



## CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

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

**AGENDA DATE:** June 27, 2018

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

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

**SUBJECT:** West Beach Splash Playground

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Commission and Council receive a presentation and provide advisory comments on the West Beach Splash Playground.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

The purpose of this staff report and the joint Parks and Recreation Commission and Neighborhood Advisory Council discussion is to review the proposed renovation plan and provide advisory comments. Comments will be incorporated into preliminary landscape plans to support design review and permitting.

#### Background

The City of Santa Barbara's Capital Improvement Program (Fiscal Years 2018-2023) identifies the West Beach Wading Pool as a site for a new splash playground. The existing wading pool, located adjacent to Los Baños del Mar, has been closed since 2014 due to a major leak and the ongoing response to the severe drought. The wading pool will require significant upgrades to reopen since the specific location of the leak is unknown. There are also new mandatory upgrades to allow access for persons with disabilities, and the state Health and Safety Code requires an upgraded water filtration system. Considering these capital costs and the operational costs for lifeguard staffing to operate a wading pool, the Parks and Recreation Department (Department) is evaluating replacement of the wading pool with a splash playground.

Splash playgrounds, also known as splash pads or splash parks, typically feature a concrete surface and have a variety of water jets that create a fun environment for children of all ages. Splash playgrounds are a popular replacement for wading pools due to their lower cost for

maintenance and staffing, and longer range of operating days during the year. Splash playgrounds can also be used by members of the community that do not know how to swim. Unlike traditional wading pools, splash playgrounds do not have standing water of any considerable depth — typically less than an inch deep and freely flowing to surface drains — so the chance of drowning is greatly minimized and lifeguards are not required by law. When not in use, splash playgrounds can be used as a multi-purpose space and integrated into a more traditional playground or park setting.

### Project Objectives

The primary objective of the West Beach Splash Playground (Project) is to create an engaging park incorporating playful and safe water elements in warmer months, while also functioning as a year-round destination playground. A key consideration is to have a design theme that reflects local ocean and waterfront features with play equipment for ages 1-10. Project amenities would include restroom/changing room, showers, tables and chairs, shade options, and play elements for wet and dry areas.

On April 10, 2018, the Department contracted with the SWA Group, a landscape and urban design firm with splash playground experience. The scope of work includes concept and preliminary plans along with a neighborhood workshop, design review meetings, and public hearings.

### Project Elements

The Community Workshop Plan (see Attachment) was developed with a new splash area, playground, landscaping and other amenities. The plan theme combines elements of the existing harbor and beach with coastal Chumash heritage and ocean features. The main play structure is a replica harbor patrol boat outfitted with two water spray cannons. Additional play features include a colorful and undulating splash zone surface with sprayers and water cannons, interactive Chumash heritage play space, sand dune slide, ocean themed climbers, and two lifeguard tower inspired slide structures. Other elements include a large life preserver inspired entry arch, a restroom building, and two different seating types accompanied by steel shade umbrellas and palm trees.

### Community Input

To present the Community Workshop Plan and gather input, the Department held a meeting at the site on May 24, 2018. The workshop was noticed through 1,400 mailers to area residents, on-site signage, Facebook event notices, and email invitations to stakeholders. The SWA Group presented a concept plan to the 13 workshop participants.

The Project received support as a whole, with attendees commenting on the theme, play equipment, seating areas, education opportunities, and the adjacent nesting birds. The harbor patrol boat and ocean theme spray area is a significant draw for children. Participants

requested multiple options for seating types and locations, including chairs with a view of the gate and a few lounge chairs. Parents supported a reservable group area for birthday parties. Attendees recommended a larger buffer from the adjacent nesting birds to avoid bird droppings in the playground. Participants also suggested an educational component to highlight the night herons and egrets in the adjacent trees, along with information on coastal Chumash heritage.

### Revised Concept Plan

As a result of the workshop, SWA Group created the Revised Plan (see Attachment). The plan includes four different styles of chairs evenly located around the main play area, with 10 oversized steel beach umbrella structures and new palms providing more shade. A reservable group area will accommodate four picnic tables that can be used by the public when not booked. A 20 foot planting buffer with educational bird habitat information will provide space between the nesting trees and park seating. The main gate moved to the center of the paseo, and the arched entry element is now removed to allow parents a clear view of the gate.

### Next Steps

The project will require Historic Landmarks Commission approval, a Coastal Development Permit, and may require Planning Commission approval. The Department will also contact local Chumash representatives for advice on the heritage play space. Without any significant obstacles, it is anticipated that design review and environmental permitting could be complete in late-2018.

### **BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

The SWA Group contract amount, including a 10-percent contingency, is \$152,240 and funded through the Parks and Recreation Fiscal Year 2018 Capital Improvement Program. An additional \$100,000 was approved in the Fiscal Year 2019 Capital Improvement Plan. These funds will be used to develop construction drawings.

**ATTACHMENT:** West Beach Splash Park Concept Plan Comparison

**PREPARED BY:** Justin Van Mullem, Project Planner

**SUBMITTED BY:** George Thomson, Capital Projects Supervisor

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