

# Agenda Report

November 21, 2016

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council  
**FROM:** Department of Public Works  
**SUBJECT:** **POCKET PARK UPDATE AND DESIGNATION OF A PORTION OF LANDSCAPED AREA AT LAMANDA PARK LIBRARY AS A POCKET PARK**

## **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) of the State CEQA Guidelines and, as such, are not subject to environmental review;
2. Designate a portion of the landscaped area at Lamanda Park Branch Library as a pocket park location pursuant to Pasadena Municipal Code section 4.17.060.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

In response to increased demand for park space in the City's downtown area, staff has been engaged in efforts to identify possible locations to establish pocket parks. This report is an update on that effort. Additionally, staff is requesting designation of the Lamanda Park Branch Library property as a pocket park in order to utilize Residential Impact Fees for improvements to the grounds thereby creating a more park-like setting.

## **RECREATION AND PARKS COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:**

On November 1, 2016 the Recreation and Parks Commission reviewed and supported a revised Potential Pocket Park Inventory with a recommendation that the location identified at Union Street and Euclid Avenue be removed from consideration, and recommended that the City Council designate a portion of the Lamanda Park Branch Library grounds as a pocket park location.

## **BACKGROUND:**

The City of Pasadena presently maintains 29 parks totaling approximately 373 acres and about 260 acres of open space for a total of approximately 633 acres. The parks range from 0.30 acres at Sid Tyler Park to 95 acres in the active park portion of Hahamongna Watershed Park.

In recent years the City's park system has been enhanced by the expansion of Robinson Park, the acquisition of Annandale Canyon Estates and its conversion to open space, the establishment of joint-use agreements with the Pasadena Unified School District opening up school sites (Linda Vista, Madison Elementary, and John Muir High) for use as park and recreation facilities and most recently the current project converting the former U.S. Army base at Desiderio into a Neighborhood park. And although not a City park per se, the development of the Arlington Gardens has contributed greatly by providing residents a quiet refuge to relax in a peaceful and beautiful setting.

Beyond acquisitions and expansion, ongoing investment in parks has continued, including the park renovations at Robinson Park and Villa Parke, establishment of Vina Vieja Park, and Reese's Retreat barrier-free play area at Brookside Park. From late 2005 to early 2013, \$20,236,569 in Residential Impact Fees have been appropriated into the Capital Improvement Program for park related expenditures.

Given that most of the recent housing development in the City has occurred in the City's downtown area, as directed by the General Plan, there has been an increase in demand for the establishment of parkland in the City's more urban core. Accordingly, staff has been engaged in an effort to identify possible locations to establish pocket parks. As part of this effort staff has identified a number of potential locations focusing primarily on City-owned, or undeveloped parcels. Staff has approached private property owners to inquire as to their willingness to sell property as well. However, given land values the City has not been successful in this effort. The City is currently waiting for response from two recent inquires.

Currently, there are four sites that appear most viable, these include:

- 95 Alessandro Place. This is a privately owned, 0.69 acre parcel located west of Fair Oaks Avenue and south of Bellefontaine Street. It is surrounded by existing development and parking lots. A letter of interest has been mailed to the property owner and the City is currently waiting for response. (Attachment A, Location A)
- 2880 Estado Street. This is a privately owned, 0.21 acre parcel located immediately north of Interstate 210 and west of Sunnyslope Avenue. A letter of Interest has been prepared. (Attachment A, Location B)
- 235 S Bonnie Avenue. This is a City owned, 0.17 acre parcel located at the southwest corner of Del Mar Boulevard and Bonnie Avenue. (Attachment A, Location C)

- City right-of-way at Walnut Avenue and Oak Avenue. Oak Avenue terminates north of Walnut Avenue. The property is City right-of-way. This area is very small at approximately 2,500 square feet and not optimally located, but it is considered available. (Attachment A, Location D)

For private properties, if an owner is interested in discussing the sale of the property, the City would likely conduct an appraisal and then address the funding for purchase.

For all potential locations, some community outreach and conceptual park planning would be necessary to make a basic determination that the location is appropriate. Upon that determination, a park development project would be recommended to the City Council for consideration.

In the Playhouse district, the City-owned surface lot on the corner of Union Street and El Molino Avenue was previously identified as a potential park site. (Attachment A, Location E) The concept was initially envisioned as a park over a subterranean parking structure to maintain parking spaces for businesses and visitors. Although the City Council prioritized this project as a future effort, the elimination of the state's Redevelopment program eliminated the anticipated source of funding. The project had an estimated cost of \$14 million.

Recently, discussions have occurred involving various stakeholders including the Playhouse Business Improvement District, Downtown Pasadena Residents Association and City staff to explore the possibility of constructing the park without the subterranean parking. The key challenge being the need to identify either replacement parking or sufficient parking resources already nearby that can satisfy the parking demand. This effort is just getting underway, but if successful would provide for the establishment of a moderate size park in an identified under-parked area near many multi-unit residents.

Finally, the Lamanda Park Branch Library was identified as a potential pocket park location. (Attachment A, Location F) Staff recommends that the City Council designate a portion of the grounds as a pocket park location. The library site includes an approximately 0.25-acre area of turf and landscape located on the east side of the parcel. While outside the initial study focus area, this land has been previously reviewed and found to meet the pocket park criteria. An unfunded Capital Improvement project was adopted as part of the Fiscal Year 2017 Capital Improvement Program for park development. In order to commence with a park planning effort, it is recommended that the City Council designate the area as a pocket park location. No physical changes will take place at this location until that planning effort is completed and an improvement project is proposed and fully funded.

Identifying and reviewing potential park locations is an ongoing priority effort and staff is bringing new focus to it. Staff will continue to monitor the availability of private parcels with and without existing structures, work with the development community, and seek creative ways to utilize existing City lands.

**COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:**

The following Council goals and policies would be advanced under the proposed action:

- General Plan Green Space, Recreation and Parks Element, Objective 4 - Use traditional and creative strategies to preserve and acquire open spaces in order to enhance the quality of life of all Pasadenans;
- General Plan Open Space and Conservation Element - Preserve, Acquire and create open space;
- City Council Strategic Planning Goals - Increase conservation and sustainability; and
- Green City Action Plan, Action 10 - Ensure convenient access to public parks and recreational open space.

**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 budgetary and 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 there is no possibility of any environmental effects at this time. As the City becomes more certain it will undertake any project that may come out of the planning process, 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:**

The estimated cost of ongoing review of potential pocket park locations is \$10,000 and the estimated cost for park planning of the Lamanda Park Branch Library location is \$10,000. The total estimated cost of this action will be \$23,000 including Public Works administrative costs. Funding for this action will be addressed by the utilization of existing budgeted appropriations in the Pocket Park Planning CIP project (budget account 78076) which has a current balance of \$136,374.

The following table presents a summary of the sources of funds that will be used:

Residential Impact Fees	\$ 23,000
<b>Total Sources</b>	<b>\$ 23,000</b>

The following table represents the design cost summary:

Ongoing Potential Pocket Park Site Review	\$ 10,000
Lamanda Park Branch Library Park Planning	\$ 10,000
Administration Costs (15%)	\$ 3,000
<b>Total Fiscal Impact</b>	<b>\$ 23,000</b>


Respectfully submitted,

  
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