

COUNCIL AGENDA: 09-23-08

ITEM: 5.2

Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Albert Balagso

SUBJECT: WATSON PARK MASTER PLAN
PROJECT

DATE: 09-02-08

Approved

Date

9/5/08

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 3

SNI AREA: 13th Street SNI

RECOMMENDATION

Approval of the Watson Park Master Plan and adoption of resolution incorporating environmental mitigation measures as set forth in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program for the project.

OUTCOME

Approval of the master plan and adoption of the resolution permits the City to finalize construction documents, implement a phase I construction project in accordance with the Master Plan and reopen the park to the public.

BACKGROUND

Watson Park is a community park of approximately 35 acres located along Coyote Creek within the 13th Street Strong Neighborhood Initiative (SNI) area in Council District 3. Watson Park has frontage along 22nd Street and is accessed by Jackson Street. A secondary access off Taylor Street provides access to the Umberto Abronzino Soccer Bowl only. The park also has frontage along the Route 101 freeway.

The property was originally acquired in 1959 and dedicated as a park in honor of former Mayor Fred Watson on October 30, 1961. Watson Park was first developed in the 1960's. The original 1970 Master Plan envisioned an open park character that emphasizes the riparian edge along Coyote Creek.

In May 2004, construction began on a skate park facility in Watson Park. During excavation, contractors uncovered refuse materials indicative of a burn dump. This discovery led to the

closing of the park as a precautionary measure in August 2005.

Since the park's closure, the public, the City, the California Environmental Protection Agency's Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) and other agencies have worked together to determine the limit of the former burn dump, study how best to remediate the area, and identify a preferred approach to reopen the park.

Major milestones in this effort include:

- Preliminary site investigation and soil testing
- Preliminary Waste Characterization Study (PWCS)
- Draft Remedial Action Plan (RAP).

In fall of 2005, a Capital Project Advisory Committee (CPAC) was formed to work with City staff on park planning efforts on behalf of the larger Watson Park neighborhood. It was decided to prepare an updated Master Plan for Watson Park that would incorporate site remediation efforts and reflect the current program needs of the community.

ANALYSIS

Watson Park is strategically located close to downtown San José near an existing residential neighborhood and along a future major trail system. These factors make the park an important recreational asset. The CPAC and the larger community participated in creating a new vision for the park that guided the preparation of the master plan, which identifies the following goals:

- Establish an open park setting with good visibility
- Highlight the Coyote Creek riparian zone and trail as a major feature
- Establish a loop road and pedestrian circulation system throughout the park
- Create a neighborhood serving park at grade with North 22nd Street.

Changes between the existing park program and this Master Plan are:

- Demolish two small community center buildings and replace them with a soccer field house
- Reduce the total number of soccer fields from three to two, adding the option for night lighting and artificial turf at both fields
- Add volleyball courts
- Add night lighting to the dog park, basketball courts and skate park
- Reduce the total number of community garden plots.

The Master Plan includes the following programmatic elements:

- Two soccer fields with supporting field house, parking and other amenities

- Community garden plots
- Group picnic areas
- Skate park, basketball courts and volleyball courts
- Play lots for tots and youth
- Open space
- Senior area with gazebo and labyrinth
- Rest rooms
- Coyote Creek trail and pedestrian bridge over Coyote Creek.

It is envisioned that this Master Plan will be implemented in phases, with the first construction project occurring simultaneously with the site remediation project. Subsequent construction phases have not been identified or scheduled at this time. Currently, the remediation of Watson Park is scheduled to start construction in April 2009. Permit requirements may impact that date.

To date, \$15.2 million has been identified to pay for the remediation of Watson Park to reopen the park for public use and to remediate homes located along Terrace Drive adjacent to the park. Remediation of Terrace Drive homes was initially included in the Watson Park remediation project, but was separated from the remediation of the park in order to accelerate that work.

Site remediation studies, environmental clearance work and the Master Plan are being prepared simultaneously to compress project delivery time. As cost information for these projects is developed, a Phase I Master Plan implementation project will be finalized. It is clear, however, that additional funding is desirable to build all of the facilities included in the Master Plan for Watson Park and establish its strategic importance to the City.

The Master Plan is attached in CD form. A hard copy has been placed in the City Clerk's Office for public access.

Mitigation measures recommended in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan will be incorporated into the construction documents and implemented at the time of construction or as appropriate.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

Approval of the Watson Park Master Plan and adoption of the resolution will allow staff to proceed with the design and construction of a phase 1 construction project and reopen the park to public use. If Council approves, no additional Council report will be submitted.

PUBLIC OUTREACH/INTEREST

- Criterion 1:** Requires Council action on the use of public funds equal to \$1 million or greater.

(Required: Website Posting)

- Criterion 2:** Adoption of a new or revised policy that may have implications for public health, safety, quality of life, or financial/economic vitality of the City. **(Required: E-mail and Website Posting)**
- Criterion 3:** Consideration of proposed changes to service delivery, programs, staffing that may have impacts to community services and have been identified by staff, Council or a Community group that requires special outreach. **(Required: E-mail, Website Posting, Community Meetings, Notice in appropriate newspapers)**

This project meets Criterion 2: Adoption of a new or revised policy that may have implications for public health, safety, quality of life, or financial/economic vitality of the City.

The extensive community outreach effort included frequent meetings with the CPAC, community newsletters and community-wide meetings on an as-needed basis to solicit input, address concerns, and validate the project approach. Project information and studies were posted on the City's internet.

The CPAC met almost every month until summer 2007, when they elected to begin meeting on an as-needed basis. Between fall of 2005 and summer of 2007, the CPAC received progress reports on work related to the investigation and remediation of the burn dump and participated in creating a new vision for the Park that resulted in this Master Plan.

The CPAC was presented with preliminary site layouts at meetings held in April, June and July 2007 for discussion. The Park and Recreation Commission recommended approval of the Watson Park Master Plan at a hearing on June 18, 2008.

In addition, this memorandum will be posted on the City's website for the September 23, 2008 City Council agenda.

COORDINATION

This memorandum has been coordinated with the City Attorney's Office, the City Manager's Budget Office, the Department of Public Works, the Environmental Services Department and the Planning, Building and Code Enforcement Department.

FISCAL/POLICY ALIGNMENT

This project is consistent with the Council-approved Budget Strategy Economic Recovery section. The resulting construction project will spur construction spending in our local economy.

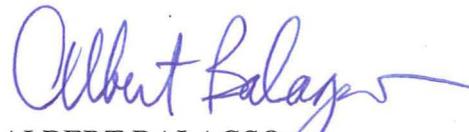
COST SUMMARY/IMPLICATIONS

1. AMOUNT OF RECOMMENDATION/COST OF PROJECT: N/A
2. ESTIMATED COST OF PROJECT: N/A

FISCAL IMPACT: The Master Plan will be partially implemented as part of the remediation project starting in 2009. Annual operations and maintenance costs for the initial implementation project are expected to increase by approximately \$31,000 above current budget amounts to accommodate new stormwater management facilities, newly planted trees, soccer field night lighting and upgraded sports field maintenance techniques in alignment with sports field study goals. Additional implementation projects have not been programmed and operation and maintenance costs for such future projects will be reviewed as part of 2010-2014 Preliminary General Fund Forecast update to be released in the fall of 2008.

CEQA

CEQA: PP 07-130, Mitigated Negative Declaration


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and Neighborhood Services

For questions, please contact MARYBETH CARTER, Senior Landscape Architect, at 793-4183.