



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item

23-0940

Agenda Date: 11/8/2023

REPORT TO PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

SUBJECT

Recommend to City Council Approval of the Preferred Concept Plan for the Corn Palace Park Project

BACKGROUND

On July 14, 2009, City Council considered the “Parks of the Future” Study that addressed Sunnyvale’s parks and open space needs for the next twenty years (RTC No. 09-183). This Study created a community supported blueprint for providing high quality parks and recreation for all residents. In this study, it was determined that Sunnyvale is a largely built-out city and there are limited opportunities to acquire open space. The Corn Palace property was identified as one of the few opportunities for the City to acquire park land.

The Corn Palace property (1142 Dhalia Court) was originally a 20-acre parcel of agricultural land located west of Lawrence Expressway. In 2013, the western portion of the property was developed into single family homes, while the rest of the property continued to be farmed until 2015. A two-acre portion of this property oriented in the northeast corner of Toyon Avenue and Lily Avenue, extending east to Lawrence Expressway, was identified by staff as an adequate size and location for a public park. It was acquired by the City in March 2020 and the remaining land was developed into single family homes with the Corn Palace II Development.

On March 14, 2023, Callander Associates, a landscape architecture firm, was awarded a contract for design and construction support services for the Corn Palace Park Development project (RTC No. 23-0149). The project objective was for design and construction of a new two-acre public park at the Corn Palace II development site. The project includes facilitating community outreach and preparation of a preferred conceptual plan for consideration. Public street improvements along Toyon Avenue and Lily Avenue were installed as part of the Corn Palace II Development by the Developer. City Council approval of a preferred conceptual plan 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.

A thorough community outreach effort was performed to review the objectives of the project and receive input on desired design features. Since this will be a “mini park,” intended to serve residents within walking distance, outreach was targeted to residents within 1/4 mile of the site. Two virtual community meetings and two online surveys were held between May 2023 and early August 2023 to gather community input. The preferred conceptual plan 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 4, Preferred Concept Plan, dated October 2023.)

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The City Council is scheduled to consider this item on December 5, 2023.

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

This action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15303, which exempts construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures, and/or CEQA Guidelines Section 15304, which exempts minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees. Furthermore, the traffic and noise impacts of the park were considered within the scope of the Final Environmental Impact Report for the City of Sunnyvale Corn Palace Residential Development Project dated March 1, 2019, and, as no new environmental impacts are anticipated and no new mitigations are required, the action is also exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(c)(2) and Public Resources Code Section 20194(c).

DISCUSSION

City staff and the landscape architect for the project hosted two virtual community meetings to gather input on desired design features and to select a preferred concept plan. In addition, two online surveys were made available through the City website.

The first community meeting was held virtually on May 11, 2023, and was attended by approximately 52 attendees. The purpose of this meeting was to introduce the project, discuss the site, and receive input from attendees. A formal presentation was followed by a polling exercise for community members to vote on preferred park uses and features. During the presentation it was shared that, as

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identified in the Council-approved Parks of the Future Study, a park less than three acres may include items such as a children's play area (ages 6-12), an open lawn area, sports courts (half-court basketball or single tennis court), and restrooms. Items that would not be considered included a community garden, sports fields (baseball, football, soccer, softball, multi-purpose), full-service recreation centers, and a swimming pool. Attendees also had the opportunity to ask questions and share comments and concerns during the meeting.

In the first meeting, community members expressed a strong preference for a park that supports primarily passive uses. An open lawn area, a playground, and a pollinator garden were highly preferred park features. Most attendees did not feel that splash play, a restroom, sports courts, or Wi-Fi were important amenities to provide at this park. In general, community members envisioned the park to be a clean, safe, green, and relaxing space to which they and their families can take their dogs. Some attendees expressed concern about privacy, safety, parking and unrestricted access between the new park and the recently completed housing development.

Online Survey #1 received 174 responses that collected general data on user demographics and preferences. Similar to the input received in the meeting, community members generally preferred that the park prioritize passive uses and playgrounds. A majority felt that a splash pad, restrooms, Wi-Fi, or a dog park were not important amenities for this park. The summary for this meeting and survey results are attached to this report as Attachment 2, Community Meeting and Online Survey #1, dated May 11, 2023.

The second community meeting was held virtually on July 20, 2023, and was attended by approximately 49 people. Results from the first community meeting and survey were discussed and the consultant presented three conceptual plans that were developed based on feedback from the previous outreach efforts. The layout and configuration of the three conceptual plans varied on the size and location of the playgrounds and picnic areas and included different configurations of other possible park features (e.g., restrooms, pollinator garden, shade structures and courts). Concept A included a lawn and playgrounds, as well as some of the lower priority features such as restrooms, a tennis court, half-court basketball court, and fitness equipment. The mounded lawn area was shown in the southeast portion of the park and the playground was in the north central portion near the new housing development. Concept A also included a pollinator garden, concrete pathways and plaza and new shade trees. Concepts B and C were similar to each other in that they prominently featured the most desired elements such as an open lawn, playgrounds, pollinator garden, shade structure and picnic area. Concepts B and C also included small entry plazas, benches, stormwater retention features and pathways. Concept B showed the playgrounds on the western portion of the park whereas Concept C located the playgrounds on the eastern portion and included a larger picnic area as well as space for game tables.

Meeting attendees were asked to participate in a polling exercise where they were asked which concept they preferred and how they felt about the layout and features of each concept. Sixty percent (60%) of the community members selected Concept B as their preferred concept, followed by Concept C (36%) and Concept A (4%). Generally, the attendees liked both the features and layout of Concept B and voted against the features shown in Concept A. Online Survey #2 collected feedback on the three concept plans and park features and received 195 responses. The results of the survey varied from the meeting in that Concept A (48%) was preferred followed by Concept B (29%) and Concept C (23%). The summary for this meeting and survey results are attached to this report as Attachment 3, Community Meeting and Online Survey #2, dated July 20, 2023.

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The public input received from the two community meetings and online surveys was used by the consultant to prepare a preferred concept that addresses most of the public's requests. The features in Concept B were incorporated into the layout of Concept A. This approach was used in response to the results received in both the second community meeting and online survey, as well as taking into consideration the input heard about park features from the voting exercise in the first round of outreach. Below are some of the results that support the approach taken to develop the preferred concept sketch:

- Concept B received the most votes for both layout and features during the 2nd Community Meeting.
- Concept A received the most votes for layout from Online Survey #2.
- Concept B received the most votes for features from Online Survey #2.
- A majority of respondents did not prefer to include restroom, pickleball, tennis, or basketball as indicated in the online survey and community meeting results.

The proposed conceptual plan also meets the needs of the City from an operation and maintenance standpoint. The preferred concept keeps the open lawn area, playgrounds, pollinator garden, shade structure and picnic area while also incorporating bench seating, planters, new fencing, stormwater treatment areas, seatwalls and abundant trees for shade.

Throughout the process several community members expressed a desire for something that acknowledges the history of the site to be included in the design. This is consistent with a mitigation measure adopted as part of the Environmental Impact Report for the development project to reduce the impact of demolition of the existing structures that appear eligible for listing on the California Register of Historic Resources (RTC No. 18-1055). The mitigation measure consists of creating a plaque or exhibit that is displayed at the park. In response, the developer fabricated a plaque and provided it to the City to be installed with construction of the park.

In accordance with City policy, one percent of the construction valuation will be reserved for public art onsite. The typical "art in public places" process will be followed to identify locations and commission artwork for the park.

The conceptual plan 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 \$ 5,749,941 for design and construction of the Corn Palace Park Development Project (Project No. 834330).

A design contract with a 10% contingency in the amount of \$479,482 was awarded to Callander Associates on March 14, 2023. Initial estimates for the preferred concept plan are approximately \$4.4 million, including an escalation factor to the projected mid- point of construction.

Based on conceptual level estimates, there is adequate funding in project 834330 Corn Palace Park Development, 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

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construction pricing, the plans may be modified to adjust costs to the project budget.

Prior to the award of construction contract, Council will have a chance to review the costs for Wi-Fi installation at this park, pursuant to the 2018 directive to include the analysis with each major park renovation. Costs associated with the installation of Wi-Fi features are not accounted for in the current project budget and may require a future budget modification.

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 Council meeting agenda on the City's official-notice bulletin board at City Hall, at the Sunnyvale Public Library and in the Department of Public Safety Lobby. In addition, the agenda and this report are available at the NOVA Workforce Services reception desk located on the first floor of City Hall at 456 W. Olive Avenue (during normal business hours), and on the City's website.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Recommend that City Council approve the Preferred Concept Plan as shown on Attachment 4 of the report.
2. Provide other recommendation to City Council as the Commission deems appropriate.

RECOMMENDATION

Alternative 1: Recommend that City Council approve the Preferred Concept Plan as shown on Attachment 4 of the report.

Prepared by: Nate Scribner, Assistant City Engineer

Reviewed by: Chip Taylor, Director, Public Works

Reviewed by: Sarah Johnson-Rios, Assistant City Manager

Approved by: Kent Steffens, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

1. Reserved for Report to Council
2. Corn Palace Community Meeting and Online Survey 1, Dated May 11, 2023
3. Corn Palace Community Meeting and Online Survey 2, Dated July 20, 2023
4. Preferred Concept Plan