



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

AGENDA DATE: September 25, 2019

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Administration Division, Parks and Recreation Department

SUBJECT: Ortega Park Master Plan Progress Report And Street Tree Removal Application

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission:

- A. Receive a presentation on the status of the Ortega Park Master Plan;
- B. Concur with the Street Tree Advisory Committee and approve all street tree removals for 604 E. Ortega Street as proposed with the exception of the four large Italian stone pines;
- C. Remove the Italian stone pines from consideration for removal; and
- D. Make the finding that a reasonable and practical development of the property on which the trees are located requires their removal.

DISCUSSION:

Background

On January 8, 2019, City Council directed staff to advance the Ortega Park Master Plan (Master Plan). Implementation of the Master Plan is now underway with significant progress accomplished by City staff and RRM Design Group on the architectural and engineering design of the site's buildings, on-street parking, stormwater treatment areas, landscaping, pedestrian access, and recreational amenities. The proposed recreational amenities and general orientation of the park features reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Commission on November 14, 2018 remain unchanged. Attachment 1 illustrates the most recent proposed site plan.

Swimming Pool Area

Compared to the 2018 concept design for the swimming pool area, the current plan proposes separating the wading pool and lap pool with a standalone water slide structure. This change provides potentially lower operating costs while maximizing the flexibility to

program each pool for specific activities or seasonal closures. Architectural renderings and proposed floor plans for the swimming pool support buildings and park restroom are also complete (Attachment 2).

Skate Park

On May 11, 2019, a skate park design workshop was hosted by the Parks and Recreation Department (Department) to gather input from local skaters. The workshop was well attended and generated good direction for the design team's skate park architect. The proposed skate area plan now includes a variety of features that caters to all skill levels (Attachment 3). City staff will gather additional skate park design input from the community via an online survey and focused meetings in the coming month.

Architectural Board of Review

The Architectural Board of Review (ABR) provided a concept design review of the Master Plan on September 9, 2019. Overall, the ABR supports the proposed design and aesthetics presented in the Master Plan. Specific recommendations from the ABR include simplifying the architectural detailing on the proposed buildings, adding additional access gates to the multi-sport field, extending the park walkway from the central picnic area directly to the Cota Street-Salsipuedes Street entrance (thereby reducing the size of the skate area), increasing the amount of ornamental ironwork at the park entry gates, and providing more shade on the swimming pool deck at the rear of the Welcome House (pool entry building). Additional analysis of the proposed field lighting, the site's potential archeological resources, and potential soil contamination will need to be completed in the coming months. In addition to responding to the ABR's comments and advancing focused technical studies, staff will be submitting the project to the City's Development Application Review Team (DART), with an anticipated review by the Planning Commission in early-2020. An additional review and findings by the Parks and Recreation Commission will occur prior to the Planning Commission hearing.

Proposed Tree Removals and Replacement Plantings

The Master Plan proposes new recreational facilities and other amenities that would potentially require removal of up to 45 existing trees (Attachment 4). The existing trees proposed for removal include a grove of Chinese flame trees near the former picnic area at the Cota Street-Salsipuedes Street intersection, a grouping of pine trees along the park side of Ortega Street, and various interior park trees. These trees are proposed to be removed due to their conflict with new building foundations, parking areas, sidewalks, the swimming pool, skate park, and the multi-generational recreation area. A new landscape plan is in development that currently includes approximately 60-80 replacement tree plantings to provide a cohesive and aesthetically-pleasing park setting.

In anticipation of the City's DART process and ABR review, staff submitted a street tree removal application for Ortega Park (Attachment 5). The Street Tree Advisory Committee (STAC) reviewed the proposed tree removals at the September 5, 2019 meeting. The STAC discussed the project, the trees to be retained, and the 45 trees proposed for removal. In particular, the STAC discussed the four large Italian Stone Pines adjoining Santa Barbara Junior High. STAC is concerned that the Italian Stone Pines might have some historic significance. The STAC recommends the Commission approve all removals as proposed on the condition the four Italian Stone Pines remain if they are given historic designation. STAC commented that the City Historian should be consulted regarding these trees. Department staff is consulting with the City Historian to determine the historic significance of the large Italian stone pines. At this time, staff recommends the large stone pines not be considered for removal. Staff will return to the STAC once the proposed tree species and landscape plan are more fully developed. In addition, other proposed tree removals, if approved, would not occur until park construction begins. As noted below, the construction phase is not currently funded and therefore a construction timeline is not developed.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The Master Plan is currently being advanced through two separate design contracts, both with RRM Design Group. A \$169,658 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) is funding design of public right of way improvements, including sidewalks, parking areas, street lights, and crosswalk improvements. This phase is funded through the completion of construction bid documents. A \$251,334 contract with RRM for design of the interior park improvements is funded by the City's Capital Program. This contract only goes through preliminary design. However, an additional \$250,000 from Measure C is available to advance design of the interior park improvements. A new design contract will be presented to City Council once the current phase is complete. The construction phase is not currently funded, but is anticipated to come from a variety of sources, including grants, the General Fund, Measure C, and private donations.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Ortega Park Draft Preliminary Site Plan
2. Building Renderings
3. Skatepark Rendering
4. Existing Conditions and Demolition Plan
5. Street Tree Removal Application

SUBMITTED BY: George Thomson, Parks Capital Projects Supervisor

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