

# Agenda Report

**TO:** CITY COUNCIL

**DATE:** AUGUST 12, 2002

**FROM:** CITY MANAGER

**SUBJECT:** PRELIMINARY APPROVAL OF THE WASHINGTON PARK MASTER PLAN

**RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the City Council approve in concept the Washington Park Master Plan (Attachment A) pending completion of the environmental review of the project.

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

On June 4, 2002 the Recreation and Parks Commission voted unanimously to recommend that the City Council approve the Master Plan.

**RECOMMENDATION OF THE NORTHWEST COMMISSION:**

On June 11, 2002, the Master Plan was presented to the Northwest Commission for review and comment. The Commission voted unanimously to recommend that the City Council approve the Master Plan. The Commission questioned how the recommended improvements would be funded. Staff responded by informing the Commission that many of the highest priority improvements are funded in the Capital Improvement Program.

**RECOMMENDATION OF THE DESIGN COMMISSION:**

On June 24, 2002 the Master Plan was presented to the Design Commission for review and comment. The Commission requested, for security purposes, that any new landscaping not block visibility into the park. The Commission also requested that historic arroyo rock wall surrounding the lower restroom be preserved when the structure is removed.

**RECOMMENDATION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION:**

On June 26, 2002, the Master Plan was presented to the Planning Commission for review and comment. The Commission expressed support for various components of the Master Plan, including the use of native plants, the use of educational and interpretive materials and the pursuit of grant-funding opportunities.

**RECOMMENDATION OF ACCESSIBILITY AND DISABILITY COMMISSION:**

On July 2, 2002 the Master Plan was presented to the Accessibility and Disability Commission. The Commission was supportive of the plan, especially the various improvements related to accessibility.

**RECOMMENDATION OF THE URBAN FORESTRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE:**

The Tree Planting Plan portion of the Master Plan was presented to the Urban Forestry Advisory Committee on July 31, 2002. The Committee recommended that any new trees be placed in locations that can be automatically irrigated.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The proposed Washington Park Master Plan was developed through a series of three community workshops and the efforts of a stakeholders group. Both the stakeholders and the workshop participants emphasized the importance of maintaining the park's historic character and the need to enhance the existing features of the park. As a result, the Master Plan does not propose any major alteration to the fabric of the park. The plan does contain many recommendations for the rehabilitation and renovation of the park and one significant new feature, a "Community House." This feature is a small building adjacent to the parking lot would contain a meeting room, restrooms and a recreation office and storage.

Final approval of the Master Plan by the City Council will be sought after an environmental review of the Master Plan has been completed in the Spring of 2003.

**BACKGROUND:**

The process of revising the Washington Park Master Plan began in September 2001 with the formation of the Washington Park Master Plan Stakeholders Group. The goal of the project was to update the park's 1980 Master Plan. The stakeholders group is composed of members of the local community. City staff from Public Works, Human Services, Recreation and Neighborhoods and the Police Department also participated. The Armenian Cultural Center, located adjacent to the park, offered the use of their facility for meetings and workshops. As a result of the community driven workshop process, a new Master Plan has been created for the park (Attachment A) and a tree planting Master Plan has also been developed (Attachment B).

At the project's first community workshop, held on January 15, 2002, participants were asked to consider a series of questions about the park and how the community uses it. The workshop series was publicized by a mailing to all residents within 1,000 feet of the park, news releases to local media, and distribution of hundreds of flyers to neighborhood associations, libraries, and local businesses. The intent of the first workshop was to draw

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out as many thoughts and ideas as possible. Staff and the stakeholders group felt that it was critical that all input from participants the workshops be heard and noted. The outcome of this workshop was a list of ideas for improving the park. These ideas fell into several categories: Guiding principles, passive features, active/sports features, parking/access/safety, and activities that are not suitable for the park.

The majority of the participants felt very strongly that the historic character of the park should be preserved and enhanced. This became the predominant theme throughout the Master Plan process. Theodore Payne and Ralph Cornell designed this historic park in the early 1920's. Ralph Cornell was the first professional Landscape Architect to practice in Los Angeles and he was responsible for the campus design of UCLA among other notable projects. Theodore Payne was a botanist who is well known for his work in increasing public awareness of native California plants. He was instrumental in the founding of the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden and the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden. The collaboration of these two well-known individuals was short lived, but productive. In addition to the design of Washington Park, they also developed the design of Occidental College and Torrey Pines State Park. The Friends of Washington Park have prepared several exhibits that provide more detail on the history of the park (Attachment C).

At the second workshop, held on February 19, 2002, the emphasis was focused on prioritizing the ideas that were brought forth in the first workshop. At this point in the process the possible addition of the Armenian Center property to the park was discussed. This parcel is located east of the park and is approximately two acres in size. Currently, the owners of the center, the Armenian Cultural Foundation, are not seeking to sell the property. There was unanimous support from the workshop group and the stakeholders to acquire the property as parkland if and when it becomes available. At the conclusion of the second workshop the proposed improvements were sorted into two general groups, high and medium priority.

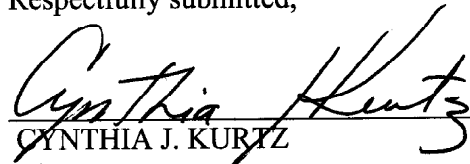
At the third workshop, held on March 19, 2002, a draft Master Plan was presented that graphically represented the proposed improvements (Attachment A). The goals of this workshop were to review this plan and to select the proposed projects that should be given the highest priority from the overall list (Attachment D). The proposed improvements as shown on the draft plan were too extensive to be completed in a single phase, so it was important to complete the workshop process with consensus as to what improvements should be undertaken first. A short list of the highest priority projects was developed and approved at the third workshop (Attachment E).

The majority of the proposed improvements are focused on rehabilitating and enhancing the existing infrastructure in the park. The only major new feature that is proposed is a "Community House" adjacent to the parking lot on Washington Blvd. This would be a small structure, about 2,000 square feet, that would house restrooms, storage, a meeting room and an office for Recreation staff. The programming that is currently offered by the Human Services, Recreation and Neighborhoods staff could be greatly enhanced if such a

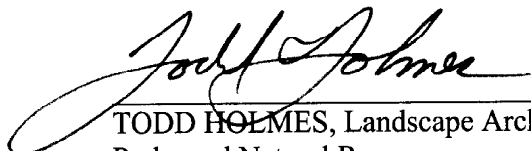
**FISCAL IMPACT:**

A preliminary estimate of the total cost of the improvements proposed in the Master Plan has not been prepared. The Master Plan identified fifteen high priority items from the overall project list contained in the Master Plan. Seven of the fifteen projects are funded in the current Capital Improvement Program. As a part of the annual revision of the Capital Improvement Program, the balance of the high priority projects will be evaluated for inclusion in the program.

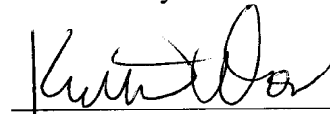
Respectfully submitted,

  
CYNTHIA J. KURTZ  
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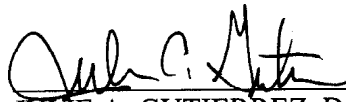
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