



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

AGENDA DATE: December 16, 2015
TO: Parks and Recreation Commission
FROM: Administration Division, Parks and Recreation Department
SUBJECT: Cabrillo Ball Park Renovation Project

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Commission considers the additional analysis of the expanded recreation options for the Cabrillo Ball Park Renovation Project and comments from the Neighborhood Advisory Council; and provides further direction prior to proceeding with design review.

DISCUSSION:

Background

Since 2011, the Parks and Recreation Department (Department), Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission), park stakeholders and members of the community have discussed the need to enhance the function of the Cabrillo Ball Park as a premier ball field, expand recreation opportunities, promote park safety, upgrade park infrastructure, and improve park aesthetics. From 2011-2014, the Department completed the first phase of site improvements that helped address concerns about illegal activity, site drainage, and field improvements. On January 28, 2015, the Commission reviewed preliminary concepts for additional park improvements. The Commission supported the proposed overall improvements to the entire park and recommended further evaluation of three expanded recreation options: 1) Fitness and Play Area, 2) Basketball Court, and 3) Fitness Area and Basketball Court. On October 28, 2015, the Commission further reviewed the expanded recreation options but did not have a majority to recommend one of the options for additional project development. At that meeting, the Commission discussed the importance of recreational activity to increase use of the park, neighborhood and site compatibility, design alternatives to reduce the potential for noise impacts, and options for locating basketball in other areas of the beach/waterfront. The Commission recommended that the Department seek Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) concept review and consideration of the two options.

Additional Research and Evaluation

Following the Commission meeting, Department staff reviewed the feasibility of redesigning the basketball court to place it further from the adjacent hotel, considered potential alternate locations for basketball in the beach/waterfront area, evaluated park programming approaches to ensure the most active and compatible recreational use of the site, and researched the number and location of basketball courts near the park. Moreover, since the plans presented to the Commission were still conceptual, and HLC review requires submittal of a development application, Department staff considered the time and resources required to complete further design, and the complicated nature of presenting two different projects for HLC review. Lastly, since there has been a long-term interest in providing additional recreation for Eastside residents, the Department reviewed the project with the Neighborhood Advisory Council.

Location of Basketball Court/Noise:

The conceptual location of the basketball court provides an opportunity for the fitness area, landscaping, and storm water management features, and a buffer from the Chromatic Gate. Shifting the location toward Cabrillo Boulevard would increase the distance from the hotel by an estimated 100 feet. Additional concept planning could determine how to re-orient the court while also integrating adult fitness opportunities. In consideration of programming, specific hours and basketball court features could be developed and implemented to minimize noise for the neighboring hotel.

Alternate Locations:

Staff completed a general evaluation of potential alternate locations with a focus on beach parking lots and sandy areas. It is unlikely that beach parking lots would provide a feasible location due to parking demand and the use of the lots to stage sporting and other special events. Based on a review of existing beach basketball courts at Avila Beach, Oxnard Shores, and Laguna Beach, site locations are adjacent to sand, visible by public, and compatible with the surroundings. West Beach may be a feasible location since it is relatively stable and already the site for a variety of beach and ocean related activities. This location would need to be further studied in coordination with the Waterfront Department, and would require separate design and development review.

Existing Basketball:

The Department reviewed the number and location of basketball courts near the park. There are 19 full courts and four half courts that can be accessed at Santa Barbara High and Jr. High, Cleveland and Franklin Schools, and Ortega Park. With the exception of Santa Barbara High, most courts located on school property may not be available outside school hours.

Active Recreation Use of Park:

The conceptual design for the fitness and youth play area includes several fitness stations for all abilities that are grouped to promote social interaction, open lawn areas for casual drop-in use or specific fitness training, bike parking, planters to help define areas, and a play area for children. The play area will support the primary focus of outdoor exercise and use by families.

In consideration of programming, the proposed fitness area may provide more options than basketball due to the popularity of private fitness programs in park settings and location near the beach way, a popular running, walking and cycling route. The proposed fitness equipment could be used in a multi-site workout. Fitness equipment would tie in active use of the beach parks for running and walking and could offer families an exercise option while the ball field is in use.

At Cabrillo Ball Park, due to its size and location, the proposed junior-high-sized basketball court would be for drop-in play only.

Neighborhood Advisory Council Comments

The Department presented the project and recreation options to the Neighborhood Advisory Council (NAC) on December 9, 2015. Overall, NAC members voiced their support for basketball since it could support enhanced recreation opportunities for Eastside residents. NAC members also supported the enhanced walking path and inclusion of adult fitness equipment. There was less concern about potential noise and a greater focus on methods to maximize active recreation space and use of the park.

Recommendation

Given these considerations, as well as the time and resources required to further develop the designs for HLC review, staff recommends that the Commission consider the additional analysis as well as the comments from the Neighborhood Advisory Council. There is clearly support for adult fitness and both support and concern about basketball. Staff would like to refine the conceptual plans to better balance the two options while also reducing the concerns about noise and neighborhood compatibility.

PREPARED BY: Justin Van Mullem, Associate Planner

SUBMITTED BY: George Thomson, Capital Projects Supervisor

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