

PASADENA CENTRAL PARK
MASTER PLAN

December, 2006

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

In the fall of 1989, a Draft Master Plan for Central Park was presented to the community. The Central Park Master Plan was intended to provide a guide for the revitalization of Central Park—one of Pasadena's oldest parks. The draft plan included a comprehensive design as well as a detailed selection of plant materials, park equipment, furnishings, fencing, lighting, and structures.

The City retained the services of two Los Angeles firms to manage the Master Plan effort. Jean Marie Gath from The SWA Group and Michael J. Pittas from Design/Development Services, together with members of their firms, served as consultants for the Central Park Master Plan. Three operating principles guided their work:

1. That the design goals and objectives, arrived at through an exhaustive community participation, be respected;
2. That the historic character of the Park be preserved and enhanced; and
3. That the plan takes into account the City's resource limitations and be implemented in its parts as well as the whole.

The consultant noted that the draft plan was the result of an active community, dedicated public officials, and civic leaders working together over a seven-month period. The participatory process consisted of a series of community design workshops, each attended by between 25 and 40 persons representing a wide spectrum of interests including park users, nearby residents, and business people. There were also representatives from Castle Green, El Centro de Accion, Union Station, Lawn Bowling Club, the Pasadena Police Department, and various other City departments.

The only significant element of the plan that was constructed during the 1990's was a new playground. In 1998, the City received a \$200,000 grant for improvements to both Central Park and Memorial Park from the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). The grant was to be used for improvements to the two parks which are adjacent to the Gold Line Stations. It was decided to use the MTA grant for improved lighting in both parks.

In 2002, a group of interested persons established a Central Park Task Force to address a variety of problems at Central Park. A number of meetings were held and nearby residents, businesses, the developer of the Del Mar Light Rail complex, and various City representatives participated. An update of the Central Park Master Plan emerged as a key goal during these meetings. The update would focus on ways to make the implementation of the plan more likely and to simplify the proposed renovations. The extensive gardens proposed for the north end of the park and the central gazebo seemed overly complex and would be difficult to implement. In addition, they did not seem consistent with the way the park is used by the community.

In 2004, the first phase of the Master Plan update was completed when the City of Pasadena City Council approved an amendment to the plan that allowed the use of tinted

concrete in lieu of decomposed granite for the primary walkways in the park. Residential Impact Fee revenue became available for Central Park improvements and the task force members felt that the replacement of the park's deteriorated walkways was a high priority. Concrete was recommended in lieu of decomposed granite to make the walkways more accessible and to reduce maintenance costs. The revision also included the selection of the type of walkway lights, benches, waste containers, and bollards to be used throughout the park. In 2005, approximately 75% of the walkways were replaced, and new bollards, benches, and waste containers were installed through the park.

In 2004, the Master Plan was also revised to shift the proposed location of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial to Memorial Park.

B. HISTORY OF CENTRAL PARK

Central Park and Memorial Park, originally called Library Park, are the two oldest parks in the City of Pasadena. Much of the credit for establishing Central Park can be attributed to the efforts of Mayor Weight, who in 1901 supported a public improvement bond that provided for the purchase of land soon to become the City's first parks.

Central Park was originally known as South Park and catered to the guests of the downtown hotels, most notably the adjacent Hotel Green. Under the direction of landscape architect Thomas Chisholm, plantings were carefully selected to display both variety and visual beauty.

By the early 1920s, there were clay roque courts, a small building to house the tourist club and the chess club, a lawn bowling green, and a serpentine pathway system throughout Central Park.

In 1925, the City Directors led by their Chairman, Hiram W. Wadsworth, approved a redesign for both Library Park and Central Park. Ralph D. Cornell, a landscape architect from Los Angeles, was retained by the City for the redesign of both parks. The serpentine pathways were replaced by a simplified pathway system which continues to grace Central Park today. During the 1920s, well known architect Wallace Neff designed a clubhouse for the Lawn Bowling Club. The "tourist house" was relocated to the south end of Central Park and in the mid-1970s became the headquarters of El Centro de Acción Social, Inc.

In 1983, both Memorial Park and Central Park were listed on the National Register of Historic Places as contributors to the Old Pasadena Historic District.

II. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Establish a Strong and Coherent Image for Central Park
2. Maintain and Enhance the Historic Character of the Park
3. Provide for a Secure and Safe Park
4. Improve the Level of Park Maintenance and Cleanliness
5. Enhance Opportunities for Children's Use
6. Provide Passive Recreational Experiences
7. Sustain the Current Level of Active Recreation
8. Retain Park's Accessibility to all Potential Users

Park Programming encourages a range of activities and festivities in order to "activate" the park and increase the public's awareness of Central Park as a park facility. Although the master plan does not provide an operating program for the park, it does provide the physical environment to encourage and accommodate such activities.

In order to implement the Goals and Objectives, the Master Plan was created. The program is intended to convey the character and quality envisioned for future Park improvements. In summary, the Master Plan consists of the following components:

- Park Features
- Park Furnishings and Systems
- Accessibility
- External Issues
- Phasing of Improvements

Park Features are special elements that provide a focal point or visual accent within the park. They may include an open meadow, the existing fountain, landscaping, lawn bowling green, and the children's play area. The combination of these facilities creates a multi-use environment that can attract a wide range of park users.

Park Furnishings/Systems are those elements that provide the framework and basic structure for the park. These include plantings of trees, turf, groundcover, and shrubs that together create the overall environment. Fencing, lighting, benches, and waste containers are other important components. It is important that these elements be selected and installed in a way that is harmonious with the character of the park.

Accessibility allows for the disabled, mobility impaired, and their caregivers to enjoy Central Park.

Park Programming refers to the use of the park by groups or organizations; for example, small gatherings for events, such as "art shows" that benefit local nonprofits and other organizations and bring additional life to the park. Per the City's policy for large events in

public parks, parks are primarily for the use of the general public and not for special events. The policy sets out specific requirements and limitations for large events in Central Park.

Phasing of Improvements allows for improvements to the park to be made incrementally as funds become available.

External Issues address the park's relationship to adjacent development. This includes the consideration of pedestrian crosswalks, linkages of the park to the Gold Line Station, access to nearby residential complexes, and connections to Old Pasadena.

The following Master Plan has incorporated this design program and it is intended to implement in a physical form the goals and objectives established for the future of Central Park.

III. PARK FEATURES

The park can be divided into three distinct, yet connected, areas:

- The Gardens
- The Meadow
- The Lawns

Each area has its own atmosphere and series of landscape elements, all of which are integrated and reflective of the Park's historic character and quality.

A. The Gardens are located at the northern portion of the Park, adjacent to Dayton Street. This is the approximate location where historically, the formal gardens of the Park occurred. The Ralph Cornell Plan (1925) continued that tradition and included an area with a small, more intimate garden area. The 1989 plan contained extensive formal gardens throughout the north third of the park.

This portion of the park is primarily intended for passive use. The proposed improvements in this area will incorporate the existing plantings such as the palm garden. The focal point of this area will be a formal garden/plaza area that is based on the Ralph Cornell Plan. The specific design of this area will be developed as a separate project. It is envisioned as an area that will contain formal plantings (perhaps in raised beds), a water feature, decomposed granite paths, and perhaps low fencing. Native and naturalized plant material, reflecting the Southern California environment, will be used in this area to demonstrate how drought-tolerant plants can be used in an ornamental way.

The existing children's play area is located at the northwestern portion of the park. This area will be renovated with upgraded equipment and expanded. The existing chain-link fence will be replaced with a more decorative steel fence. The atmosphere of the play area is intended to be both educational and imaginative.

Picnic tables will be added to this area. Central Park is a popular location for picnics and tables have been sited throughout the park on accessible decomposed-granite pads adjacent to the walkways.

B. The Meadow is located in the center of the Park, providing an open, informal “green” space. It provides both an active play area for spontaneous activities, such as kite flying, Frisbee games, etc. It also serves as a place for gatherings and activities such as small art shows, family picnics, and the like. The existing mature stands of elms, jacarandas, magnolias, oak, and ginkgo trees will be preserved within the meadow, providing shade relief as well as preserving the historic character and quality of the Park.

The northern lawn bowling area will be removed. A space has been reserved for the possible relocation of this green to the southwestern portion of the park – opposite the other lawn bowling green. The north green is being removed in order to reestablish the historic design and to provide additional open space. The existing restroom building will be demolished and the replacement structure will be located west of the Lawn Bowling Clubhouse. The removal of the lawn bowling green and the restroom will greatly increase visibility and security in the park.

In the southwest corner of the meadow there is a group of oak trees and no turf. Decomposed granite and picnic tables will be placed in this area. The existing electrical switchgear in this area is an eyesore and it will be relocated to the new restroom building.

C. The Lawns are located in the southern section of the park. Portions of this area reflect an earlier time—a time of genteel social activities when the sport of lawn bowling attracted both players and spectators from throughout the Southern California region. Lawn bowling is still popular and plays an important role in increasing the “usability” of Central Park. The Master Plan, therefore, incorporates and supports lawn bowling. The southern existing lawn bowling green will be renovated. A new synthetic turf surface will be the center piece of the improvements. This surfacing will allow a much greater amount of usage of the green than can occur on a natural turf surface. Other improvements will include new fencing, walkways benches and a permanent storage structure.

A new restroom building will be constructed in this area. The architecture of this building will complement the historic lawn bowling clubhouse. In addition to toilet facilities, this building will also house the relocated electrical gear and a small maintenance storage area. An enclosure will also be incorporated into the building to house the park’s refuse containers.

In the area of the El Centro de Acción building, the unused horseshoe courts will be removed and replaced with open turf. New foundation plantings will be installed around the building. A forty-inch-high decorative steel fence will be installed along the Del Mar Avenue frontage of the park. Many children play in this area in the summer and a fence will improve their safety.

The El Centro building will be renovated. Any exterior restoration of the El Centro Building shall be based on the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and the Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.

The remaining open areas of the lawns will be available as play areas, particularly for the many children who attend summer school and after school activities at El Centro de Acción.

IV. PARK FURNISHINGS

Park Furnishings are those elements that provide the framework and basic structure for the park as well as the smaller, pedestrian amenities for its users. These furnishings include plant material, paving materials, building materials, water features, lighting, fencing, and site furniture. It is important that park furnishings be selected and designed to achieve maximum longevity while incurring a minimum of maintenance costs.

A. Plant Materials

Plant material is of course one of the most essential elements in defining the character and quality of the park environment. Central Park offers a wide variety of mature specimen trees including Araucaria, Bottle, Camphor, Cedar, Cherry, Chestnut, Crepe Myrtle, Cypress, Deodar, Elm, Eugenia, Grevilla, Jacaranda, Live Oak, Madrona, Magnolia, Maidenhair, Maple, Palm, Pepper, Pittosporum, Pine, Redwood, Sequoia, Sycamore, and Tulip.

These trees will be incorporated into the Master Plan and will be protected. The success of the park will depend greatly on the use of drought-tolerant plants. Making use of California native plants is highly desirable.

B. Paving Materials

The layout of the pathways and walking surfaces throughout the park provides one of the important organizing elements. The basic layout of the pathways will respect Ralph D. Cornell's original 1925 design. Where the historic Cornell pathways have been removed or altered, every effort should be made to replace them. The main pathway system throughout the Park will be maintained as six-inch tinted concrete. Secondary paths, such as the small pathway system in The Gardens, will be of decomposed granite.

C. Building Materials

The new restroom building will be reflective of historic Pasadena architecture and compatible with the lawn bowling clubhouse which was designed in the Mediterranean style by noted architect Wallace Neff.

D. Utilities

The park's electrical switchgear, irrigation pump, and backflow are housed in unsightly enclosures that have been poorly sited. They will be relocated either in close proximity or within the new restroom building. Any features that are outside the building will be screened by a wall—respectful of the Park and its traditions—to lessen the negative impact to the park.

E. Lawn Bowling Clubhouse and Fields

The Master Plan incorporates and supports the continuation of lawn bowling. The members of the Lawn Bowling club support the use of synthetic turf for the southern field. While expensive to purchase and to install, the new turf would be cost-effective in the long term. The artificial turf allows for constant activity on the field and would eliminate the need for a second field. The Master Plan supports the replacement of the current grass field with artificial turf.

The clubhouse is in need of repairs, restoration, and improved landscaping. Any exterior restoration of the clubhouse shall be based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings. The areas immediately surrounding the two lawn-bowling fields are also in need of upgrades and improvements to the lawn and shrubs.

Lighting may be added to illuminate the field to extend the hours of lawn bowling. The light fixtures should be compatible design and angled onto the field to avoid any glare to nearby residences.

Benches and waste containers in the lawn bowling area should be in the same design as those throughout the park and Old Pasadena. Temporary sheds and storage bins which are located outside the clubhouse shall be removed. A new permanent storage building will be constructed adjacent to the clubhouse. This structure will be designed to be harmonious with the architecture of the clubhouse. A landscape plan for the exterior of the clubhouse area shall be created and implemented.

F. Water Features

Water is an important element in the Southern California landscape. It can provide natural cooling, enhance courtyard environments, or enliven small spaces. A new water feature could be incorporated into the formal garden area. The new water feature should be very simple, for example, a single jet of recirculating water, in a small decorative concrete basin. The use of recycled water and very modest fountain design is fully consistent with the City's water conservation policy.

G. Lighting

The pathway and security lighting system throughout the entire park was replaced in 2006. Any additional light fixtures that may be added to the park in the future, such as on the exterior of the buildings in the park, shall respect the historic nature of the park and the buildings.

H. Children's Playground

A forty-inch decorative steel fence is proposed for a limited area near the children's playground. Fencing is needed for the protection of children who are inclined to run to Fair Oaks to watch departing fire engines. Security remains a high priority for children playing in the Central Park playground.

Playground equipment will be upgraded and will include new swings, slides and climbing equipment. In order to protect the recently installed art, the playground area may be increased to include more adjacent parkland to the north and to the east.

I. Site Furniture

Site furniture provides many of the pedestrian amenities within the Park, increasing the Park's usability on an every day basis. Benches, picnic tables, drinking fountains, and bicycle racks are proposed.

Care should be taken with the design so that site furniture will reflect the historic designs found throughout Old Pasadena. Picnic tables should be concrete-based with wood table-tops. New drinking fountains will be designed to be reminiscent of earlier drinking fountains in Pasadena parks.

J. Public Art

Consideration should be given to the incorporation of public art into the proposed improvements in the formal garden area.

V. ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility for the disabled, infirm, and incapacitated will be incorporated in every stage of the Park's design. The selection of park furnishings should be carefully designed, not only for those of us who have permanent disabilities, but for those of us who will be temporarily disabled at some time in our lives. Thus, curb cuts, lighting, ramps, wheelchair-height drinking fountains, and handicapped-accessible restrooms are only a few of the features Central Park should incorporate as integral parts of the Master Plan design and operations policies.

A gate, installed across the pathway to the refuse container area in 2005, should be kept closed at all times. Bollards have been sited at strategic locations throughout the park. These features are intended to discourage the public from driving into and/or parking in Central Park.

VI. PARK PROGRAMMING

The park is used by both El Centro and the lawn bowlers for ongoing programs. In addition, scheduled special events take place on a regular basis. Gatherings for events, such as "art shows" that benefit local nonprofits, bring additional life to the park. All

events shall conform to the City's Large Event Policy and are subject to permitting. The policy sets out specific requirements and limitations for large events in Central Park.

VII. PHASING OF IMPROVEMENTS

The Master Plan is intended to be a long-term guide for implementing improvements to Central Park. Like any Master Plan it must be phased, allowing for improvements to be made incrementally. The design of the park has been cognizant of this need, and although no time frame has been established for the completion of the park, each element of the Master Plan can be readily implemented as funding becomes available. The improvements are listed in order of priority, with the highest priority item being number one. In addition, the improvements have been grouped into "high", "medium" and "low" priority categories by letter.

PRIORITIZED IMPROVEMENT LIST

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 1 | A | Remove and replace existing walkways with new concrete walkways. |
| 2 | A | Relocate light fixtures |
| 3 | A | Renovate and expand Play Area |
| 4 | A | Decorative steel fences |
| 5 | A | Decorative steel gates |
| 6 | A | New drinking fountains |
| 7 | A | Mowstrips around decomposed granite areas |
| 8 | A | Decomposed granite areas |
| 9 | A | Picnic tables |
| 10 | A | Trash receptacles |
| 11 | A | Bollards |
| 12 | A | New plantings around buildings |
| 13 | B | Relocate electrical panels |
| 14 | B | Demolish restroom building |
| 15 | B | New restroom, electrical utility room & irrigation pump |
| 16 | B | Remove north lawn bowling green |
| 17 | B | Remove horseshoe pits |
| 18 | B | Decorative steel fence – south lawn bowling green |
| 19 | B | Formal garden / plaza |
| 20 | B | New irrigation pump |
| 21 | C | Renovate lawn bowling building – south lawn bowling green |
| 22 | C | Remove metal storage building – south lawn bowling green |
| 23 | C | Synthetic turf surfacing – south lawn bowling green |
| 24 | C | Edge and gutter – south lawn bowling green |
| 25 | C | Light fixtures – south lawn bowling green |
| 26 | C | New benches with shade structures – south lawn bowling green |
| 27 | C | New drinking fountain – south lawn bowling green |
| 28 | C | Storage building to match clubhouse – south lawn bowling green |
| 29 | C | New concrete paving - south lawn bowling green |

Demolition of the North Lawn Bowling Green

Ideally, the new artificial turf will be installed in the early phases of the Master Plan's implementation. If that is not possible, the northern lawn-bowling green will remain until a new lawn-bowling green is constructed on the southwestern section of the park and opposite the existing south bowling green. This will ensure as little disruption as possible to the activities of the lawn bowlers. Because both greens are used by the lawn bowlers on a rotating basis, the northern green should not be relocated until funds are secured for the construction of a new artificial turf or for the new field, as referenced above.

VIII. EXTERNAL ISSUES

The park's relationship to nearby development is important and easy ingress and egress to and from the park should be facilitated, both for park users as well as for pedestrians who wish to traverse the park. This includes the consideration of pedestrian crosswalks, linkages of the park to the Gold Line Station, access to nearby residential complexes, and connections to Old Pasadena. Currently, the park is accessible by crosswalks at each corner and there is a mid-block crossing to the Gold Line Station. Consideration should be given to a mid-block pedestrian crossing on Fair Oaks Avenue.

IX. MANAGEMENT

Because Central Park has a number of potential funding sources available, it would be important to develop a coordinated approach to financing the park's revitalization. To sustain the kind of coordination and long-term focus which will be required to support the Park, a new form of management entity should be given full consideration by the City. Such an entity might take the form of a public/private Development Corporation set up as a 501-C (3) nonprofit corporation. The membership of the corporation's board could be initially appointed by the City for fixed terms and subsequently by the board members directly.

The membership would include residents, commercial property owners and tenants, indigenous park groups (for example: lawn bowlers, El Centro de Accion, horticultural organizations, etc.), along with ex-officio representation of public agencies and departments including Community Development, Neighborhood Services and Recreation, and Public Works. This group would be the nucleus of support for the Park. It could strive to find resources for additional maintenance and might become the vehicle through which park events and activities are coordinated. Should such events involve revenues, the Development Corporation might be granted these funds for use in furtherance of the park's revitalization program. Most importantly, the existence of such a group will help to guarantee the Plan's ultimate realization.

X. IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

A variety of funding mechanisms and management models can be used to assist the City and community in the implementation and operations of the Central Park Master Plan. Some of the potential funding sources which should be investigated include the General Fund, Residential Impact fees, and Mello-Roos funding.

A. General Fund

While general-fund allocations for parks and recreation purposes are becoming increasingly rare, advocates for the revitalization of Central Park should not fail to present a strong argument at budget time. Because the implementation of the Master Plan may take upwards of a decade to complete, the annual increment of need might be quite small when measured against other needs. Thus because of the relatively modest amounts involved, elected officials may act affirmatively to fund the Plan, at least in phases, moving the park's ultimate rebirth that much closer.

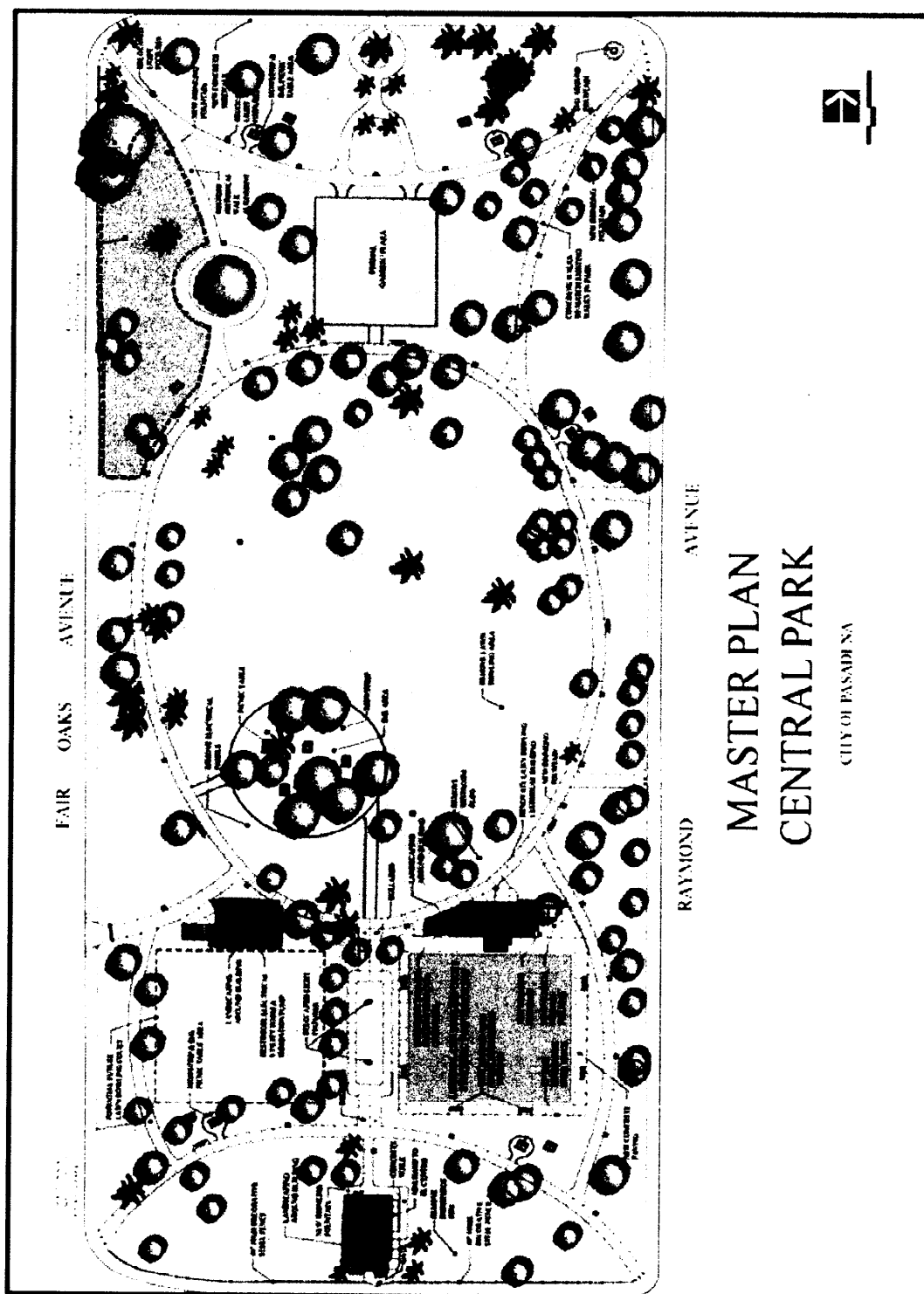
B. Residential Impact Fees

Monies collected under the provisions of the Quimby Act (collection of fees from new residential development for park improvements) will be collected from future residential development in the Central Park area. It is anticipated that these funds will be sufficient to pay for various elements of the Master Plan as outlined in the phasing program.

C. Mello-Roos

In 1982, the California State Legislature enacted the Mello-Roos Community Facilities Act which permits local jurisdictions to create a defined area, known as a Community Facilities District (CFD), and, by a two-thirds majority vote of the landowners or registered voters within the area, impose special taxes for the purpose of financing needed public improvements and services to that area. Once levied, these special taxes may be used to pay debt service on bonds issued by the City to finance a defined set of public improvements as well as the cost of delivering ongoing services. Properties participating in the CFD do not have to be contiguous. CFD boundaries can be restricted to include only commercial properties. The bonds are secured by liens against properties within the CFD and repaid by the special tax over a term of up to forty years. Quimby funds which are generated from housing could be used in conjunction with the Mello-Roos funds.

XI. SITE PLAN



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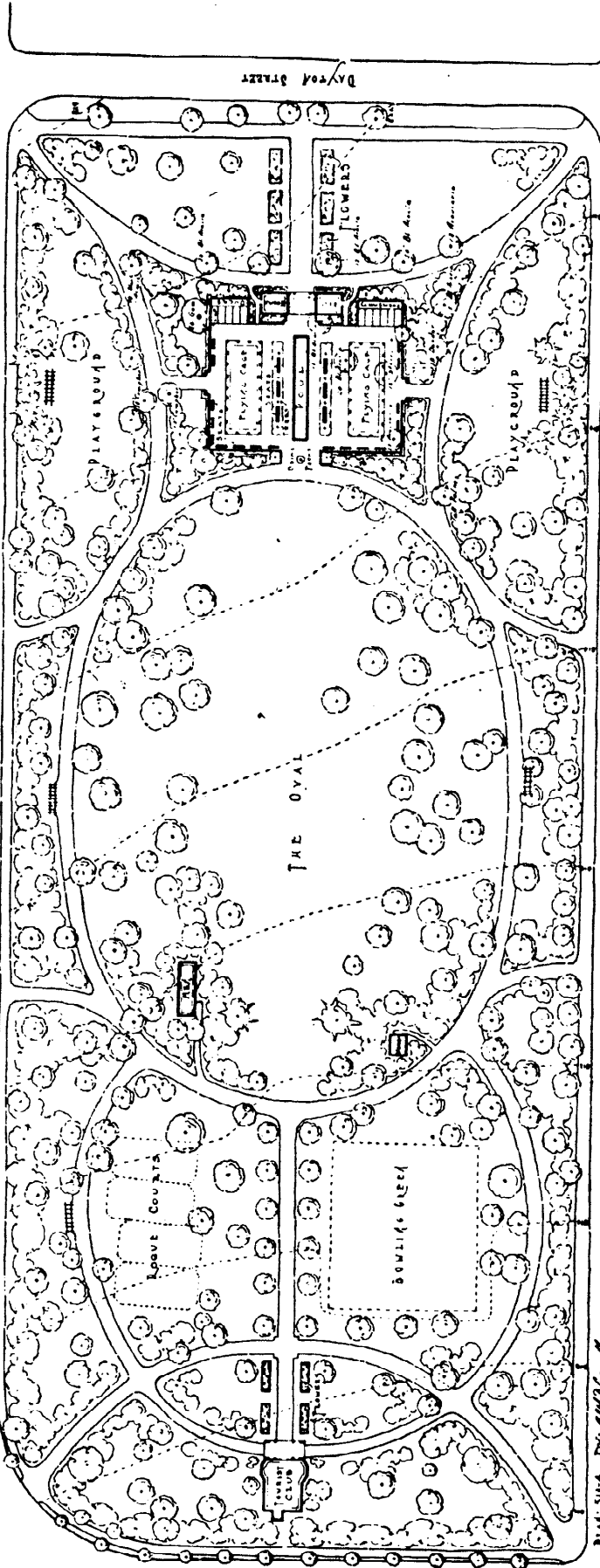
PLAN FOR REDESIGN
 CENTRAL PARK
 CITY OF PASADENA, CAL.

COOK & HALL • RALPH D. CORNELL
 Landscape Architects and City Plan-
 ning Consultants, Los Angeles, Calif.
 663 I.W. Hellman Bldg.

March 1925.

South Hill Oaks Ave.

Scale: 1 in. = 60 ft.

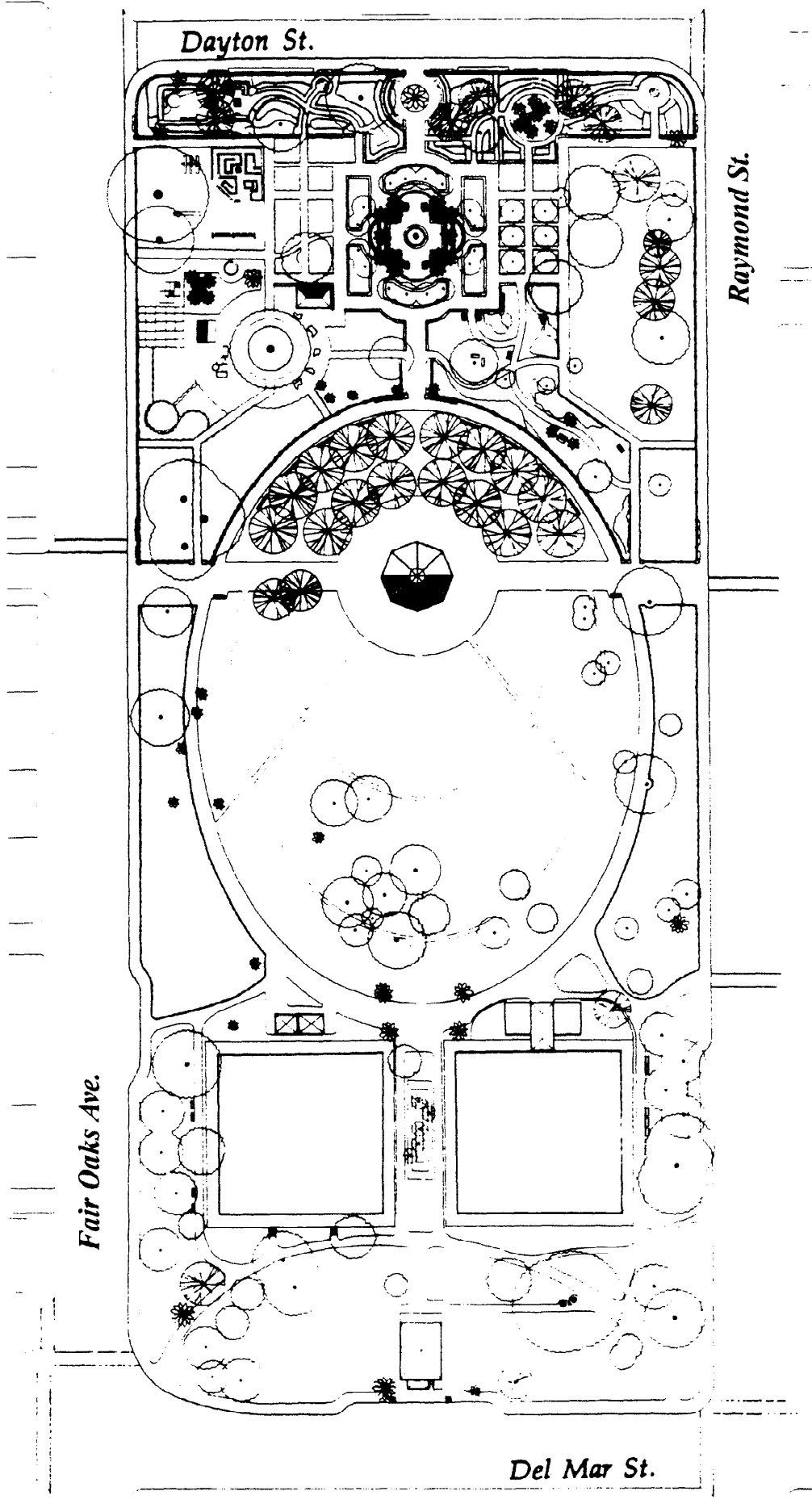


SOUTH HILL OAKS AVE.

PLAN: 511-4 BY: RALPH D. CORNELL

1925 PLAN

Technical Master Plan



1989 PLAN