



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Albert Balagso

SUBJECT: SARATOGA CREEK PARK
MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT

DATE: 03-20-06

Approved

Deane Sabua

Date

3/28/06

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 1
SNI AREA: N/A

RECOMMENDATION

Approval of the Saratoga Creek Park Master Plan Amendment to include a dog park.
CEQA: Exempt, PP05-185.

BACKGROUND

Saratoga Creek Park is a neighborhood park located in Council District 1 that stretches between Graves Avenue and Doyle Road, east of Lawrence Expressway. Current park amenities include a playground, picnic benches, a restroom and turf areas.

Over the past several years staff has continued to pursue opportunities for off-leash dog facilities throughout Council District 1. Staff evaluated vacant parcels, City surplus parcels and existing park sites. The criteria used to evaluate new land include the potential cost of the land, location, size or footprint of programmable space, proximity to residents, available parking, visibility, and accessibility. The criteria used to evaluate existing park space include location, size of programmable space, impacts to current park uses, the proximity and impacts to residents, parking and access.

Concurrent with the search for potential sites, staff held several meetings with Council District 1 neighborhoods to provide updates on progress and to solicit input on evaluating potential locations. As a result of this public input, the community clearly expressed their strong desire for the City to provide more dog parks. Residents prefer to have a dog park within walking distance of their homes; however, the park needs to be large enough to accommodate the expected usage. On the other hand, staff has also met resistance from residents not desiring off-leash dog areas located within their neighborhoods citing numerous impacts such as traffic and odors, among other undesirable issues.

In February 2004, staff designed a pilot dog park in Saratoga Creek Park. This pilot project was the result of the City-community partnership solution to provide balance between dog owners, park users, and neighbors. The scope was to provide an off-leash dog park with a site evaluation period of one year to determine if a dog park is a compatible use at this park. The pilot project was a 0.5-acre fenced off-leash area with natural turf. At a community meeting in October 2004, the community soundly endorsed staff's recommendation to convert the pilot off-leash site at Saratoga Creek Park into a permanent dog park.

ANALYSIS

Saratoga Creek Park is 10.6 acres in size and the open turf area at the south end, by Graves Avenue, is currently underutilized. The southern most portion of the park, between Lassen and Graves Avenues is actually separated from the northern section of the park by a cul-de-sac on Lassen Avenue. The only park amenities within the southern section of the park are six exercise stations and two picnic tables. There are six parking stalls at the end of Lassen and on-street parking is also available. The northern section of the park includes play lots for tots as well as elementary ages and a park restroom.

The Saratoga Creek Park Master Plan Amendment proposes to include the addition of an off-leash dog area. A map of the Master Plan Amendment is attached. The off-leash area will be situated on a 0.5-acre site within the park and will be designed to have common areas for both big and small dogs. To minimize operation and maintenance costs, its surfacing will consist mainly of decomposed granite. The project includes installation of fencing, site furnishings and other amenities.

The formalization of an off-leash dog area would have a minimal impact on neighbors at its proposed location. Additionally, the site is relatively flat with no vegetation other than a number of mature redwood trees, which will be protected and preserved. Furthermore, the design and development of this proposed off-leash project will fit within the guidelines of the City's Greenprint for Parks and Community Facilities and Programs.

Once the City Council approves the Master Plan Amendment, project design will begin in April 2006, construction will begin in August 2006, and project completion is expected in November 2006.

OUTCOME

Approval of the Saratoga Creek Park Master Plan Amendment will add the dog park as a permanent feature in the park. The amendment will enable staff to implement the addition of several permanent features to the dog park. Additions to the dog park would include picnic

tables, litter receptacles, concrete surfacing at the entrances and a decomposed granite surface to replace the failing turf.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Four separate community meetings were held to gather public input on the project. The first meeting was in the fall of 2003. The next meeting was February 2004, then October 2004 and a last meeting October 2005. The meetings were well attended and the community was in favor of building a pilot dog area and then incorporating the dog park permanently into the park. The Parks and Recreation Commission approved the Master Plan Amendment on November 2, 2005.

The Saratoga Creek Park neighborhood was also re-surveyed during the month of February 2006 to confirm public support for this project. Over 1,100 survey forms were mailed out to the surrounding neighborhood, with 231 (21.0%) being completed and returned. Of the completed surveys, 180 (77.9%) respondents indicated being in favor of the City moving forward with this project. Fifty-one (22.1%) respondents were opposed.

COORDINATION

This memorandum has been coordinated with the City Attorney’s Office, City Manager’s Budget Office, and the Departments of General Services and Planning, Building and Code Enforcement.

COST IMPLICATIONS

The total cost to add a permanent dog park to the Saratoga Creek Park is estimated at \$147,000. Funding is available in the Park Trust Fund for this project. The additional operating and maintenance costs associated with this project are estimated at \$20,000 annually. These funds will be considered as part of the 2006-2007 budget process.

BUDGET REFERENCE

Fund #	Appn. #	Appn. Name	Total Appn.	2005-2006 Adopted Capital Budget (Page)	Last Budget Action (Date, Ord. No.)
375	5118	Saratoga Creek Dog Park Renovations	\$147,000	V-850	

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CEQA

Exempt, PP05-185.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Albert Balagso", followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

ALBERT BALAGSO
Acting Director of Parks, Recreation and
Neighborhood Services

Attachment: Map of Saratoga Creek Park Master Plan Amendment

