



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item

22-0881

Agenda Date: 12/14/2022

REPORT TO PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

SUBJECT

Recommend to City Council Approval of the Conceptual Design for the Community Center Grounds Renovation Project

BACKGROUND

The Sunnyvale Community Center was originally constructed in 1972 with the grounds covering over 14 acres. It is a unique recreation complex that includes the Senior Center, Creative Arts Center, Performing Arts Center (Theater), Indoor Sports Center, Recreation Center, Historical Museum, and related storage and maintenance facilities. The existing grounds include a quarter-mile walking trail that loops around the lower pond, which is surrounded by large lawn areas and trees, including a heritage valley oak tree. There is also an upper fountain located in the middle of the Community Center that contains a public art memorial piece.

On October 26, 2021, Verde Design, Inc., a landscape architecture firm, was awarded a contract for design and construction support services for the Community Center Grounds Renovation and Enhancement Project (RTC No. 21-0969). The project objective is to renovate the grounds and ensure sustainability for the future by enhancing recreational usability, increasing attractiveness, reducing maintenance needs, and reducing the use of utilities. This project includes selective upgrades to existing pathway and parking lot lighting, American with Disabilities (ADA) improvements, and replacement of park fixtures, including drinking fountains, benches, and tables. Additionally, the project includes facilitating community outreach and preparation of a preferred conceptual plan for consideration. City Council approval of a preferred conceptual design will initiate the development of the detailed design and construction documents that will be used as part of the invitation to bid process for construction of the project. It is likely that some features of the final project may vary slightly from the selected concept as the project evolves through the detailed design process.

An extensive community outreach process was performed to review the objectives of the project and receive input on desired design features for the new Community Center grounds. In the spring and fall of 2022, three virtual community meetings, three online surveys, and several “pop-up” events at the Community Center were held to gather community input. City staff and Verde Design presented jointly at the community meetings. The preferred conceptual design presented for approval is based on a combination of feedback from the community, input from City staff that will operate and maintain the facility, and the goals of the City Council-approved Capital Project. (See Attachment 6, Preferred Concept Plan dated December 2022.)

The City Council is scheduled to consider approval of the preferred conceptual plan in January.

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EXISTING POLICY

General Plan, Chapter 3, *Land Use and Transportation - Open Space*, Goal LT-9

Adequate and Balanced Open Space: The City strives to provide and maintain adequate and balanced open space and recreation facilities for the benefit of maintaining a healthy community based on community needs and the ability of the City to finance, construct, maintain, and operate these facilities now and in the future.

General Plan, Chapter 4, *Community Character - Recreation*, Goal CC-11

Wide Range of Recreation Programming: The City strives to ensure equal opportunities for participation and to provide for a range of structured and unstructured uses, and a variety of general and special interest uses in parks and facilities. The City also provides a wide range of program choices, open space, amenities and facility offerings to meet the recreational needs of a diverse and changing population, including identified subgroups and special populations. Policies related to acquiring and/or developing open space facilities and amenities are also included here. Competing interests and finite resources, however, require the City to set some priorities.

- **Policy CC-11.1** Give priority to the following services, facilities and amenities that:
 1. Are not readily available through other providers within or near Sunnyvale.
 2. Benefiting under-served populations as identified in the US Census and through community input.
 3. Fulfill a basic need or teach basic skills (e.g., non-competitive, developmental sports instruction such as learn to swim given priority over competitive sports programming).
 4. In which the community demonstrates interest.
 5. Benefit a greater number of residents.
 6. Can be used by multiple users or serve multiple purposes.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The actions being considered are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15262 as the actions relate to the authorization of a feasibility and planning study for possible future actions that the City Council has not approved, adopted or funded.

If a conceptual design for the Community Center Grounds Renovation Project is approved, then the full scope of the project and any potential impacts will need to be reviewed. It is anticipated that the project will be exempt from CEQA under the Class 1, Class 2, Class 3, and/or Class 4 categorical exemptions for maintenance and replacement of existing facilities and landscaping, reconstruction/renovation of existing structures, and construction of small new structures, with negligible expansion of the existing uses. It is also possible that an initial study and/or Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) may need to be conducted if the categorical exemptions are not appropriate. In any event, the CEQA determination will be brought to the City Council for approval concurrent with the award of the construction contract for the project.

DISCUSSION

The landscape architect and City staff hosted three virtual community meetings to gather input on desired design features and to select a preferred plan. Additionally, three online surveys were posted on the City website and several “pop-up” events were held on the grounds of the Community Center where park users were contacted and encouraged to take the online surveys. Feedback about the options being considered was also requested at the Senior Center and at the Sunnyvale Library. The

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information from the surveys and “pop-up” events were presented at the second and third community meetings.

The first community meeting was held virtually on Tuesday, March 15, 2022, and was attended by approximately 52 people. The goal of the meeting was to inform the public of the project background and receive public input about the existing facility. The consultant asked the public to comment on the individual elements and features, and how the park could be improved. A break-out session was held in which smaller groups of attendees were asked what they liked and disliked about the grounds, and what features were missing from the grounds. Comments included recommendations such as: improve pond conditions; include more walking paths; make space for passive recreation and picnic tables; and add a playground area. Online Survey #1 received 199 responses that collected general data on user demographics and preferences. The top three requested features in the survey responses included: 1) additional walking paths, 2) playground with play structures, and 3) group picnic area(s). The summary for this meeting and survey is included as Attachment 2, Community Meeting and Online Survey #1 Report, dated April 2022.

The second community meeting was held virtually on Thursday, May 12, 2022, and was attended by approximately 20 people. Results from the first community meeting and survey were discussed. The consultant presented three conceptual designs that were developed based on feedback from the previous outreach efforts. The layout and site configuration for all three conceptual designs varied based on the size of the proposed lower pond (e.g., the smaller the pond, the more elements can be added) (Attachment 3). Concept 1, “Most Pond, Least Program”, included a new playground, picnic areas, a berm trail, and reduced the lower pond footprint by 80%. Concept 2, “Balance of Pond and Program”, included Concept 1 elements but further reduced the lower pond footprint to 50%, and added an amphitheater, flexible synthetic lawn area, additional internal walking paths, and game tables/seating areas. Concept 3, “No Pond, Most Program”, included Concept 2 elements, fully removed the lower pond, and added a dog park, sport courts, and a boardwalk over a stormwater feature. The public was divided into smaller groups and asked to provide feedback on what they liked and disliked on each concept. Generally, the attendees liked the addition of internal walking paths and the berm trail, and the use of more natural materials for proposed features. Online Survey #2 received 276 responses that collected feedback on the preferred balance between the lower pond footprint and programmed features. Concept 3, “No Pond, Most Program”, was popular in the survey; however, a majority of responses indicated that keeping the lower pond in relation to adding new program elements were “equally important”. The summary for this meeting is included as Attachment 3, Community Meeting and Online Survey #2 Report dated June 2022.

The third community meeting was held virtually on Thursday, September 22, 2022, and was attended by approximately 20 people. (See Attachment 4, Community Meeting and Online Survey #3 Report dated October 2022.) Results from previous meetings and pop-up events were reviewed and two conceptual designs were presented for discussion. The pros and cons for each option were thoroughly discussed by the group. Generally, the attendees of the Community Meeting were in favor of Concept A. A couple of members from the audience voiced their concerns over the geese. The consultant and City staff outlined potential features being explored to mitigate the geese population. There were 657 responses to Online Survey #3 and preference between the two concepts was evenly split. Responses showed the berm trail and amphitheater as desirable elements, and large synthetic turf lawn areas as unpreferred.

The public input received from the third community meeting and online survey was used by the

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consultant to prepare a preferred design that addresses most of the public's requests. The plan also meets the needs of the City from an operation and maintenance standpoint. There is a reoriented upper fountain with existing memorial sculpture, upper plaza with grid of shade trees and lower plaza overlook, a fountain outfall into a lower stream bed with boulders and cascading water, a lower pond, an amphitheater-style seating area, separate playground areas for a Tot Lot (ages 2-5) and school-aged children (ages 5-12), a new restroom/mechanical equipment building, a northern berm trail with picnic areas, and a possible art display area. Several items desired by the public, but as lower priorities, including sport courts and dog parks, were not included in the preferred design due to less public support and the proximity of nearby parks that offer these features.

Although large areas of synthetic were not supported by the community, the preferred concept does include a small section of synthetic turf to reduce ongoing water use.

The conceptual design presented for approval is based on a combination of feedback from the community, input from City staff that will operate and maintain the facility, and the goals of the City Council-approved Capital Project.

FISCAL IMPACT

City Council previously approved a budget of \$13,374,174 for design and construction of the Community Center Grounds Renovation and Enhancement Project (Project No. 830310).

A design contract with a 10% contingency in the amount of \$1,397,791 was awarded to Verde Design on October 26, 2021. Initial estimates for the preferred concept plan are approximately \$12 million, and includes an escalation factor reflecting current economic conditions.

Based on conceptual level estimates, there is adequate funding from 830310 Community Center Grounds Renovation and Enhancement, including construction contingency and other soft costs. As the project progresses further into design and estimates are refined to reflect the current economic conditions for construction pricing, modifications may be necessary to keep within the project budget. A future Report to Council will be presented requesting award of a construction contract after the project is competitively bid. Operating costs and revenues will be adjusted during the next operating budget review cycle.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Public contact was made by posting the Parks and Recreation Commission agenda on the City's official-notice bulletin board, on the City's website, and the availability of the agenda and report in the Office of the City Clerk.

The three virtual public meetings for the project were conducted by City staff and Verde Design on March 15, 2022, May 12, 2022, and September 22, 2022. Notification of these meetings was provided through mail delivery to neighbors that live within 1,000 feet of the project and advertising via the City's Facebook page, Nextdoor, and the City website. Three online surveys for the project were also offered on the City website and advertised via existing Recreation Activities email subscribers, Recreation Activities and Senior Center Newsletters, the City's Facebook page, Nextdoor, and the City website. Online Survey #1 was open from March 15 to March 31, 2022, and 199 responses were received. Online Survey #2 was open from May 12 to June 13, 2022, and 276 responses were received. Online Survey #3 was open from September 22 to October 14, 2022, and 657 responses were received.

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Additionally, the City held several “pop-up” events at the Community Center, including the Cultural Celebration on May 14, 2022, where the project team received feedback from 22 attendees, and at the Senior Center on October 11 and 12, 2022, as well as the Sunnyvale Public Library on October 13 and 14, 2022, where input from 39 users was collected. Further input was received via email correspondence from four community members.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Recommend that City Council Approve the Preferred Concept Plan as shown on Attachment 6 of the report.
2. Provide other recommendation to City Council as the Commission deems appropriate.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Alternative 1: Recommend that City Council Approve the Preferred Concept Plan as shown on Attachment 6 of the report.

Prepared by: Marlon Quiambao, Senior Engineer
Reviewed by: Jennifer Ng, Assistant Director of Public Works
Reviewed by: Chip Taylor, Director of Public Works
Reviewed by: Michelle Perera, Director of Library & Recreational Services
Reviewed by: Teri Silva, Assistant City Manager
Approved by: Kent Steffens, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

1. Reserved for Report to Council
2. Community Meeting and Online Survey #1 Report, dated April 2022
3. Community Meeting and Online Survey #2 Report, dated June 2022
4. Community Meeting and Online Survey #3 Report, dated October 2022
5. Design Options
6. Preferred Concept Plan