

Agenda Report

September 9, 2013

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Department of Public Works
SUBJECT: APPROVAL TO INSTALL A MEMORIAL IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE AT MEMORIAL PARK

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Find the project proposed herein to be exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in accordance with Section 15304 – Minor Alterations to Land; and
2. Approve the request to install a memorial in remembrance of the Armenian Genocide at Memorial Park.

RECREATION AND PARKS COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On July 16, 2013, the Recreation and Parks Commission considered the Pasadena Armenian Genocide Memorial Committee's (PASAGMC) proposal to install a memorial in remembrance of the Armenian Genocide at Memorial Park. The Commission unanimously supported the Armenian Genocide memorial design and proposal scope and recommended the City approve the memorial with the location to be determined by the City Council. Although not part of the formal motion, some Commissioners expressed interest in having the City Council consider alternate locations for the placement of the memorial, including a location not in a park, in a park other than Memorial Park, near City Hall, or on property owned by an Armenian organization.

BACKGROUND:

In late 2011, the City began a discussion with representatives of the local Armenian community about placing an Armenian Genocide memorial in a Pasadena park. Over the course of several months, the representatives met with the City to discuss an initial design concept and establish a possible location for this memorial. The Department of Public Works determined that Memorial Park was the most suitable park due to the presence of other memorials. Several possible locations within the park were suggested by the City to the memorial representatives. The City provided general design guidelines on suitable proportions, maintenance and security considerations, and general conformance for the memorial.

In May 2012, PASAGMC submitted a letter of intent to the City with a proposal for an Armenian Genocide memorial (Attachment A).

In the fall of 2012, PASAGMC conducted a design competition. Seventeen proposals were received and reviewed by a committee. The top three were invited to provide more detail and finally, Catherine Menard's design concept was unanimously selected.

The memorial is proposed be located in the northwest portion of the park, generally between the library monument and the band shell. This location is a gently sloping landscaped area that once had a large oak tree that was lost in the 2011 windstorm. The location has been maintained with mulch groundcover since then (Attachment B).

The memorial would consist of a sculptural tripod element over a small basin. Water would periodically fall from the tripod into the basin at timed intervals. Stone paving and benches would surround the basin in a circular pattern. A formal hedge would surround the benches. A new walkway would surround the memorial to allow park visitors to circulate outside the memorial itself, and a formal row of trees would surround the walkway. Additional trees are proposed as a backdrop to the memorial. These trees would replace trees lost in the 2011 windstorm and further the goals of the Memorial Park Master Plan. The proposed monument would be approximately 28 feet in diameter to the outside of the hedge and the sculptural tripod would be approximately 16 feet in height (Attachment C).

Park Monument Policy Consideration

The Public Park and Recreational Facility Park Monument Policy establishes guidelines and procedures for approving and placing monuments in parks, park/recreational facilities and areas of parkland (Attachment D).

Policy Criteria	Consideration
1. Site specific: Monuments placed in parks should relate to the site.	The City has worked with PASAGMC to integrate the proposed design into the park through materials, handrails, and landscaping.
2. Community Value: All monuments in the City of Pasadena parks will reflect cultural and historical significance.	City Council annually declares a Day of Remembrance of the Armenian Genocide. The City also has a sister city of Vanadzor, Armenia.
3. Monuments and Memorials: Monuments and memorials should pertain to an individual or event that made a significant contribution.	This memorial is proposed as a remembrance to a historic event that is significant to Pasadena's Armenian-American community.
4. Public Art: Proposed donations that are designated as Public Art are subject to evaluation.	N/A. The City's Arts/Cultural staff has determined this memorial would not constitute Public Art.

a. Appropriateness	Part of Memorial Park’s purpose is to act as a venue for monuments and memorials. Goal #4 of the adopted Master Plan establishes that memorials should be functional and meaningful. Therefore it was determined that Memorial Park was the most appropriate location for this memorial.
b. Compatibility	The City has worked with PASAGMC to integrate the proposed design into the park through materials, handrails, and landscaping.
c. Impact on Park Use	Proposed monument would be located in a passive, landscaped area of the park. The location is consistent with the goals set in the adopted Master Plan regarding monument placement. The proposed location would realign but not eliminate established circulation patterns. Further, it would not adversely affect scheduled events within the park.
d. Aesthetics	The proposed design is bold and seeks to make a strong statement within and beyond the footprint of Memorial Park. The sculptural forms have significance to the Genocide, and the materials chosen have importance in Armenian culture.
e. Maintenance	PASAGMC has committed to using the highest quality materials and construction methods. The applicant has committed to providing perpetual maintenance either directly or by way of funding (Attachment E).
f. Safety	The City has worked closely with PASAGMC to address potential safety concerns such as clear visibility around the memorial and the elimination or reduction of potential mobility hazards.

Memorial Park Master Plan Consideration

The adopted 1999 Memorial Park Master Plan does not provide specific recommendations for individual monuments and memorials. It contains a general recommendation for visibility from the “hillock” area adjacent to where the memorial is proposed and for the rehabilitation and formalization of Memorial Walk. The master plan also includes goals for the entire park and any proposals for new features (Attachment F).

Alternative Locations

The Recreation and Parks Commission discussed the possibility of considering an alternative location for a memorial of this scale. It is significantly larger than a more typical park monument request, but not disproportionately larger than other existing monuments at Memorial Park. When considering an alternative park location, it is desirable to locate a memorial in an aesthetically and emotionally pleasing location that at the same time will not reduce the availability of useable space for recreational activities.

The applicant desires to complete the memorial by April 24, 2015, the 100th anniversary of the genocide. On this anniversary, PASAGMC anticipates a substantial gathering at the memorial and, further, that annual remembrance events will take place. When considering any alternative location, the availability of gathering space around the memorial and ample parking must be considered.

To be responsive to some Commissioners' and limited public input about siting the memorial in Memorial Park, the Department of Public Works has evaluated other sites including parks and surplus City-owned property.

Victory Park and Brookside Park were evaluated for suitability based on the criteria outlined above. In both cases, there are various locations within each park where a memorial could be placed that would not reduce the availability of useable space for recreational activities as well as parking capacity for an annual event. Detailed studies have not been conducted, however, and the applicant would need to submit a specific design when a location is identified. With Victory Park, the memorial is not consistent with the park name and a CIP was created for FY 2014 to update the Master Plan. With Brookside Park, the high level of activity in the park already causes some concern that placing the memorial there would add additional load to the park and potentially conflict with other activities.

The current inventory of surplus City-owned property was also evaluated, but no suitable parcel was found. The available parcels were too small, within residential neighborhoods, narrow strips or other unsuitable shapes, presented safety concerns, or a combination of these factors.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

This request is consistent with the City Council’s mission to provide exemplary service responsive to the entire community and consistent with our history, culture and unique character.

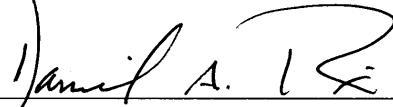
ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

The project is exempt from CEQA per Section 15304 – Minor Alterations to Land, as the proposed activity would install the memorial in an area that has existing site furnishings. There are no changes to the existing use of this area, and the physical change is not extensive. Therefore, the proposed memorial would not cause significant environmental effects.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact as a result of this action. PASAGMC has committed to provide all costs associated with the design, construction, purchase, installation, and maintenance of the memorial.

Respectfully submitted,



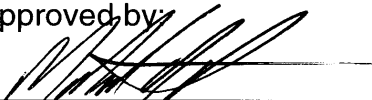
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for Director of Public Works

Prepared by:



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Project Manager for Parks and Landscape

Approved by:



MICHAEL J. BECK
City Manager

- Attachment A – Letter of Intent
- Attachment B – Existing Conditions
- Attachment C – Final Concept Package
- Attachment D – Park Monument Policy
- Attachment E – Financial Report
- Attachment F – Memorial Park Master Plan Excerpt