



REPORT

THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO TO THE PARK AND RECREATION BOARD

DATE ISSUED: February 7, 2023

REPORT NO: 101

ATTENTION: Park and Recreation Board
Agenda of February 16, 2023

SUBJECT: Montezuma Neighborhood Park General Development Plan Amendment

SUMMARY

Issue – Should the Park and Recreation Board recommend approval of the General Development Plan (GDP) Amendment for Montezuma Neighborhood Park to include off-leash dog areas, children’s play areas, and other park enhancements?

Director’s Recommendation – Recommend approval of the proposed General Development Plan (GDP) Amendment for Montezuma Neighborhood Park.

Other Recommendations – The following groups have reviewed and considered the proposed project. Actions taken and recommendations made by these groups are listed under Discussion below.

Colina Del Sol Community Recreation Group (CRG)
College Area Community Planning Group (CACPG)

Fiscal Impact – Preparation of the GDP Amendment is funded in the amount of \$350,000 with Development Impact Fees (DIF) Funds. The estimated total construction cost for the proposed improvements at Montezuma Neighborhood Park is \$3,198,240.00.

Water and Energy Conservation Status – The proposed Amendment for the Montezuma Neighborhood Park will comply with all water and energy conservation guidelines contained in Council Policy 200-14.

Environmental - The City of San Diego conducted an environmental review which determined that the project meets the statutory exemption criteria set forth in CEQA State Guidelines, Section 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies) in order to approve the design services Agreement only, which include soils testing activities for geotechnical investigation/evaluation.

BACKGROUND

The project is located within the College Area Community of the City of San Diego in Council District 9. This project proposes to obtain an approved GDP Amendment to add a dog park and children's play area to the existing 1.6-acre Montezuma Neighborhood Park. Proposed improvements include: children's play areas separated by user age, two off-leash dog areas separated by small and large dogs, comfort station, shade structures, picnic tables, benches, drinking fountains, trash/recycling receptacles, passive turf area, trail with interpretive panels, walkways, security lighting, accessible parking, bike rack, irrigation, and landscaping.

DISCUSSION

On July 20, 2022, the first community meeting for the proposed GDP Amendment was held virtually, facilitated by the Colina Del Sol CRG. The purpose of the first workshop was to collect input from the community and indicate their preferred draft conceptual design with regards to the two alternatives presented. In this meeting, the community, including the members of the Colina Del Sol CRG, voted for Concept Design 1 "Catoctin", which means "hill rising above plain" with 75% of the votes, compared to 25% of the votes for Concept 2 – "Aztec Sun".

Concept 1 – "Catoctin"



Concept 2 – “Aztec Sun”



Poll Results

Montezuma Park GDP Amendment

1. Which design alternative do you prefer? (Single Choice) *

"Catotin" translation to rolling hills above a plain 75%

Aztec Sun Iconography 25%

No representative from the College Area CPG attended the first meeting, therefore, per request of the Colina Del Sol CRG chair and co-chair, a second meeting was held, with the same content and purpose, on November 9, this time in-person, at the Faith Presbyterian Church, hosted by the College Area CPG. At the meeting, the College Area CPG members chose to not vote for a preferred concept, respecting the choice made by the Colina Del Sol CGR, instead choosing to discuss the inclusion or not of the dog park into the GDP along with listing other amenities that were not included in the presented proposed concepts. The College Area CPG members voted to include the dog area into the GDP and provided the City Design Team with a list of their input/feedback and additional amenities that they would like to see incorporated into the GDP if possible/feasible.

Listed below are the main items discussed by the community and College Area CPG members during the meeting:

1. Continue to include of the off-leash dog park.
2. Separate access to dog park and children's play area; provide buffers.
3. Capitalize on drainage amenity, which can be used as a learning tool and opportunity to beautify the corridor.
4. Focus on children; capitalize on being one of the few parks in the area.
5. Incorporate natural play elements.
6. Integrate water into the children's play
7. Incorporate color and vibrancy in the children's play area with a blend of both modern play, traditional play, and nature play.
8. Provide more shade trees withing the park but do not include picnic shelters.
9. Offer more shade trees on the eastern edge of the site adjacent to single-family.
10. Include more seating (picnic tables, benches, etc.).
11. Include a restroom
12. Blend the tot lot playground into turf/natural spaces and minimize number of structures.
13. Provide more large open turf space for older children to play (soccer, frisbee, etc.).
14. Continue to maintain larger turf spaces.

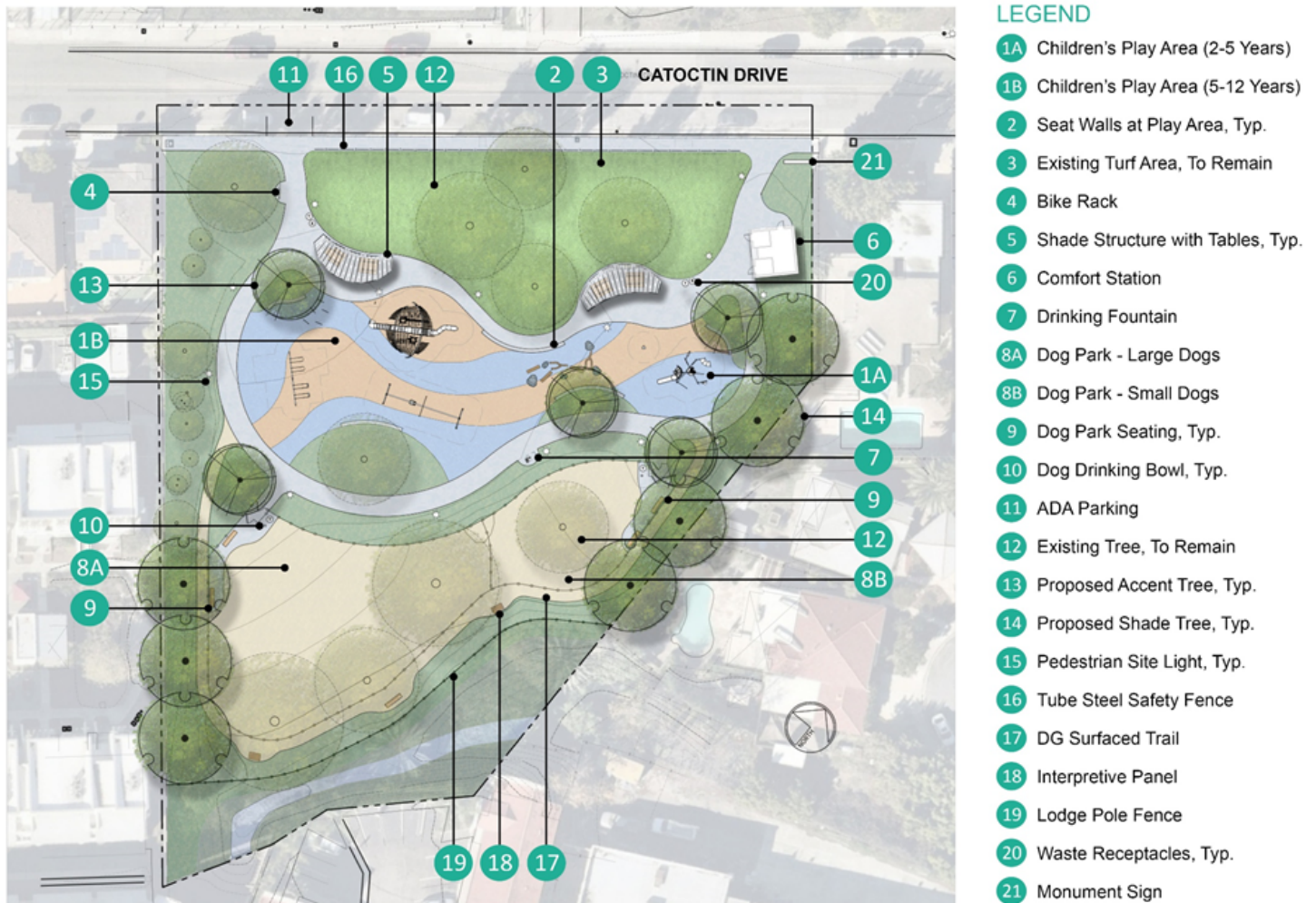
Additional Amenities

1. Bike racks
2. Monument signage
3. Larger turf space for sport/unprogrammed play
4. Sun dial

On November 16, 2022, a third meeting was held, this time held in a "hybrid" fashion, at the Colina Del Sol Recreation Center. At the meeting the City Design Team presented the draft proposed design which incorporated the preferred Concept 1 "Catocin" along with the all the desired additional amenities and feedback received during the College Area CPG meeting that were feasible to be incorporated into the design.

Below is the draft proposed design to enhance Montezuma Neighborhood Park:

Proposed Draft General Development Plan (GDP) Amendment for Montezuma Neighborhood Park



ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve the GDP amendment for Montezuma Neighborhood Park.
2. Approve the GDP amendment for Montezuma Neighborhood Park with modifications.
3. Do not approve the GDP amendment for Montezuma Neighborhood Park.

Respectfully submitted,



Elif Cetin
Deputy Director, AEP Division
Engineering & Capital Projects Department



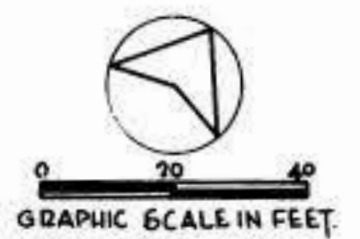
Prepared by: Juliana Grotzinger
Associate Civil Engineer – Project Manager
Engineering & Capital Projects Department

EC/jg

Attachments:

1. Montezuma Neighborhood Park General Development Plan
2. Notice of Exemption (NOE) – 11/15/2021
3. Notice of Right to Appeal Environmental Determination (NORA) – 10/25/2021
4. Article by Karen Austin, November 2022 - Planning for parks to meet current and future College Area needs.
5. Article by Karen Austin, January 2023 – New playground and dog park proposed as Montezuma Park improvements.

cc: Council District 9



CITY OF SAN DIEGO PARK and RECREATION DEPARTMENT

THE GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

MONTEZUMA PARK

4929-CATOCTIN DR.

LAMBERT COORDINATES 219-1751 THOMAS BROS. PG. 61-F1 H-442

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

(Check one or both)

TO: ☒ Recorder/County Clerk
P.O. Box 1750, MS A-33
1600 Pacific Hwy, Room 260
San Diego, CA 92101-2400

FROM: City of San Diego
Engineering & Capital Projects Department
525 B Street, Suite 750, MS 908A
San Diego, CA 92101

☐ Office of Planning and Research
1400 Tenth Street, Room 121
Sacramento, CA 95814

Project Name: As-needed Design Engineering Services for Montezuma Park GDP Amendment

WBS No.: P-21002.02.06

Project Location-Specific: The project is located at the existing Montezuma Park (4943 Catoctin Drive) within the College Area Community Planning Area (Council District 9).

Project Location-City/County: San Diego/San Diego

Description of nature and purpose of the Project: Award an as-needed design engineering services contract for the Montezuma Park General Development Plan Amendment project, including engineering, architectural, landscape architectural, environmental, and other related services for preparation of surveys, site analysis, geotechnical investigation, design drawings and concepts, agency coordination, project management support and other related items. The geotechnical investigation would include research, borings, subsurface exploration, infiltration testing, backfilling boring sites, laboratory testing, disposal, and reporting to provide recommendations for project design.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: City of San Diego

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: City of San Diego Engineering & Capital Projects
Contact: Gretchen Eichar, Senior Planner
Phone/E-mail: (619) 533-4110 / GEichar@sandiego.gov
525 B Street, Suite 750 (MS908A), San Diego, CA 92101

Exempt Status: (CHECK ONE)

- ☐ Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
- ☐ Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
- ☐ Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269 (b)(c))
- ☐ Categorical Exemption:
- ☒ Statutory Exemptions: 15262 [Feasibility and Planning Studies]

Reasons why project is exempt: The City of San Diego conducted an environmental review which determined that the project meets the statutory exemption criteria set forth in CEQA State Guidelines, Section 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies) in order to approve the design services agreement only, which include soils testing activities for geotechnical investigation/evaluation.

Lead Agency Contact Person: Gretchen Eichar

Telephone: (619) 533-4110

If filed by applicant:

July 2021

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a notice of exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? ☐ Yes ☐ No

It is hereby certified that the City of San Diego has determined the above activity to be exempt from CEQA

Carrie Purcell

Carrie Purcell, Interim Deputy Director

11/15/21

Date

Check One:

(X) Signed By Lead Agency

() Signed by Applicant

Date Received for Filing with County Clerk or OPR:



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Date of Notice: October 28, 2021

NOTICE OF RIGHT TO APPEAL ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION ENGINEERING & CAPITAL PROJECTS

WBS No. P-21002.02.06

PROJECT NAME: As-needed Design Engineering Services for Montezuma Park GDP Amendment

COMMUNITY PLAN AREA: College Area

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 9

LOCATION: The project is located at the existing Montezuma Park (4943 Catoctin Drive).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Award an as-needed design engineering services contract for the Montezuma Park General Development Plan Amendment project, including engineering, architectural, landscape architectural, environmental, and other related services for preparation of surveys, site analysis, geotechnical investigation, design drawings and concepts, agency coordination, project management support and other related items. The geotechnical investigation would include research, borings, subsurface exploration, infiltration testing, backfilling boring sites, laboratory testing, disposal, and reporting to provide recommendations for project design.

ENTITY CONSIDERING PROJECT APPROVAL: City of San Diego

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION: This activity is statutorily exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA State Guidelines, Section 15262 [Feasibility and Planning Studies].

ENTITY MAKING ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION: City of San Diego Engineering & Capital Projects

STATEMENT SUPPORTING REASON FOR ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION: The City of San Diego conducted an environmental review which determined that the project meets the statutory exemption criteria set forth in CEQA State Guidelines, Section 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies) in order to approve the design services agreement only, which include soils testing activities for geotechnical investigation/evaluation.

CITY PROJECT MANAGER:

Gretchen Eichar

MAILING ADDRESS:

525 B Street, Suite 750, San Diego, CA 92101

PHONE NUMBER/E-MAIL:

(619) 533-4110 / GEichar@sandiego.gov

On October 28, 2021 the City of San Diego made the above-referenced environmental determination pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This determination is appealable to the City

Council. If you have any questions about this determination, contact the City Project Manager listed above.

Applications to appeal CEQA determination to the City Council must be filed in the Office of the City Clerk within 5 business days from the date of the posting of this Notice (November 4, 2021). During the Statewide "Safer-at-Home" directive to reduce the spread of COVID-19, beginning March 19, 2020, appeals to the City Clerk must be filed by email or US Mail as follows:

- 1) Appeals filed via E-mail: Send the fully completed appeal application [DS-3031](#) (including grounds for appeal and supporting documentation in pdf format) via email to Hearings1@sandiego.gov by 5:00pm on the last day of the appeal period; your email appeal will be acknowledged within 24 hours. You must separately mail the appeal fee by check payable to the City Treasurer to: City Clerk/Appeal, MS 2A, 202 C Street, San Diego, CA 92101. The appeal filing fee must be United States Postal Service (USPS) postmarked within 5 business days of the date the appeal is filed.
- 2) Appeals filed in person: Bring the fully completed appeal application [DS-3031](#) (including grounds for appeal and supporting documentation) to the City Administration Building—Public Information Counter, 1st Floor Lobby, located at 202 C Street, San Diego, CA 92101, by 5:00pm on the last day of the appeal period. The

This information will be made available in alternative formats upon request.

Planning for parks to meet current and future College Area needs

Karen Austin by Karen Austin November 11, 2022 in College Times Courier

For years, College Area residents have been asking for more parks and recreational opportunities.

In 2020, more than 400 people completed a survey to share their perspective with City planners. According to the City, more than 80% of respondents indicated that the park and recreational needs of their household were not currently met in the College Area.

More recently, community members gave input about parks during an open house held by City planners in June, 2022. Some expressed their desire for traditional park amenities like general open space, a playground, and circuit training equipment, while others highlighted the need for public space amenities like community gardens, a farmers market, and a dog park.

Local resident, Kelsey Smith, took part in the 2022 meeting. “My husband and I are raising four children who are age 10 and under, right here in the College Area,” she said. “I want the City to know that we need a park on the El Cerrito side of the neighborhood. A nice place to connect with neighbors, where all the kids can safely play and families can get to know each other,” she added.

Smith and her 10 year-old son, Daniel, met with Martin Flores, a public spaces and parks designer for the City’s planning department with more than 25 years of experience. Together, the three discussed options like green streetscapes, linear parks, trails, pocket parks and overlooks. They also assessed images of various recreational amenities and reviewed maps on easels to discuss possible sites for parks and open spaces throughout the College Area.

Daniel said he goes to parks a lot. When asked what he’d like to be able to do in his neighborhood park, he said, “I like the idea of having things to do in Montezuma Park, like things for climbing, jumping, running and exploring.”

Formal evaluation of existing College Area parks

Park space in the College Area currently includes Montezuma Neighborhood Park, approximately 1.6 acres, and three joint-use agreements with Hardy Elementary School, Harriet Tubman Village Charter School, and The Language Academy.

City staff recently evaluated these four park areas using a new point system per the Parks Master Plan (PMP). Adopted in 2021, the PMP replaces the previous land-based standard of 2.8 acres per 1,000 residents (PMP, 1956), with a recreational value-based standard.

The results of the parks evaluation were presented to 109 participants of the Oct. 26 virtual meeting of the College Area Community Plan Update (CACPU) Committee. Committee members help voice the needs and ideas of the community regarding housing, mobility and other aspects of development in the College Area, including parks.

During the meeting, the CACPUC and area residents viewed a slide presentation by City Parks Planner, Martin Flores. Flores referred to Appendix D of the PMP, explaining that park points are based on

population, with 100 points awarded per 1,000 people. According to the most recent decennial census, the College Area population was 24,839 in 2020, making it eligible for 2,484 park points.

Flores informed viewers that the College Area currently has 164.5 park points based on the attributes of Montezuma Neighborhood Park and the three existing joint-use sites. Points correspond to the usable size of an outdoor area, park access, and amenities such as benches, play areas, multipurpose turf and hard courts. With only 164.5 points, the College Area is considered severely “park-deficient” with only 6.6% of its expected park points.

More people should equal more parks

With an anticipated increase in College Area housing density being planned in the CACPU, the parks deficit has the potential to grow significantly.

A chart presented during the CACPUC meeting indicated the City aims for a potential buildout population of 85,371 residents by the year 2050, based on 2.44 people per household. The potential deficit could increase to 8,372 points (8,537 points allowable by population minus the 164.5 points for existing parks).

Such significant growth in new College Area high-rise dwellings will only increase demand for parks and open spaces in those built-out areas.

Prioritizing the development of parks

There are several policies and frameworks which work in concert to determine park needs and prioritize development. The Parks Master Plan is the overarching guide to park investments with Council Policy 800-14 and the Parks Needs Assessment feeding into it.

City Council Policy 800-14 establishes the basis for prioritizing projects of the Capital Improvements Program (CIP). CIP projects support a community’s infrastructure, like libraries and parks. This policy tool is intended to efficiently and equitably deliver infrastructure across the City. Similar projects vie for prioritization and resources within categories, like Neighborhood Assets, which includes park and recreation facilities.

A Parks Needs Index, not yet developed, is the City’s intended tool to evaluate a neighborhood for park quality, quantity, safety and accessibility. The Index should identify the areas in the City with the greatest park needs and where added recreational value will have the greatest impact for community members.

Despite these policies which aim to ensure parks are developed in communities that need them most, College Area resident Danna Givot believes, “The Parks Needs Index is yet another black box. We don’t know what the standards are or how they will remedy our severe park deficit in a meaningful way. We don’t know if we’ll get a fair shake from the City, so we don’t end up with little parklets instead of really usable parks.”

Funding for Montezuma Park improvements and College Area parks

Earlier this year, the Montezuma Neighborhood Park (MNP), became a focus of the City’s Capital Improvements Program.

The Montezuma Park General Development Plan is in the process of seeking input about two design alternatives which would add play areas for 2-5 and 5-12 year olds, as well as off-leash enclosures for small and large dogs. Residents within 300 feet of the park should have received a notice about the planning process and an upcoming meeting for community members.

Funding will be needed for the improvements to existing locations and for new parks. Typical funding mechanisms are: Development Impact Fees, the General Fund, and grants. Communities deemed park-deficient should have priority status for park funding.

Development Impact Fees (DIF) – These fees are paid by developers and can be used to fund infrastructure assets like fire stations, libraries, streets and parks. According to Jefferey Nguyen, the policy advisor and College Area community representative for Council President Sean Elo-Rivera, the College Area has some \$920k unspent DIF funds generated from past College Area development projects.

Presently, the City has a new formula that creates a Citywide Park Development Impact Fee, which will be used to invest in park priorities. At a minimum, 30% of the citywide impact fees will be prioritized to park-deficient communities, while 50% will go to Communities of Concern as defined by the City's Climate Equity Index.

The Climate Equity Index (CEI) works to address the historical inequities experienced by people living in certain census tracts deemed Communities of Concern. The CEI aims to ensure that residents citywide have equal access to opportunities, including "Proximity to Community Recreation Areas." Like park-deficient communities, communities of concern will receive priority when it comes to parks.

General Fund – This is the City's main operating fund and is created by general tax revenue. The General Fund provides for city services, including revenue for the City's Capital Improvements Program (CIP). This funds projects that improve the City's infrastructure, like upgrading an existing park or building a new one.

Grants – Additional funds and seed-money can come from public and private grants. These typically include state and federal funds from government agencies, community institutions, and private foundations.

Possible sites for College Area parks and open spaces

When asked how the City intends to actually generate parks in the College Area, Tara Lewis, a senior public information officer, stated, "The College Area community is mostly built-out, so the Draft Community Plan Update will aim to provide guidance on creating greater recreation value in existing parks, developing new plazas and park spaces with new development, connecting parks spaces with accessible pathways and trails, and creating new parks on City-owned land or through the purchase of private property."

Community members have identified several possible sites for new parks as part of a 7 Visions report given to City staff, which highlights recommendations for the CACPU.

These include: park space tied to the redevelopment of Alvarado Road, a linear park along Montezuma Road east of College Avenue, a park associated with redevelopment along a portion of the east side of College Avenue, pocket parks along El Cajon Blvd. in the El Cerrito area, a potential park adjacent to the College-Rolando Library, open space trails, possible joint use agreements with SDSU and other willing partners, and upgrades to the existing joint use parks.

It should be noted that the College area does not currently have park sites which can be readily accessed by people living throughout the College Area, and no large sites have been identified for activities like indoor basketball, court sports, soccer, football, baseball and softball.

Residents can still give input about parks

Residents still have opportunities to give their input through the College Area Community Plan Update (CACPU) process.

Currently in draft form, the Plan Update will guide College Area redevelopment through the year 2050. The Planning Department anticipates releasing a first draft of the updated Community Plan, referred to as a Discussion draft, by early 2023. The Discussion Draft will include draft policies and concepts for parks and public spaces, as well as housing, mobility and other areas of community development. The City will continue meeting with the Community Plan Update Committee to seek public input and make refinements through the summer.

Community members are encouraged to attend a presentation and give input about upgrades for Montezuma Park on Nov. 16 – 6:30 p.m., Colina Del Sol Community Recreation Center, Hybrid meeting. In-person at 5319 Orange Avenue. To register by Zoom contact: jgrotzinger@san Diego.gov

Feedback can also be shared with at any time with Mayor Todd Gloria, Council President Sean Elo-Rivera (College Area, District 9), Planning Director Heidi Vonblum, and Nathan Causman, the College Area community planner.

Resources: www.sandiego.gov (general access to City departments and policy information)

www.sandiego.gov/planning/parks-master-plan

www.sandiego.gov/parks-for-all-of-us

www.planccollegearea.org

– Karen Austin is a College Area resident and new member of the College Area Community Council, not the Planning Board.

New playground and dog park proposed as Montezuma Park improvements

Karen Austin by Karen Austin January 10, 2023 in College Times Courier

The only dedicated park in the College Area is receiving much needed attention as part of the City's draft General Development Plan (GDP) Amendment for Montezuma Neighborhood Park.

Located at 4943 Catoctin Drive, the park was built in 1974 and is documented as being 1.6 acres of open space. It has no amenities common to most neighborhood parks, such as play equipment for children and sport courts.

That should change with proposed upgrades to include separate playgrounds for children 2-5 and 5-12 years of age and off-leash dog enclosures for small and large dogs. Following some initial controversy, these and other design elements were recently approved at the local level and will be reviewed for approval by the City of San Diego Parks & Recreation Board (PRB) during one of its public meetings in early 2023.

With the College Area currently in the process of drafting an update to its 1989 Community Plan, local park space has been a key topic of land use discussion and planning for some time. Especially so, because according to Martin Flores, a Parks Planner for the City's Planning Department, the College Area has just 6.6% of the parks and amenities it currently deserves. With greater housing density being planned in the College Area through 2050, the demand for meaningful parks space will only grow.

To start addressing the parks deficit, the City contracted with Schmidt Design Group for assistance. Specializing in landscape design, they produced two Montezuma Park design concepts which aimed to better meet the recreational needs of current and future College Area residents.

Understandably, it was a major surprise for the College Area Community Planning Board (CACPB) and members of its Plan Update Committee to learn that the future of their only community park was being discussed without their review or input. Troy Murphree, who is a College Area resident and member of the planning board believes, "it's really important that the people who the park is supposed to benefit are involved in making decisions about what they want."

Park GDPs are supposed to be discussed on the local level by Community Recreation Groups (CRG), which serve in an advisory capacity to City recreation centers and the City's Parks & Recreation Department. Although eligible with a population of 25, 000 people, the College Area doesn't have its own recreation center, so Montezuma Neighborhood Park is under the purview of neighboring Colina Del Sol Recreation Center and its CRG.

The two designs were initially presented to the volunteer board of the Colina Del Sol CRG on July 20, 2022. According to Juliana Grotzinger, the City's project manager assigned to the Montezuma Park GDP, some 20 people attended, including board members and interested others.

It was noted during the meeting that no one from the College Area was on the CRG board and, in fact, no College Area residents appeared to be present for the discussion. With no representation and no input by actual College Area residents, City staff and Schmidt Design Group consultants agreed to better inform and involve locals in the future of their only park before the CRG would make recommendations.

As per City Council Policy 600-33, which establishes guidelines to assure the public has adequate advance notification and opportunity to participate in the input process of projects, the July 20th presentation was repeated during the November 9th in-person meeting of the CACPB.

Cursory poll asked meeting attendees three questions

Kevin Oliver, a project officer with the City's Engineering and Capital Projects Department, Division of Architectural Engineering and Parks, presented the same two design alternatives to the Planning Board members and others who were present. A cursory poll asked the approximately 20 attendees to raise their hands in response to the following three questions: How often do you visit the park (daily, weekly, few times a month, few times a year, never)? How do you get to the park (walk, bike, drive)? What is your preference for playground equipment (traditional, natural elements like boulders and logs, inclusive components for all abilities)?

The ensuing discussion of the design alternatives focused on issues like the size and location of areas allotted for children and dogs. Safety concerns were brought up about co-locating these distinctly different uses in close proximity to each other, with specific attention to whether pathways could be provided separately for people and dogs. In a show of hands, the board was split about 50-50 on whether to forgo the dog parks and stick to kids and open space.

Daniele Laman, vice-chair of the CRG, was present and shared that Clay Neighborhood Park, just south of El Cajon Boulevard, is slated to get a dog park.

For more than 20 years Laman has served on both the Chollas Lake and Colina Del Sol CRGs and has been on the board of the Chollas Lake Little League since 1998. Laman believes her experience and decades-long commitment to local parks planning and programming makes her an ideal candidate to serve on the Citywide PRB. When asked about this opportunity she said, "I'd like to serve on the Parks & Rec Board because there hasn't been any 9th District (City Council) representation for the 10 years it's (the district) been in existence."

Other points of discussion during the CACPB meeting included the number of trees expected to be lost to construction, specific landscape details including seating, picnic tables and shade structures, the need for a bathroom, need for safety measures along the street, and how to incorporate the drainage swale at the back of the park into a usable space.

Ultimately, the Planning Board voted not to support either of the two alternatives. Instead, the board requested that feedback given during the CACPB meeting be factored into a revised design concept to be presented at the CRG's hybrid in-person/Zoom meeting on Nov. 16. The CACPB also voted to request member Troy Murphree represent them on the Colina Del Sol CRG, given concerns that College Area representation was non-existent.

Residents within 300 feet of Montezuma Park were notified of this scheduled meeting and were informed that the CRG would once again discuss the future of the park. It should be noted that the City's General Plan Recreation Element, defines "neighborhood parks" as intending to serve 5,000 residents and ideally, should have 3 to 13 usable acres with play areas, multi-purpose fields, multi-purpose courts, and other amenities. With only one very small designated City park to serve a College Area population of 25,000 people, only those within 300 feet were informed of the opportunity to discuss park

improvements. Most of the residents within the entire service area of 1,970 acres have not been made aware of the proceedings.

Revised design concept presented based on community feedback

Jeff Justus, head of production for Schmidt Design Group, was the lead presenter during the Nov. 16, 2022 CRG meeting. He presented a revised design concept based on feedback from the approximately 20 people who attended the CACPB meeting. The new design incorporated suggestions to blend traditional play structures and natural elements, maintain some turf area, add fencing to keep kids and play toys from going into the street, as well as lattice structures for shade, picnic tables, new lighting, and a gender-neutral bathroom facility.

In response to previously discussed risks associated with young children and dogs playing in the same area, Justus stated, "It's a small park, so we really weren't able to put two different walkways in two different locations. We didn't feel it was appropriate to create a caged-in walkway just for the dogs to get to the back portion of the play area . . ." No separate walkways were incorporated into the new design.

Sue Richardson is a College Area resident who, along with Murphree, will help represent the College Area community on the CRG. She was appointed on Nov. 16, after attending three consecutive meetings. Reflecting on the presentation she heard that night, she stated, "I appreciate that the City took the input given during the CACPB meeting into consideration and it was reflected in the new draft concept. The Montezuma Park renovation will be a great asset for the community, but the College Area still needs more usable parks to reduce our significant parks deficit."

At the end of the discussion that evening, Chairperson Sidney Michael moved that the design proposal be adopted as presented. According to Lacy Bradshaw, director of the Colina Del Sol Recreation Center, the motion passed. At some point, 21 participants were noted on Zoom. According to Bradshaw, "Records show ten people signed into the meeting (in person). There are 13 board members, 7 of them were in attendance and 6 of them voted yes and the 7th (the chairperson) does not get a vote."

In terms of next steps, Grotzinger said, "We are working to present to PRB in early 2023, aiming for February or March. Upon approval from the board, it will depend on the asset owner, Parks & Recreation Department, to allocate enough funds to continue the design from 30% (funding) to final CDs (conceptual designs) and to award a construction contract."

Residents who want to take part in the City's public hearing about Montezuma Park will be able to find PRB meeting agendas, parks information and documents at: sandiego.gov/parks-and-recreation.

College Area residents are welcome to attend Colina Del Sol CRG meetings, which are held every other month (the odd numbered months), on the third Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. The next meeting will be on Jan. 21, 2023. The in-person location is 5319 Orange Avenue. To attend by Zoom contact Lacy Bradshaw at lbradshaw@sandiego.gov

For information and the meeting schedule of the CACPB go to: sandiego.gov/planning/community-plans/college-area/planning-group.

For the College Area Community Plan Update Committee go to: plancollegearea.org. Karen Austin is a College Area resident and member of the College Area Community Council.