

# Agenda Report

**TO:** CITY COUNCIL

**DATE:** September 17, 2007

**FROM:** CITY MANAGER

**SUBJECT:** NAMING BROOKSIDE PARK'S UNIVERSALLY ACCESSIBLE  
PLAYGROUND "REESE'S RETREAT"

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the City Council name the universally accessible playground in Brookside Park "Reese's Retreat."

## **RECOMMENDATION OF THE RECREATION AND PARKS COMMISSION**

On August 7, 2007, the Recreation and Parks Commission voted unanimously to recommend to the Council that the universally accessible playground in Brookside Park be named "Reese's Retreat".

## **RECOMMENDATION OF THE ACCESSIBILITY AND DISABILITY COMMISSION**

On November 7, 2006, the Accessibility and Disability Commission voted unanimously to recommend to the Council that the universally accessible playground in Brookside Park be named "Reese's Retreat".

## **BACKGROUND**

A universally accessible playground will be installed in Brookside Park in accordance with the Central Arroyo Master Plan. Construction will begin in the spring of 2008. The playground will offer outstanding outdoor recreational opportunities for children with special needs and able-bodied children. It will be located just east of the Rose Bowl Aquatic Center.

The Accessibility and Disability Commission and the Recreation and Parks Commission recommend the new playground be named "Reese's Retreat" according to the provisions in the City's Public Park and Recreational Facility Naming Policy. The policy allows for the use of the name of an individual who has greatly contributed to the City or the parks. The following text was taken from the facility naming request that was submitted by the Commission (for the full text of the naming request see Attachment A):

*Over six years ago, then Accessibility & Disability Commissioner Marchelle (Elliot) Sellers, became a strong advocate for inclusive playgrounds in Pasadena. Her son, Reese, was a special needs child who wanted what all children want, the opportunity to play with other children. He wanted to feel the exhilarating rush a child feels while "soaring" through the air in a swing. He wanted to pretend the day was filled with pirates and super heroes while playing with children of all abilities. That such a simple desire could not be fulfilled drove the Accessibility & Disability Commission to explore how they could assist in bringing Reese's dreams into reality.*

*Sadly, Reese did not live long enough to see his wish come to fruition. The Accessibility & Disability Commission felt that his example, his motivation and his legacy created this extraordinary gift of an inclusive childhood experience. They have stated that it is only fitting that this special muse be honored by naming the playground Reese's Retreat.*

In accordance with the City's Public Park and Recreational Facility Naming Policy, nearby residents were given a chance to offer feedback on the proposed name. A letter was sent to all homes within 1,000 feet of Brookside Park to notify them of the proposed naming of this facility and to invite them to comment on the proposed action. The letter included the date, time, and location of the August 7th Recreation and Parks Commission meeting.

Two e-mails and one letter supporting the name change were submitted and one letter was received in opposition to the proposed name (Attachment B). The author of the opposing letter felt that the proposed name did not conform to the Public Park and Recreational Facility Naming Policy because Reese did not greatly contribute to the City or the park system. No other comments have been received.

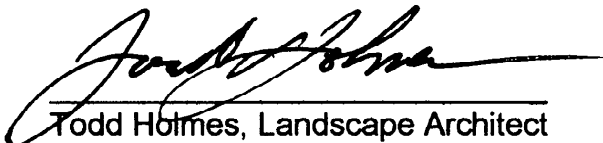
**FISCAL IMPACT**

Sufficient funds are available in the "Brookside Park – Play Equipment Safety Replacement and New Playground" project (budget account 77365) to construct signage designating the playground "Reece's Retreat".

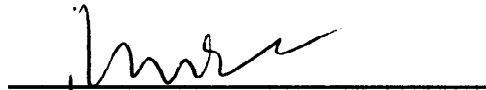
Respectfully submitted,

  
CYNTHIA J. KURTZ  
City Manager

Prepared by:

  
Todd Holmes, Landscape Architect

Reviewed by:

  
Kathleen Woods, Administrator  
Parks and Natural Resources

Approved by:

  
Martin Pastucha, Director

## **Attachment "A"**

## **PARK/RECREATIONAL FACILITY NAMING REQUEST**

**SUBMITTED TO:** Cynthia Kurtz, City Manager, City of Pasadena

**SUBMITTED BY:** Accessibility & Disability Commission, City of Pasadena

**LOCATION:** Brookside Park, to be built near KID'S SPACE

**TYPE OF PROJECT:** A fully accessible, fully inclusive playground

**PROPOSED NAME:** Reese's Retreat

**STATEMENT OF POLICY CONSISTANCY:** Predicated upon the stated city policy which governs the naming or re-naming of a park or recreational facility, the Accessibility & Disability Commission believes that our request is consistent with item "D" which allows for the name of an individual who has greatly contributed to the city or the parks. Our belief is based on the following:

Over six years ago, then Commissioner Marchelle (Elliot) Sellers, became a strong advocate for inclusive playgrounds in Pasadena. Her son, Reese, was a special needs child who wanted what all children want, the opportunity to play with other children. He wanted to feel the exhilarating rush a child feels while "soaring" through the air in a swing. He wanted to pretend the day was filled with pirates and super heroes while playing with children of all abilities. That such a simple desire could not be fulfilled drove the entire Commission to explore how we could assist in bringing Reese's dreams into reality.

We met many times with City staff and representatives from the city of Los Angeles' SHANE'S INSPIRATION. We supported the efforts of City staff to make grant requests and even requested in conjunction with the Mayor's Committee for Employment of Person's With Disabilities to have the \$25,000 award for winning the Most Accessible City in America contest set aside for a fully inclusive playground.

The efforts of City staff and the Accessibility Commission finally brought the vision into reality. Sadly, Reese did not live long enough to see his wish come to fruition. He drove us, inspired us, gave us courage to fight for his dream. Although he never will be able to enjoy the fruits of his inspiration many other children will. Every time a child who is a wheelchair user flies through the sky tethered by a swing or a child who is visually impaired finds friends and joy while playing on a swinging bridge, Reese will be smiling. It is his example, his motivation, his legacy that created this extraordinary gift of an inclusive childhood experience. It is only fitting that this special muse be honored by naming the playground Rees's Retreat.

## **Attachment “B”**



**CITY OF SOUTH PASADENA**

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE  
1414 MISSION STREET, SOUTH PASADENA, CA 91030  
TEL: 626.403.7272 \* FAX: 626.403.7271  
WWW.SPPD.ORG

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--CITY MGR.--

August 8, 2007

Bill Bogaard, Mayor  
City of Pasadena  
100 N. Garfield Avenue  
Pasadena, CA 91109

Dear Mayor Bogaard:

I am writing this correspondence as the Immediate Past President of the Rotary Club of South Pasadena. Through my experience with Rotary, I've come to know Marchelle Sellers, and the great work she's done in developing the Pasadena Ronald McDonald House.

I understand that the Pasadena Parks and Recreation Commission recently approved a recommendation to name an accessible park after Marchelle's son, Reese, who tragically passed away in 2006. As you know, Reese provided the motivation and inspiration for Marchelle and a handful of others to take on the monumental task of creating the Pasadena Ronald McDonald House which now serves hundreds of families a year. The Pasadena Ronald McDonald House is a model facility for families struggling to deal with a hospitalized child, and it serves as a tremendous asset to Pasadena and its surrounding communities.

I had the privilege of knowing Reese and the powerful impact he had on others. I can think of no better way to honor his short but meaningful life than to name a park that is accessible to the disabled after him. I strongly encourage you and the City Council to support the recommendation of the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Very truly yours,

Daniel B. Watson  
Chief of Police

C: City Manager Cynthia Kurtz

**Holmes, Todd**

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**From:** mireya jones [mireya@jonescoffee.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 26, 2007 10:32 AM  
**To:** Holmes, Todd  
**Subject:** Reese'e Retreat!

Bravo! All of our "special" areas should be so named. I hope that you will have the little blurb enclosed or something explaining who Reese was.

Thanks,  
Mireya Jones  
Jones Coffee Roasters

8/1/2007



**Holmes, Todd**

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**From:** Alyssa Bellew [abellew@uuneighborhood.org]  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 19, 2007 3:10 PM  
**To:** Holmes, Todd  
**Subject:** Reese's Retreat

Dear Todd Holmes:

The staff and members of Neighborhood Church applaud the addition of a universally accessible playground at Brookside Park and support the fitting name "Reese's Retreat".

Sincerely,

**ALYSSA BELLEW**  
**DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION**  
**NEIGHBORHOOD UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH**  
301 N. ORANGE GROVE BLVD.  
PASADENA, CA 91103  
(626)449-3470 EXT. 11  
FAX (626) 449-3472  
[WWW.UUNEIGHBORHOOD.ORG](http://WWW.UUNEIGHBORHOOD.ORG)  
*The purpose of life is a life of purpose-Robert Byrne*

8/1/2007



August 2, 2007

Todd Holmes  
Parks and Natural Resources  
City of Pasadena  
PO Box 7115 Room 255  
Pasadena, CA 91109-7215

Dear Mr. Holmes,

Thank you for sharing the information about the upcoming meeting to name the Brookside Park this week. Although I cannot be at the meeting, I do have some concerns about the name that the Accessibility and Disability Commission have put forth for this park.

While I am sure that naming this park after a child with a disability is an emotional response, it does not seem to follow the City of Pasadena's naming requirements that are outlined in the City's Park Facility Naming Policy. This policy allows for the use of the name of an individual who has greatly contributed to the city or the parks. Naming this park after Reese does not follow these guidelines since he did not contribute to the city or the parks. While his parents may be advocates for inclusive parks and may have passed these guidelines, the nomination is not in their name, but in his.

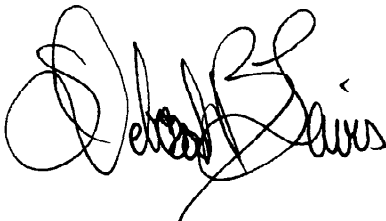
As you may know, there are many children with disabilities in the city of Pasadena who are also worthy of having a park

named after them due to the fact that they would enjoy the use of an inclusive park. So why this child and not them? Is this setting a precedent that will be carried on in the naming of other places in Pasadena? If there is a policy, why is it being disregarded in this case?

Please understand that I have nothing against Reese or his family-I do not know them or the circumstance that caused this nomination. But as an objective observer of this nomination, it creates questions of policy, procedure and practice.

I hope you will convey my concern at the meeting on Tuesday and that this can be resolved to the satisfaction of the nearby residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deborah B. Lewis". The signature is stylized with large, flowing loops and a prominent "D" at the beginning.

Deborah B. Lewis  
Executive Director

2460 North Lake Ave. PMB #128 Altadena, CA 91001