

January 13, 2022
Item 5

**TITLE: REVIEW AND RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT ALL-ABILITIES
PLAYGROUND MASTER PLAN AT KEN MERCER SPORTS PARK**

SUMMARY

In late 2017, residents with special needs family members approached the City to request an all-abilities playground in Pleasanton. In April 2019, the City Council adopted the all-abilities playground as a priority for their 2020-2022 workplan as Capital Improvement Program Project No. 20773 with \$400,000 in funding for design services.

The design firm RRM Design Group was secured and, together with City staff, held six stakeholder meetings, one community outreach meeting, and conducted a survey to gather public feedback. Two conceptual designs were created based on the input received.

The two concepts were presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Human Services Commission, and the Youth Commission. They were also shared at two community outreach events, one held at the Farmers Market on September 18 and one held in the current playground area at Ken Mercer Sports Park on September 25, 2021. Another community-wide survey was also conducted between September 25 – October 15, 2021 which yielded 144 responses from the community.

The Draft All-Abilities Playground Master Plan was created and reflects the feedback received. City staff requests that the Parks and Recreation Commission review the Draft All-Abilities Playground Master Plan and community feedback and recommend approval to the City Council. The Draft Master Plan is scheduled to be presented to the City Council for approval in February.

RECOMMENDATION

Review and recommend approval of the draft All-Abilities Playground Master Plan at Ken Mercer Sports Park.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

There is no direct financial impact resulting from a Parks and Recreation Commission recommendation. \$400,000 is budgeted for design work for this project in the Capital Improvement Program budget. \$114,050 of that amount was approved for the conceptual design phase. City Council will determine the final design and construction budget for the project.

BACKGROUND

In late 2017, residents with special needs family members approached City staff to request an all-abilities playground in Pleasanton. In February 2019, these same residents attended the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting to recommend an all-abilities playground as a priority for the 2020-2022 budget cycle. Based upon this input, the all-abilities playground was unanimously recommended as the Parks and Recreation Commission's number one priority for the 2020-2022 budget cycle.

In April 2019, the City Council adopted the all-abilities playground as a priority for their 2020-2022 workplan as Capital Improvement Project No. 20773.

Following the decision by City Council, staff visited numerous all-abilities playgrounds in the San Francisco Bay area and met with staff from these cities to discuss their designs and maintenance needs. These included: Magical Bridge Playground in Palo Alto, Matteo's Dream Playground in Concord, Athan Downs Playground in San Ramon, Heather Farms Playground in Walnut Creek, Magical Bridge Playground in Redwood City, Mia's Dream Playground in Hayward and the all-abilities playground in Dublin.

Based on site visits, staff compiled a checklist of suitable attributes necessary for a successful all-abilities playground. These attributes included:

- Ample parking
- Varied grades
- Restrooms
- Shade
- ADA access
- Centrally located in town
- Easy access to transportation/schools
- Additional park amenities
- Safe environment
- Sufficient play area
- No conflicting uses.

With these attributes in mind, staff researched and visited a variety of locations within Pleasanton to determine which City properties checked the boxes on the list and could accommodate an all-abilities playground. These parks included: Val Vista Community Park, Amador Community Park, Bernal Community Park, Ken Mercer Sports Park, and Staples Ranch (undeveloped location.) While no location met all the site attributes and availability of space, Ken Mercer Sports Park and Staples Ranch were presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission as the most viable options.

At the January 9, 2020 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting, the commissioners voted unanimously to recommend that City Council explore an all-abilities playground at Ken Mercer Sports Park. At the September 1, 2020 City Council meeting, the City Council voted to approve the design process for an all-abilities playground at Ken Mercer Sports Park.

Funding in the amount of \$400,000 was budgeted for the project under CIP Project No. 20773. Through a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) selection process, the City selection committee chose RRM Design Group as the most qualified firm to prepare the All-Abilities Playground Master Plan.

Together with RRM Design Group, City staff conducted community outreach for the project which included:

1. Creating a website (www.pleasantonallabilitiesplayground.com) that is regularly updated
2. Completing a topographic survey and geotechnical engineer's report
3. Hiring an arborist to complete a tree survey
4. Holding six stakeholder meetings (Sunflower Hill, Pleasanton Rotary North, PUSD- PTA Special Needs Committee, the Pleasanton Chamber of Commerce, the Pleasanton Friends of the Senior Center, and the Parks and Recreation Commission)
5. Holding one virtual community outreach meeting
6. Conducting one community outreach survey

RRM and staff compiled all the feedback received at the various meetings and via the survey and created two conceptual designs based on the input received.

The two designs were meant to be interchangeable so that items in option 1 could be placed in option 2 and vice versa.

Option 1 Playground Description (Pleasanton's Rise Playground):

This inspirational playground encourages bravery, confidence, and the joy of lifting up others. Through a variety of play and sensory experiences that encourage inclusion, it inspires all who visit to "rise" up like the birds in the wind, the sun, the moon and the stars.

Design Features:

- Entry area with Pleasanton arch replica
- Large main play area that could include a bird, nest or other large soaring feature that could be interacted with in a variety of ways, i.e.: climbing, swinging, ziplining, and/or sliding
- Quiet areas
- Additional picnic areas
- Music area
- Fitness Zone
- Bankshot basketball area
- Large climbing structure for older youth
- Sensory Play area.

Option 2 Playground Description (Pride of Pleasanton Playground):

This playground concept celebrates the park's green, lush setting, and undulations. It encourages users to discover nature through organic shapes, natural materials and textures, and a variety of adventures and challenges along the way. This concept will also include interpretive play features that highlight the unique character of Pleasanton.

Design Features:

- Entry area with Pleasanton Arch replica
- Large main play area that could include replica Kottinger Barn, or other key historic building in Pleasanton that could be interacted with in a variety of ways i.e.: climbing, swinging, ziplining, and/or sliding
- Fitness area
- Nature themed play areas that could include mounds, sand, and sensory play
- Additional picnic areas with shelter
- Challenge course for older youth
- Quiet areas
- Artistic shade structures
- Music area.

Both options proposed additional accessible parking stalls, a drop-off and loading/unloading zone, and new parking stalls for a net-zero gain in parking in the parking lot immediately adjacent to the all-abilities playground.

The two concepts were presented at the following events/meetings:

1. August 12, 2021 – Parks and Recreation Commission
2. September 1, 2021 – Human Services Commission
3. September 8, 2021 – Youth Commission
4. September 18, 2021 – Community Event #1 at the Farmers Market
5. September 25, 2021 – Community Workshop #2 in the playground area at Ken Mercer Sports Park.

The City advertised for Community Workshop #2 to all neighbors within five-hundred feet of Ken Mercer Sports Park, posted the meeting on the City's website, on the project website (www.pleasantonallabilitiesplayground.com), on NextDoor, Facebook and posted posters for the meeting in city facilities.

The conceptual designs, community input and in-progress community-wide survey #2 results were all presented to the City Council on October 5, 2021.

The input received at the various meetings and event included:

Parks and Recreation Commission

- Most appreciated concept #1; however, they were concerned about the custom nature of the main bird sculpture and its durability and playability
- Would like more accessible parking included
- Liked the event stage and picnic shelter ideas in concept #2
- Loved the fitness equipment in addition to the park
- Would like a variety of seating elements included
- Liked the addition of sensory elements, swings, and the challenge course.

Human Services Commission

- Appreciated that the designs sparked imagination
- Liked that the designs were interchangeable
- Loved that the designs were utilizing the existing landscape and appreciated that the existing tree canopy will offer shade
- Tended to favor concept #2 slightly
- Appreciated the all-ages approach to design
- Would like to see a double swing included and to ensure that the quiet areas are as quiet as possible
- Liked the inclusion of generational games
- Wanted more disabled parking spaces included in proximity
- Overall, did not feel enough additional parking spaces were added.

Youth Commission

- Liked both designs, but the majority preferred concept #1 for the following reasons: appears to have more play options than concept #2, is well planned out, has good flow, is sectioned-off well, is more eye-catching and vibrant, and appears more enjoyable for children.
- Felt that concept #1 could and should still reflect the character of Pleasanton
- Wanted to keep the horizontal pine tree and incorporate it into the design
- Wished to preserve as many of the healthy trees as possible.

Community Event #1 – Farmers Market

- Slight preference for concept #2
- Wanted the following items included: multiple trash receptacles, shade structures, ziplines, swings, monkey bars, slides, spinners, corkscrew ladders, rock climbing, sand, and musical elements
- Wanted as many trees kept as possible
- Liked the auditory and sensory elements
- Liked the seating and observation areas.

Community Workshop #2 – Ken Mercer Sports Park

- Evenly split on concept preferences
- Liked the addition of the Bankshot Basketball
- Wanted to add climbing bars/monkey bars
- Loved the sensory and tactile elements
- Liked swings
- Identified quiet spaces as a necessity
- Liked the idea of inter-generational games
- Preferred less bark or woodchips as they are difficult for wheelchairs
- Needed plenty of water fountains
- Requested to keep as many trees as possible, especially the “leaning tree”.

City Council

- Strong preference for concept #1
- Preferred the large bird play area be changed – suggested butterflies and/or trees
- Liked the whimsical and colorful nature of concept #1
- Wanted as much shade as possible
- Wanted more accessible parking added
- Had questions about the maintenance this type of playground would require
- Liked the sensory elements, the basketball area, the zip line, the swings, and the teen area.

Community-Wide Survey #2

- 144 responses
- Concept #1 was preferred 49.61%
- Concept #2 was preferred 50.39%
- Highest rated features of interest from either concept include:
 - Large accessible play zone = 82.98%
 - Elevated picnic plaza with shade trees, seating and access to hill slide = 78.91%
 - Play slope with climbers and slides = 78.91%
 - Nature zone under trees with rocking benches = 72.66%
 - Inclusive challenge course = 71.09%
- Highest rated amenities include:
 - Variety of seating – benches, chairs, brick seat wall etc. = 83.46%
 - Accessible restroom = 75.94%
 - Walking loop throughout the playground = 71.43%
 - Water fountains = 71.43%.

DISCUSSION

Utilizing the feedback received throughout the community outreach phases, the Draft All-Abilities Playground Master Plan made the following modifications to design concept #1 to create the final conceptual design for the playground:

- Added one additional ADA parking space (six total). The concept alternatives both included five ADA parking spaces. Concerns about limited parking was a common theme among feedback received
- Rethought the bird design for the main play structure. The central bird structure was determined to not fit the design theme, so other options were considered. Staff and the design team have replaced the bird with a butterfly-themed structure as requested by members of the public and City Council
- Replaced the Teen Climber with the Challenge Course. The Challenge Course of concept #2 was a popular element that garnered more positive feedback than the large Teen Climber
- Included Stage and Artistic Shelters from concept #2. Both the stage area and the shadow-play shade structures were popular features of concept #2
- Relocated the Fitness Equipment along the pathway. The fitness equipment along the walking loop was a popular element to concept #2
- Small spatial changes. It was requested that small edits be made to the maintenance path and the size of the Bankshot Basketball area
- In addition to the above changes the design team made small changes to the central play area to better fit the existing grading of the site. The Sun Plaza and Entry Space were reconfigured to provide an enhanced and more straightforward entry experience.

The proposed all-abilities playground is estimated to cost between \$6.5 million and \$8 million to construct. The range in costs accounts for design decisions that still need to be made and depends on when the project is built (inflation this last year approached 7%).

Staff is requesting that the Parks and Recreation Commission review and make a recommendation to approve the Draft All-Abilities Playground Master Plan. City Council will receive the Park and Recreation Commission's recommendation, determine final approval of the Master Plan and determine the design and construction budget. The plan is scheduled to be presented to the City Council in February 2022.

Submitted by:



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Attachments:

1. Draft All-Abilities Playground Master Plan
2. All-Abilities Playground at Ken Mercer Sports Park Final Conceptual Plan
3. All-Abilities Playground at Ken Mercer Sports Park Character Sketch