



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
TO THE PARK AND RECREATION BOARD

DATE ISSUED: March 8, 2022

REPORT NO. 101

ATTENTION: Park and Recreation Board
Agenda of March 17, 2022

SUBJECT: NORMAL HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL JOINT USE FACILITY
GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (GDP) AMENDMENT

SUMMARY

Issue: Should the Park and Recreation Board recommend approval of the General Development Plan Amendment (GDP Amendment) for the Normal Heights Elementary School Joint Use Facility?

Staff's Recommendation: Recommend approval of the GDP Amendment for the Normal Heights Elementary School Joint Use Facility.

Other Recommendations: The following bodies have reviewed and considered the proposed project. Actions taken and recommendations made are listed below:

On November 12, 2019, the Adams Recreation Advisory Group voted (5-1-0) to recommend approval of the GDP Amendment for the Normal Heights Elementary School Joint Use Facility.

Fiscal Impact:

Capital Funding: No changes to the site are anticipated to implement the amended GDP. Existing fencing and gates will be utilized. Any retrofits to separate the irrigation system will be made by San Diego Unified School District.

Operations and Maintenance: The cost to operate and maintain this joint use facility on an annual basis is currently approximately \$41,600. This includes all labor, materials, equipment, and supplies. The reduction in the joint use area will reduce the yearly City operations and maintenance costs by \$24,500 to approximately \$17,100 on an annual basis. The balance in operations and maintenance costs will shift to the San Diego Unified School District.

Water and Energy Conservation Status: The proposed project would not have an impact on water and energy conservation guidelines contained in Council Policy 200-14.

Environmental: This activity is covered by the Final Environmental Impact Report for the Adams/Franklin Area Elementary School (SCH No. 2000101016) certified and adopted by the Board of Education of the San Diego Unified School District on December 10, 2002. This activity is a subsequent discretionary action and not considered a separate project for the purposes of CEQA review as defined in State CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(c). Pursuant to CEQA Section 21166, there is no change in circumstance, additional information, or project changes to warrant additional environmental review for this action.

BACKGROUND

Normal Heights Elementary School Joint Use Facility is located at 3750 Ward Road within the Normal Heights Community, Council District 3. It was established by agreement between the City and San Diego Unified School District (District) in 2005; the City accepted maintenance of the facility in 2012. This joint use is atypical in that the amenities include not just the multi-purpose field but also a landscaped corridor alongside classroom buildings, basketball court, playgrounds, and restroom. Due to safety concerns as noted below, the City and District agreed in a 2012 side letter to close the restroom to public use after a series of incidents that compromised user safety.

The joint use area consists of two major areas: the Central Campus, which includes the aforementioned landscaped corridor, basketball courts, and playgrounds, and the northeastern Upper Field, which includes a more traditional multi-purpose turf field that can be used for a variety of sports and play. The proposed amendment to the GDP would reduce the size of the joint use area from 2.90 acres to approximately 1.13 acres by removing the 1.62-acre Central Campus and the 0.15-acre parking lot. The remaining 1.13-acre joint use facility will consist of the Upper Field and be maintained by the City of San Diego, Parks and Recreation Department.

The current General Development Plan (GDP) for Normal Heights Elementary School Joint Use is provided in Attachment 1, and the proposed GDP that removes the Central Campus from the joint use area of Normal Heights Elementary School is provided in Attachment 2.

If approved, the revised GDP results in 49 Recreational Value Points (RVPs) of population-based recreational opportunities in the Normal Heights Community as shown in Attachment 3. This represents a decrease in 28 RVPs from the current GDP.

DISCUSSION

After several national school security incidents, the District is assessing security vulnerabilities at their school campuses and implementing new security measures at existing joint use sites.

The configuration of the existing joint use area at Normal Heights presents safety and security challenges because the joint use area is not a separate and discrete portion of the school campus. No fencing separates the joint use area from the school lunch court area and the restroom that was closed to public use in 2012. The joint use area is also internal to the campus and provides limited opportunities for surveillance by law enforcement. The joint use area is used by members of the public overnight, and nighttime users are frequently still on campus when students and staff arrive at school in the morning.

Dangerous drug paraphernalia including used needles, evidence of sexual activity including used condoms, evidence of overnight lodging including tents and bedrolls and damage to the campus, resistance by some park patrons to leave the joint use area before school begins each morning, leftover personal items, and human waste have been frequently found on campus by students and staff. Staff and students have also had very concerning interactions with people experiencing homelessness on campus.

Because the joint use area includes the Central Campus, students and staff can be in direct contact with members of the public each morning. This is a significant concern for students entering school each morning and creates conflict for the before and after school program which operates out of the multi-purpose room adjacent to the joint use area.

Two public community meetings were held on October 22, 2019, and November 12, 2019, at meetings of the Adams Community Recreation Group. The primary issues raised during the community input meetings are discussed in the paragraphs below.

Safety and Security of Students and Staff

School staff, neighbors, parents, and students are very concerned about safety on their campus. Numerous stories and testimony were provided during the workshops asserting that basic school security is compromised because of joint use activities.

Configuration of the Joint Use Area and Hours of Use

Options that were presented at the workshops centered on two questions: 1) When should the joint use area be open to the public? and 2) What areas of campus should be joint use?

Some community members expressed an interest in adjusting the joint use hours including locking the gates from dusk to dawn on a trial basis to address safety concerns; however, school staff and parents felt that adjusting the hours of joint use would not alleviate the key safety concerns that had been raised.

Regarding the joint use area configuration, there was wide support by most attendees at the advisory group meetings that the upper grass field should remain as joint use. Most felt that the configuration of the central campus could not be a successful joint use area because it was not easily surveilled by law enforcement, utilized campus school buildings as the boundary of the joint use area instead of separate fencing, and did not provide school exclusive space for before/after school programs and staff working after school hours.

Needed Park Space in the Neighborhood

Some members of the community expressed disappointment that park space would be removed as part of the proposed amendment to the General Development Plan. They felt that there is not adequate park space in the Normal Heights community as it is, and those community members stated that they did not want to lose any park space at all.

Other members of the community stated that the central campus area of the Normal Heights Joint Use facility provided duplicate amenities (namely play equipment and basketball courts) that are also provided at the adjacent Ward Canyon Neighborhood Park. Other community members stated said that they did not feel safe using the central campus joint use area during public use hours because it felt very isolated and they had witnessed encampments and illegal activity occurring in the playground area. Attachment 4 contains the GDP of adjacent Ward Canyon Park.

Community Input

In 2019, the City and District staff participated in meetings with the Adams Community Recreation Group as well as a meeting with stakeholders at Normal Heights Elementary School. Numerous parents of students and community members attended these meetings as well, which were held on October 22, 2019, and November 12, 2019.

Based on staff's observations at these two meetings, the consensus was to remove the Central Campus from the joint use area. This sentiment is shared by the school principal and District officials. At the November 2019 meeting, the Adams Community Recreation Group voted to reduce the size of the joint use area at Normal Heights Elementary School in the interest of student and park patron safety.

Conclusion

When weighing the public safety needs with the need for additional park space, the Department forwards the recommendation to the Board to consider reducing the size of the joint use area and returning the Central Campus for exclusive use by the students.

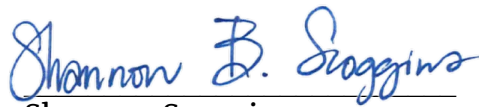
Alternatives

Other alternatives include establishing nighttime closures or reevaluating the security layout of the school to identify other methods to provide possible safe public use at this site. Neither of these options are recommended due to cost and operational impacts of the school due to the layout of the Central Campus.

Respectfully submitted,



Andy Field
Director
Parks and Recreation Department



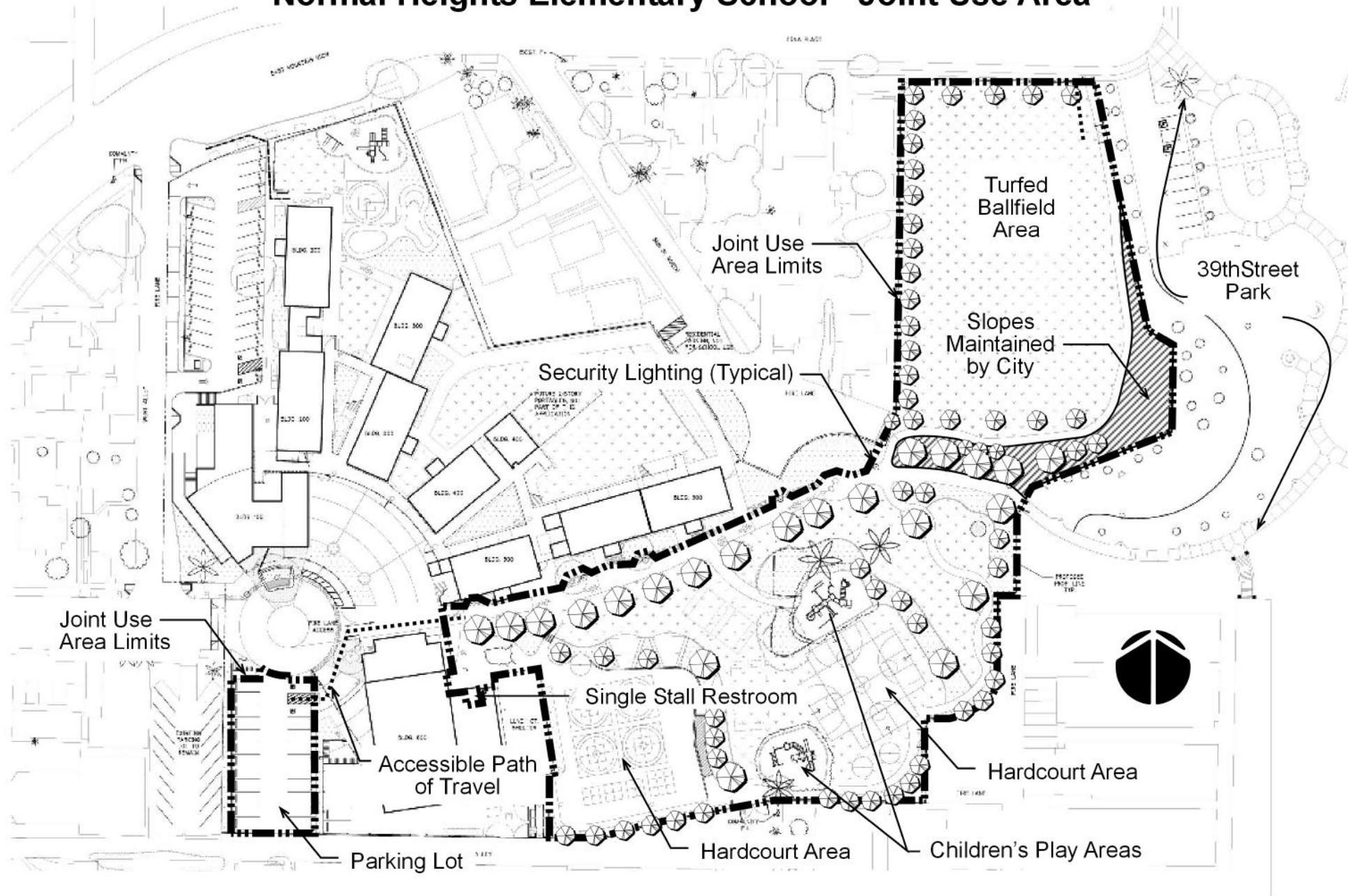
Shannon Scoggins
Park Designer
Parks and Recreation Department

(SS/ss)

Attachments:

1. Current General Development Plan for Normal Heights Elementary School Joint Use Facility
2. Proposed General Development Plan Amendment for Normal Heights Elementary School Joint Use Facility
3. Recreational Value Scoring – Normal Heights Elementary School Joint Use Facility
4. Current General Development Plan for Ward Canyon Neighborhood Park

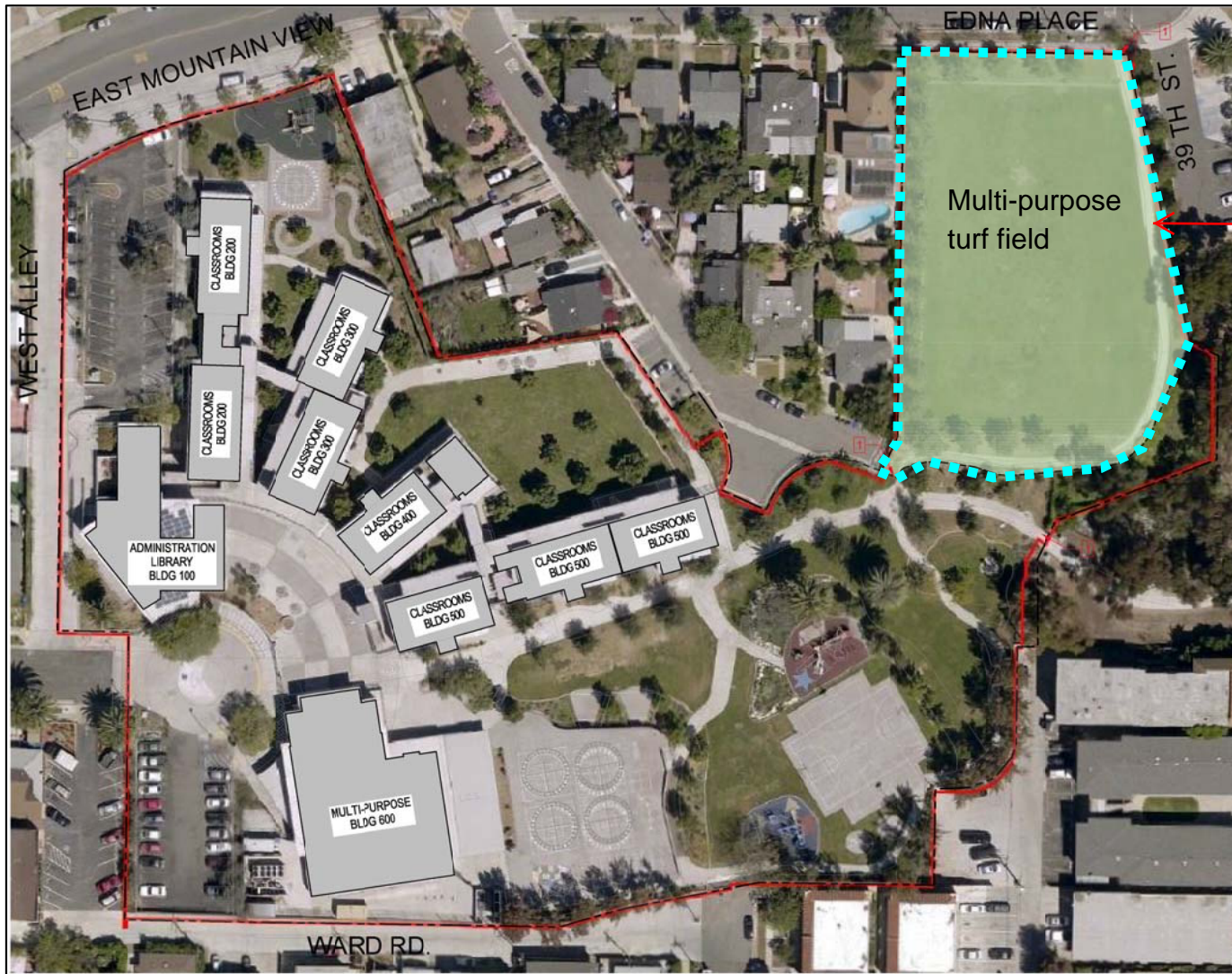
Normal Heights Elementary School - Joint Use Area



Trees to be maintained by District pursuant to Section 5.17 of Agreement

Palms to be maintained by District pursuant to Section 5.17 of Agreement

EXHIBIT "A"



Joint use area limit

CITY OF SAN DIEGO PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

THE GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

NORMAL HEIGHTS ES JOINT USE

JOINT USE FIELD

LAMBERT COORDINATES:

THOMAS BROTHERS PAGE:

PSD
(PSD #)

Recreational Value Scoring - Normal Heights Elementary School Joint Use Facility

Park Size Category	Points	Existing Facility Score	Proposed GDP Amendment	Notes
Scoring : Based on overall park acreage (population-serving only)				
Park Acreage: Points are awarded to parks based on their overall acreage.	7 point per acre	14	7	Existing 2.90 acre facility, proposed 1.13 acre facility
Parks under an acre will receive 0.875 points for each 1/8 acre.	0.875 points for each 1/8 acre	0	0	
Does not apply to MHPA or MSCP lands				
AMENITIES/RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES				
Health/Fitness/Sports Category	Points	Existing Facility Score	Proposed GDP Amendment	Notes
Play Area	7 pt. per 750 sf of play area ¹	14	0	
Nature Exploration Playground ¹¹	7 pt. per 1/2-acre	0	0	
Multi-Purpose Turf Area - point per each 1/2 acre	7 pt. per 1/2 acre	14	14	1.0 acres turf field
Active Recreation Fields	56 points for an active recreation field module (1 soccer field and 2 softball fields) or 28 points for a single softball or soccer field ⁶	0	0	
Basketball/Tennis/Pickleball/Sand Volley Ball	7 pt. per each full court (3.5 point for half-court) ⁶	7	0	
Small Hardcourt Areas: with pavement-coating mark-outs	3.5 pt. per hardcourt area; 7 pts. maximum ⁵	0	0	
Sports Lighting - pickleball, volleyball, basketball full-court - or equivalent to basketball full-court	3.5 pt. per court ¹²	0	0	
Sports Lighting - single softball field, full-size	7 pt. for ea. full size field ¹²	0	0	
Sports Lighting - each pair of softball fields or full-size soccer field	14 pts. ¹²	0	0	
Splash Pad (water playground)	14; 14 pts. maximum	0	0	
Multi-use Pathways: (Route Type 6, per SD Pedestrian Master Plan)	7 pt. per 1/2 mile	0	0	
Decomposed Granite or Dirt Trails: 4 ft. min. width, (Route Type 7, SD Pedestrian Master Plan)	7 pt. per 1 mile	0	0	
Fitness Circuit	7 pt. for ea. 3 pieces of equip. w/ signage; 21 pts. maximum per 5 acres	0	0	
Specialty Recreation (hard-surface) pump tracks, skate plaza or similar	7 pt. per 5,000 sf each	0	0	
Specialty Recreation (soft-surface)	3.5 pt. each; 7 pts. Maximum	0	0	
Specialty Recreation: disc golf or similar (min. 1/2 acre) ²	7 pt. each; 14 pts. maximum	0	0	

Recreational Value Scoring - Normal Heights Elementary School Joint Use Facility

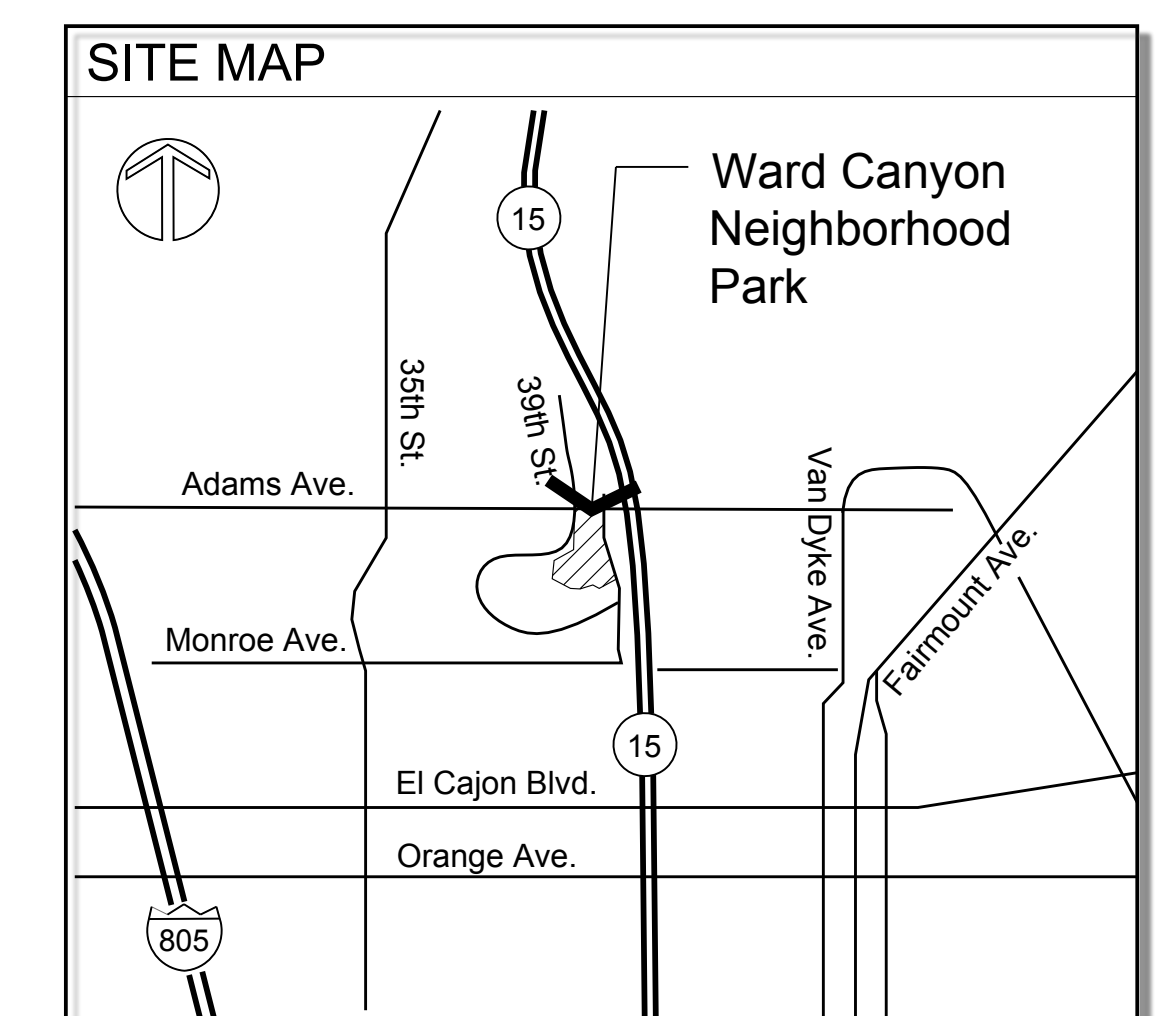
Social Spaces Category		Existing Facility Score	Proposed GDP Amendment	Notes
Off-Leash Dog Area - 1/8 acre minimum fenced area	10.5 pts. for ea. area less than 3 acres	0	0	
Off-Leash Dog Area - 3 acres minimum fenced area	21 pts. for ea. area 3 acres and larger; 42 pts. Maximum	0	0	
Food Area/Concessions or Clubhouse Building (if separate from Rec Center), 250 s.f. minimum size	7 pt, 7 pt. maximum	0	0	
Community Garden ³	7 pt for ea. 10 plots; 14 pts. maximum	0	0	
Interactive/Technology Element	7 pt. maximum	0	0	
Performance/Event Space: 5,000 s.f. minimum size paved area with seating, lighting and utilities (power, data, sound) ⁸	21; 21 pts. maximum	0	0	
Site Amenities Category		Existing Facility Score	Proposed GDP Amendment	Notes
All-weather shade cover/pavilion with tables/seating	7 pt. for ea. 400 sq. ft roof area (min. size)	0	0	
Restroom building	21 pt. per building	0	0	
Ranger Station Facilities: with public educational/interpretive display areas(s)	7 pt. per 1,000 sf	0	0	
Amphitheater: with hardscape seating and universal access ⁸	7 pt. per 40-person capacity; 14 pts. maximum	0	0	
Wayfinding Signage System ⁹	3.5 pt per system; 7 pts. maximum	0	0	
Public Art/Placemaking Elements (only 1 element per space)	3.5 pt. for each element; 7 pts. maximum	0	0	
Creation of wetlands area(s) or native planting restoration area(s) ⁷	10.5 pt per acre	0	0	
ACCESS/CONNECTIVITY		Existing Facility Score	Proposed GDP Amendment	Notes
Definition: Measures ability of park to increase overall connectivity in the Citywide parks network or improve access to an existing recreational asset				
Scoring: 0 (no component present) or 7-21 (component present)				
	Points			
Linkages: connection to a CI 1 Bike or Cycle Track	21; 21 pts maximum	0	0	
Linkages: connection to a trail system in open space	14; 14 pts maximum	0	0	
Integrated with transit: within 500 ft. walking distance to a transit stop or closer	14; 14 pts maximum	14	14	
Integrated with transit: within 1/4-mile walking distance to a transit stop	7; 7 pt. maximum	0	0	
Connection to Active Public Realm (less than 50 feet to café, restaurants, gym/fitness, retail)	7; 7 pt. maximum	0	0	
Connection to Public/Civic Use (co-location with school, library, non-profit)	7; 7 pts maximum	7	7	
Connection to Natural Area/Scenic View Corridor (must have physical structure to connect or provide view access)	7; 7 pts maximum	0	0	

Recreational Value Scoring - Normal Heights Elementary School Joint Use Facility

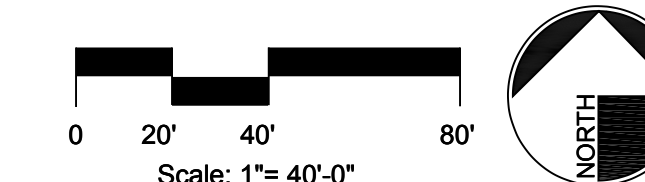
ACTIVATION & ENGAGEMENT		Existing Facility Score	Proposed GDP Amendment	Notes
Definition: Measures ability of space or facility to spark social interaction and learning-based recreation and bring diverse users together				
Scoring: 0 (no component present) or 7-21 (component present)				
	Points			
Interpretive/Education/Cultural Elements, such as Tribal cultural elements: minimum of 10 square feet of sign art/copy display area	7; 7 pt. maximum	0	0	
Space dedicated to programmed activities, weekly minimum occurrences: 7 pt. for 5,000-10,000 s.f.; 14 pts. for 10,000 or more s.f.	14; 14 pts maximum	7	7	
Recreational Features for the Disabled ⁴	21; 21 pts maximum	0	0	
Trails or Multi-use Pathways contiguous with wetland area(s), or significant water body, or native planting restoration area(s) ⁷	7 pt per 1/2 mile	0	0	
Urban Forestry: at 5-year growth 50% of all site hardscape (roads, sidewalks, parking lots) have greater than 60% tree canopy ¹⁰	14; 14 pts maximum	0	0	
TOTAL VALUE POINTS PER PARK:		77	49	

Recreation Value Points Tabulation Summary:	
Total Existing Facility Value Points	77
Total Proposed Facility Value Points	49
Total Recreation Value Points	49
Population Served	490 Residents

* See PMP Appendix D for Notes



PROPOSED PARK ACREAGE AND BOUNDARY	
5.20 Acres	Existing Park
0.20 Acres	Existing MOC Building area
0.48 Acres	Existing City Owned Land at southeast corner of existing park (via land acquisition)
0.86 Acres	Proposed Park Land within 40th Street / Caltrans easement
6.74 Acres	Total Proposed Park Acreage / Boundary

[illegible]

IMPROVEMENTS SUMMARY (DATA FROM GDP AMENDMENT DRAWINGS)							
ITEM	QUANTITY	ITEM	QUANTITY	ITEM	QUANTITY	ITEM	QUANTITY
TOTAL PROPOSED SITE	6.74 AC.	TOT LOT (Existing)	5.438 SF	PAVED WALKWAYS	52,835 SF	SECURITY LTS.	40 STD
TURF	2.05 AC.	MULTI-PURPOSE CT.	6,000 SF	PARKING LOT	18,744 SF	BACKSTOPS	0 E
SHRUB BED	1.48 AC.	RESTROOM (Existing)	254 SF	PARKING STALLS-STD.	84	BENCHES	16 E
D.G. PAVING	.80 AC.	SHADE STRUCTURE (Existing)	1 EA	PARKING STALLS-DISABLED	6	PICNIC TABLES	15 E
LAWN EDGING	996 LF	SHADE STRUCTURE (New)	3 EA	PAR COURSE STATION	3 EA	TRASH RECEPTACLES	16 E
						REVISION	

LAMBERT COORDINATES: 218-1735

THOMAS BROTHERS PAGE: PG. 1269, G-3

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