



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

AGENDA DATE: February 23, 2011

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Administration Division, Parks and Recreation Department

SUBJECT: Cabrillo Ball Field Improvements

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission receive a presentation on the background and current use of Cabrillo Ball Field and discuss potential improvements.

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this staff report is to review the current uses and challenges with Cabrillo Ball Field, outline potential improvements, review permitting requirements, provide preliminary cost estimates, and discuss funding sources.

Background

Cabrillo Ball Field, also known as Cabrillo Ball Park, was acquired by the City between 1925 and 1927. In conjunction with other land in the waterfront area, a portion of the land acquired was used for the realignment of Cabrillo Boulevard in the late 1920s. At that time, park improvements included a baseball diamond and dressing rooms. During World War II, it was used by teams from the armed services and for housing United States Army men from Camp Cooke. The dressing room-shower building was later removed.

The ball field underwent a series of improvements between 1977 and 1981. These improvements, partially funded by a \$25,000 State grant, included additional pole lights, fencing, bleachers, turf restoration, and the installation of a new crushed brick infield. The restroom was constructed in 1981. Also in 1977, the Department of Interior received City approval to install sea water intrusion wells in the south western area of the park.

In 1994, the 80-foot long block wall, concrete walkway, and post and rail fence were installed along the Calle Puerto Vallarta side of the park with the assistance of volunteers and donated materials and funds.

In 1996, Recreation staff proposed construction of a permanent 6-foot home run fence. Funding for the fence included \$3,000 donated by the Santa Barbara Softball Club. Although a permanent fence was not pursued, a temporary fence constructed of PVC plastic was used for a number of years. The fence was eventually removed and not replaced due to vandalism.

Chromatic Gate

The Chromatic Gate, located at the corner of Cabrillo Boulevard and Calle Puerto Vallarta, is within park property. Erected in 1991, the gate is the design of Herbert Bayer, an international artist and master of the Bauhaus movement. Spearheaded by the Herbert Bayer Sculpture Committee, fabrication and installation of the gate was funded by private individuals and firms and the ARCO Corporation. Although the gate was repainted in 2000, it is currently in need of repair and repainting. The lighting and landscaping around the gate also need renovation. The Santa Barbara County Arts Commission is currently developing a proposal and identifying funding options to repair and repaint the gate at an estimated cost of \$42,000.

Cabrillo Ball Field Use

Long considered one of the premier softball fields on the Santa Barbara south coast, Cabrillo Ball Field serves both adult and youth recreational and competitive sport programs. The field is scheduled for organized sports programs on a year-round basis. Major League Softball schedules the field four evenings per week year-round for adult softball leagues, and PONY Baseball schedules the field five afternoons per week for youth baseball practice from February through June. Cabrillo Ball Field is also used for weekend softball tournaments, year-round drop in soccer and softball practices on weekday evenings, and permitted weekend practices. Unscheduled drop-in use can include activities such as soccer, softball, Ultimate Frisbee, and dog walking.

Cabrillo Ball Field Challenges

Due to its location and declining infrastructure, Cabrillo Ball Field has a number of public safety and park maintenance challenges. For more than 30 years, the waterfront area that includes Cabrillo Ball Field, Dwight Murphy Ball Field, Chase Palm Park, East Beach, and other areas, has been popular with Santa Barbara's transient and homeless population. With the construction of Chase Palm Park expansion in 1998, Cabrillo Ball Field and Dwight Murphy Ball Field, as well as the Union Pacific Railroad Right of Way, have experienced increased use by transient individuals. In the last six years, sustained illegal drug use and other illicit activity, as well as aggressive and threatening behavior by individuals that hang out in the park has had an adverse impact on park use, increased park maintenance and provided unsafe working conditions for Parks

Division staff. City budget reductions in Fiscal Year 2010 led to the closure of the restroom to the public. The restroom is only open during programmed use.

In addition to the park maintenance issues outlined above, sea water intrusion, poor drainage, periodic flooding, and the ongoing decline in park maintenance funding present additional challenges for maintenance of the turf and surrounding landscaping. Sea water intrudes due to the elevation of the park relative to the coastal ocean. A recent review of the storm drain system indicates that some of the flooding may be due to clogged drains and poorly functioning drain flap. In addition, the pipe that carries water from the area of the park at the corner of Milpas Street and Cabrillo Boulevard is dysfunctional. While staff is investigating short-term solutions to the field drainage issues, long-term site drainage and other park maintenance needs will be critical to any discussion of park renovation.

Current Park Maintenance and Recent Improvements

The highest priority of park maintenance (60%) is keeping the park safe and clean. This includes litter pick up, sanitary clean-up around restroom and bleachers, sidewalk cleaning and regular safety inspections by park staff. Turf maintenance comprises 20% of park staff time. This includes mowing, edging, irrigation inspections and repairs, turf aeration, fertilizing. Turf renovation is conducted every two to three years. The remaining 20% of staff time involves horticulture work such as weeding, mulching and trimming trees, shrubs and groundcover. The restroom remains closed to the public. It is open during programmed use of the ball field.

With a \$25,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), the Parks Division installed a six-foot high chain link fence around the restrooms and bleachers in January 2011. The fence has gates for access to the restrooms and bleachers during scheduled use of the ball field. By eliminating access to the restrooms and bleachers, the fence is intended to reduce illegal activities and discourage loitering. The installation of the fence will also help ensure the park is clean and safe for visitors and softball players and their families. The fence is also intended to protect park assets and thereby reduce park maintenance and clean-up costs.

Preliminary Stakeholder Discussions

The Parks and Recreation Department held a meeting in August 2010 with hotel and other area business owners, and representatives from Casa Esperanza, Major League Softball, Pony Baseball, Santa Barbara Police, and other City Departments, to discuss the challenges and options for improving park conditions and public safety. A key outcome of that meeting was the recommendation to keep the restroom closed and to pursue funding for park improvements that would increase recreational use of the park

and discourage illegal and disruptive activities. Concern about the drug use and other illegal activity as well as harassment of park users was also raised at a Franklin Center Advisory Committee meeting in August 2010.

The conditions at Cabrillo Ball Field were most recently discussed at a meeting of the Mayor, City staff, and the Milpas Community Association in November 2010.

Potential Improvements to Cabrillo Ball Field

The Fiscal Year 2012 – 2017 Parks and Recreation Department's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) identifies a number of potential renovation projects for Cabrillo Ball Field. The objective of these improvements is to enhance park aesthetics, increase general public use and ball field programming, protect park assets, discourage illegal activities, increase public safety, and provide Parks staff with safe maintenance conditions. The improvements outlined in the CIP include:

- Renovation of restroom interior and roof replacement
- Installation of mow strips and perimeter fencing for the active ball field
- Renovation of existing landscaping
- Replacement of the ball field poles and light fixtures
- Renovation of the Chromatic Gate and associated lighting and landscaping
- Other site improvements such as the enclosure of sea water intrusion wells
- Repair and replacement of catch basins and storm drain pipes

The CIP also considers the need to identify and construct additional recreation uses in the southwestern area of the park that is not in active ball field use. Potential uses that have been proposed by the public and park stakeholders include:

- Children's playground
- Adult exercise equipment
- Basketball courts
- Off-leash dog park
- Small pocket park

It is anticipated that further public discussion could identify other potential uses. Once a range of uses are selected for further consideration, Staff will analyze each for feasibility, construction cost, life cycle, and maintenance needs. Storm drain improvements will be necessary for the development of any new use since this area of the park, in addition to a portion of the ball field, is subject to sea water intrusion and flooding during rain events.

The final scope of potential improvements will help determine the scope of project permitting and environmental review. Since the park is public property, any new development would be subject to City design review and permitting. The park is also within the City's designated coastal zone, and any new development would likely require a Coastal Development Permit from the City's Planning Commission.

Preliminary Project Cost Estimates

The Department has preliminary cost estimates for the following improvements.

Item	Estimated Cost
Renovate Restroom and Replace Roof	\$160,000
Replace Ball Field Poles and Light Fixtures	\$164,000
Site Survey and Grading	\$40,000
Install 1,000 feet of mow strips and perimeter fencing	\$100,000
Renovate existing landscaping	\$80,000
Repair and repaint Chromatic Gate	\$42,000
Replace Chromatic Light Fixtures	\$24,000
Repair/Replace Storm Drain System	\$75,000
Other Site Improvements (includes new recreation area)	\$150,000
Parks Project Management	\$50,000
Total	\$885,000

Funding Options

Potential sources of funding for improvements include the City's General Fund, the City's Redevelopment Agency (RDA), Community Development Block Grants, and contributions from the community. The General Fund may provide a portion of the funding. It is not a likely resource for significant funding since the project would compete with other City projects.

Since the site is within the City's RDA Zone, the Department is planning to submit the project for RDA funding consideration in 2011. However, the Governor's proposal to use RDA funds to help address the state's budget shortfall may eliminate this funding option. The Department may also submit a proposal in the next round of CDBG funding

in December 2011. A request for CDBG funds would be focused on a specific improvement, rather than the entire project.

The Santa Barbara County Arts Commission is also currently seeking private funding for the repair and repainting of the Chromatic Gate.

Next Steps

The Commission's discussion and public input on February 23 will assist staff in determining the next steps for moving forward with Cabrillo Ball Field improvements.

ATTACHMENT: Cabrillo Ball Field Site Plan 02.16.2011

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