entry gate, and reorientation of the play structure toward Ortega Street. Since there was interest in play features for older children, staff prepared concept plans that outline the footprint required for a smaller playground geared toward 2-5 year-old children (870 square feet), and the footprint for a larger

playground (1,100 square feet) geared toward 5-12 year-old children. Attachment 3 provides illustrations of the proposed play structure design for the two age ranges. This style of play structure would fit well with the park surroundings and complement the neighborhood.

Since the park area is not large enough to accommodate play areas for both age ranges, there are a number of considerations for play structure selection, including:

- Limited public play space within the City for 2-5 year-olds
- 5-12 year-old play structure provides opportunity for more play features
- Size and height of structure relative to the park size
 - The structure for 2-5 year-olds is about 11.5 feet high
 - The structure of 5-12 year-olds is about 15 feet high
- Use of play structure by either age range is not known
 - 2-5 year-olds are more likely to play during the day
 - Older children would play after school, on weekends and during summer

The Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) Public Playground Safety Handbook indicates that a playground should present challenges that allow children to develop and test their skills and should be ones that children can perceive and choose to undertake. As a result, playgrounds should be designed to address age-related skills, including physical size and ability, as well as intellectual social skills.

Although staff had initially proposed a play structure serving 2-5 year-old children due to the size of the park, either play structure is feasible. Staff is seeking further input from the public and the Commission regarding the preferred play structure.

Next Steps

With Commission approval of the conceptual design, staff will complete the design drawings and submit an application for design review. The project requires Architectural Board of Review approval, including approval to include development within the 25-foot setback from Mission Creek. It is anticipated that if project permits are secured by the end of June, the project construction could begin in late August/early September.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Neighborhood meeting flyer
2. Revised project conceptual designs
3. Play structure illustrations

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