



Agenda Report

March 11, 2019

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Department of Public Works
SUBJECT: UPDATE ON EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH NEW PARK SPACE IN UNDERSERVED AREAS WITHIN CENTRAL DISTRICT; APPROPRIATE FUNDS TO ACQUIRE A PORTION OF AN EXISTING PARKING LOT FOR CONVERSION TO PARK SPACE

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Find that the proposed actions are not "projects" as defined in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Public Resources Code Section 21065 and Section 15378(b)(4) and (5) of the State CEQA Guidelines, and as such, are not subject to environmental review;
2. Amend the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 Adopted Operating Budget by appropriating up to \$2,500,000 from the Residential Impact Fees – Central District to the Off-Street Parking Facilities Fund for the acquisition of real property located at 100 N. El Molino Avenue, Pasadena, CA for park development purposes; and
3. Direct the City Attorney to prepare an ordinance that will amend Chapter 3.23.010 of the Pasadena Municipal Code to add the proposed park (its three pertaining properties) to the list of dedicated parklands.

BACKGROUND:

On October 16, 2017, the City Council received an update on the City's efforts to establish new park space in underserved areas. The report included an update of efforts to identify potential park space within the Central District and a recommendation that City Council direct staff to gather community input about the conversion of a portion of an existing parking lot into park space. The City Council directed staff to continue the outreach with the community and return for further discussion.

On January 8, 2018, the City Council approved the purchase of Banner Bank site located at 717 East Union Street for \$3.15 million. This parcel is approximately 9,750 square feet (0.224 acre). The property is developed and includes a small bank building that has closed. An adjacent City-owned parcel located at the northwest corner of Union Street and Oak Knoll Avenue is approximately 2,730 square feet (0.063 acre) and can be combined to provide approximately 0.29 acres of potential park space.

On February 22, 2018, a community meeting was held. The meeting's purpose was to:

- Discuss the need/desirability of parks in the Central District;
- Discuss the possible conversion of a portion of the City-owned Union/EI Molino or Madison parking lots to park space; and
- Gauge community sentiment as to which location was preferred.

Approximately 5,600 meeting announcement postcards were sent by direct mail to the surrounding residents and businesses, and additional outreach occurred through email and social media. Approximately 60 people representing residents and businesses attended the meeting and offered comments related to both the need for parks and parking. There was a clear demonstration of the desire for park space and support for the City's recent acquisition of the bank parcel. Considering the two parking lots, the majority of those in attendance favored a park on a portion of the EI Molino site. The meeting attendees preferred the site because of its visibility, accessibility to residents, and its adjacency to the former bank site, thus allowing the sites to be combined for development of a larger park.

The Playhouse District Association (PDA) has indicated its support for development of a park at Union and EI Molino by combining a portion of the existing parking lot with the Banner Bank site. The PDA has indicated its desire to retain a minimum of 48 parking spaces, roughly half, and would like the remaining parking to be improved by integrating with the design of the new park, conducive to programming of events. They have also expressed desire to replace any lost parking nearby, including through on-street parking and pedestrian enhancements or other approaches outlined in its more comprehensive vision and parking management strategy. Those potential strategies include the following:

1. Establishing valet parking and employee parking programs to address parking needs in the core Colorado/EI Molino area and encourage additional investment in restaurants and evening activity;
2. Amending the Zoning code to reduce the required number of parking spaces for new restaurants;
3. Leveraging additional unused spaces in nearby private parking garages for public parking
4. Implementing angled parking within the District that could add additional spaces
5. Exploring the option of retaining the surface parking on the Union/EI Molino lot in a footprint to allow for a potential future linear garage (to be determined if feasible through consultant input and other stakeholders); and
6. Analyzing installation of on-street parking meters within the District. Excess meter fund could be used to help off-set the costs of some of the proposed parking solutions.

City staff is committed to working with the PDA to explore these various concepts and will return to the City Council as appropriate. Furthermore, in regard to the development of the park design, staff will ensure that the PDA, along with other community stakeholders are fully engaged in the process.

The Union/EI Molino parking lot is approximately 32,950 square feet (0.7564 acre) and currently accommodates 101 parking spaces. Parking occupancy monitoring of the lot by the Department of Transportation showed the lot to be approximately 50 percent occupied at any one time.

In February 2019, the City entered into a Parking License Agreement that moves the 91 Laemmle Theater parking entitlement spaces from the Union\EI Molino lot to a parking structure located at 40 South Oakland Avenue. With the execution of this agreement, the Department of Public Works and the Department of Transportation recommend preserving approximately half of the existing Union/EI Molino parking lot for parking and converting the remaining area, along with the Banner Bank site, into park space.

Combining the Banner Bank site and the City's Union/Oak Knoll corner lot with up to one-half of the Union/EI Molino parking site will yield up to 28,955 square foot (0.665 acre) site for park space. As such, staff is recommending appropriation of residential impact fee funds to acquire up to one-half of the parking lot from the parking fund and an amendment of Chapter 3.23.010 of the Pasadena Municipal Code to list the proposed park (its three pertaining properties) as dedicated parkland.

NEXT STEPS:

Upon City Council approval, the park planning phase will continue with a robust community engagement process in developing an integrated design for both the proposed park and the remaining parking site. Boundary line adjustments of the existing Union/EI Molino lot will be established based on vetted and finalized comprehensive design of the park and parking sites, and exact value determined accordingly for acquisition.

Engineering staff has short-listed qualified landscape architects, and is soliciting proposals to hire a design team. Project planning, environmental review and entitlements, as well as design development will be completed in FY 2020. A steering committee comprised of key stakeholders from the community, including but not limited to the PDA will be established for the project to partake in the planning and development process of the park.

Funding for the planning, environmental and design phase of the park is currently budgeted in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) under the following two projects which will be combined as a new single project in the FY 2020 CIP budget:

- Neighborhood Park Development – Union/EI Molino Concept Study (78078)
- Union Street/Oak Knoll Avenue Pocket Park – Concept Study & Design (78083)

Additional appropriations as needed for the modifications and improvements to the parking lot will be added to the scope of the new project and Off-Street Parking Facilities funds appropriated as part of the FY2020 CIP budget review process.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

This project is consistent with the City Council's goal to improve, maintain and enhance public facilities and infrastructure. It supports the Land Use Elements of the General Plan and the Green Space, Recreation and Parks Master Plan by improving the recreational opportunities of the residents as well as enhancing the City's open space area.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

CEQA excludes from environmental analysis those actions that are not "projects" as defined by State CEQA Guidelines Section 15378. That section excludes from the definition of "project" the creation of government funding mechanisms and fiscal activities which do not yet commit the lead agency to any specific project, and also excludes organizational or administrative governmental activities that do not result in physical changes to the environment. The actions proposed herein are part of the City's normal administrative process as it takes early steps to prepare for the possibility of undertaking a project, and therefore they are not yet "projects" as defined by CEQA. As the City becomes more certain it will undertake one of the projects, and before it commits itself to the project, the appropriate environmental analysis will be conducted and brought to the appropriate City body for approval.

FISCAL IMPACT:

An appraisal of the Union/EI Molino parking lot established a total value of \$5 million. Council's authorization to appropriate up to \$2,500,000 will allow for up to one-half of the property to be acquired for park use. A precise lot split boundary and corresponding property value will be established upon development of a comprehensive park and parking lot plan.

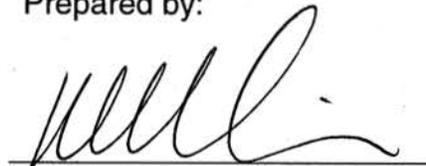
The real property acquisition will expend up to \$2,500,000 of Residential Impact Fees – Central District (Fund 304) unreserved fund balance, which will be transferred to Off-Street Parking Facilities (Fund 407) to facilitate this purchase. There is a sufficient fund balance of \$6,454,999 as of December 28, 2018 in the Residential Impact Fee Fund (Central District) to support this real property acquisition.

Respectfully submitted,



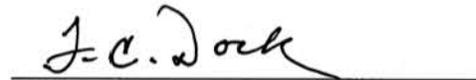
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STEVE MERMELL
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Attachment A: Aerial Plan – Union/EI Molino/Oak Knoll Sites