



**DEPARTMENT OF PARKS  
AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**CITY OF SACRAMENTO**  
CALIFORNIA

1231 I STREET  
SUITE 400  
SACRAMENTO, CA  
95814-2977

ROBERT P. THOMAS  
DIRECTOR

September 15, 1989

916-449-5200

G. ERLING LINGGI  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

DIVISIONS:  
CROCKER ART MUSEUM  
GOLF  
METROPOLITAN ARTS  
MUSEUM AND HISTORY  
PARKS  
RECREATION  
ZOO

WALTER S. UEDA  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

Budget and Finance/Transportation  
and Community Development Committee  
Sacramento, California

Honorable Members in Session:

SUBJECT: Plaza Park Consultant Review and Creation of Steering Committee

SUMMARY

This report provides Council with information on the recommendations of Project for Public Spaces, Inc. (PPS) on the redesign/revitalization of Plaza Park. Further, this report recommends that Council direct staff to create a steering committee to develop and implement a long-range use plan for the park.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Together with the new Library/Galleria project, Plaza Park has the potential to be enjoyed by thousands who live and work in the downtown area. The Urban Design Plan states that "Plaza Park is the natural heart of the City...It should be an active, programmed space functioning as Sacramento's public 'living room'". To ensure a park plan that would best accommodate future desired use, the Department of Parks and Community Services sought a consultant review of the current use of the park and designs for Plaza Park, the Library/Galleria, and Civic Center Plaza Parking Garage.

Project for Public Spaces, Inc. is a nationally recognized nonprofit corporation that specializes in the planning, design, programming, and management of public spaces. PPS was chosen due to their involvement in and approach to similar projects across the country. Mr. Fred Kent, president of PPS, is familiar with downtown Sacramento, having worked with local public and private sector agencies on design and animation projects in the past.

Fred Kent and an associate over a two-day period met with City officials and staff, SHRA, owners and managers of properties adjacent to the park, current park users, and others who are involved in the park's activities and downtown development/animation. The opinions, suggestions and recommendations solicited during these interviews have been incorporated into the final report.

PPS' final report and recommendations are attached. One of the report's key recommendations is the creation of a steering committee composed of representatives from the various public and private agencies they met with. The purpose of the steering committee will be to revitalize Plaza Park through cooperative management, programming, and proposed design improvements. The steering committee will develop a work plan to be submitted to Council for approval.

Additionally, the PPS report strongly recommends that the Farmers Market be expanded, and that some immediate design changes take place to "winterize" the market and better accommodate both farmers and the public. Implementation of these recommendations will expand the market season to three days a week, nine months a year. Specific design improvements, such as removal of the low flag wall, removal of some tables and benches, trimming of trees for greater visibility, and painting of lighting fixtures will take place in spring 1990.

FINANCIAL DATA

The Department of Parks and Community Services will provide staff support for the Plaza Park Steering Committee. Any incidental expenses will be paid from the Department's operating budget. The design improvements that will take place next spring will be funded by the Plaza Park CIP (LD26). No additional funding is requested with this report.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

None.

MBE/WBE EFFORTS

No impact.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that City Council, by resolution, direct staff to create a steering committee to develop and implement a long-range use plan for Plaza Park.

Respectfully submitted,

*for - G. Erling Longgi*  
Robert P. Thomas, Director  
Parks and Community Services

Recommendation Approved:

*Solon Wisham, Jr.*  
Solon Wisham, Jr.  
Assistant City Manager

September 26, 1989  
District No. 1

RPT:ja

Contact Person: Patti Gonzales, Administrative Services Officer - 449-5375

# RESOLUTION NO.

ADOPTED BY THE SACRAMENTO CITY COUNCIL

ON DATE OF \_\_\_\_\_

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND  
COMMUNITY SERVICES TO CREATE A PLAZA PARK  
STEERING COMMITTEE

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SACRAMENTO:

1. That in order to revitalize and redesign Plaza Park, a public/private steering committee be created.
2. That the City Council hereby directs the Department of Parks and Community Services to create the Plaza Park Steering Committee.

\_\_\_\_\_  
MAYOR

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
CITY CLERK

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FOR CITY CLERK USE ONLY

RESOLUTION NO.: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE ADOPTED: \_\_\_\_\_

SACRAMENTO  
PLAZA PARK

Prepared for:

City of Sacramento  
Department of Parks and Community Services

by:

Project for Public Spaces, Inc.  
153 Waverly Place  
New York, N.Y. 10014

August 1989

## I. Introduction

Plaza Park is a key element in the efforts currently being undertaken by the City of Sacramento to revitalize and attract people to the downtown area. Directly adjacent to City Hall and the Public Library and within easy walking distance from both city and state offices and the K Street Mall, the park has great potential. It could become not only a place that expresses the diversity and life of the Sacramento community but could be a catalyst for future growth of the area around it. However, currently, it is only at lunchtime, during an event or on farmers' market days that many people use the park. Other times it is minimally used.

In order for the park to reach its full potential as a public space it is important that specific efforts be made to attract more people to use the park on a regular basis. This will necessarily involve some improvements to the amenities that are currently available in the park, but it does not require an overall redesign of the park at this time. Instead, we recommend building on and increasing the positive activities that are now occurring in the park and making modifications to the park, where necessary, to better accommodate these activities. After a period of time, (i.e. three to five years), when the level of use has increased, more substantial design changes can be made and the overall design concept changed, if needed. Generally, our recommendations center around increasing the number of days that market type activities occur in the park, utilizing events and entertainment activities as a seed for generating uses at other times of day and week, and adding some specific design

changes and amenities to the park that will both increase and better accommodate use. This will also serve to provide a stronger sense of ownership in and therefore improve the security in the park.

## II. Methodology

In order to better understand the issues and to develop recommendations for Plaza Park, PPS and the Parks Department staff met with representatives from both the public and the private sectors who are located adjacent to the park or who have interest in the park. People who were interviewed include representatives from the following:

- o City of Sacramento - Department of Public Works, Facility Management, Planning, Parks, Police, City Manager
- o Library
- o Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency
- o Capitol Area Development Association
- o Downtown Association
- o Environmental Council of Sacramento
- o Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission
- o Certified Farmers' Markets of Sacramento
- o Representatives of City Council

In addition to the interviews, we also spent time in the park observing activities at different times of day and evening and reviewed current planning efforts and designs for properties directly adjacent to the park.

### III. Issues

There are several issues that were consistently raised in the interviews and which were evident from our observations. These issues concern, first, the current use of the park and second, the relationship of the park to the surrounding area.

The current use of the park is primarily during an event and at lunchtime. The City Life program has attracted people to the park and the farmers' market attracts people. The problem is that other than during these times, the park provides little else to encourage people to use it throughout the day. There is a group of people who do use the park on a regular basis -- some of whom may be perceived as threatening to other would-be users. However, we recommend increasing the attractions in the park for people in general rather than concentrating too much on ridding the park of its undesirable users. A positive image for the park needs to be created as well as dealing with the real security problems that are occurring.

Essential to the success of any public space is its relationship to surrounding land uses. Not only do the people who live and/or work around a park provide a clientele for the space but the type and design of the ground floor land uses can facilitate people's interaction with the park. A prime example of this at Plaza Park is Ambrose Heath, a restaurant located on one edge of the park. From the second floor of this restaurant, one has a beautiful view of the park and on farmers' market day people come in to have lunch after shopping in the park. Generally, though, the land uses adjacent to Plaza Park do not have as great an impact as they could have.

As development occurs in the future, property owners and the City should work together in increasing overall pedestrian activity and retail in the area. The City Hall and the library do provide some activities, and the proposed galleria can begin to complement the activities planned for the park, particularly during inclement weather. The ground floor of the office building adjacent to the library should have as many retail spaces as possible with entrances directly on the sidewalk to create a better level of pedestrian activity in the area. Similarly, considerations should be given to the ground floor design of the library and its adjacent streetscape. The design can accommodate an "outdoor" cafe adjacent to the proposed restaurant on both the interior and exterior of the building. However, the current proposal for the placement of the trees in the middle of the sidewalk will make this cafe difficult, if not impossible. Generally, the trees, along the entire block, which are located in the middle of the sidewalk should be moved to the curb to allow space for pedestrians to walk and for activities such as outdoor book sales, and should be spaced so as not to block shop windows and signs. On the south side of the park, efforts should be made to work with merchants to upgrade their facades. On the east side of the park, ground floor retail will ensure further activity and enhance the surrounding area.

Another issue regarding the integration of the park with the surrounding uses is creating the sense that the park is part of a square that extends out to the building line. There should be a clear sign to both pedestrians and vehicles that they have reached a special place. To do this, attractive and decorative banding and pavement treatments for the sidewalks and intersections should border the park and be compatible with surrounding development.



#### IV. Recommended Improvements

In the short term, to attract additional people to the park on a more regular basis, the following improvements should be made:

- o **Expand the market.** The current farmers' market should be expanded.

According to Dan Best, the market manager, this would be not only possible but desirable. On other days, additional markets could be developed such as for baked goods, books, art, birds, etc. To better accommodate the needs of the sellers and to strengthen the visual presence of the market, a portable or semi-permanent tube and canvas system should be researched and developed that would encircle the park in the area of the existing market. In addition, the concrete area should be expanded to provide additional space for the market.

- o **Utilize the existing program of events to support market activities and attract people on weekends and in the evenings.** The existing events program structure should be used to develop a range of programs that would not necessarily cost public monies but would enhance the existing market activities.

- Cooks from local restaurants could demonstrate their specialities on the farmers market days using produce that is in season
- Local artists could sell their work
- Children's art show or show and swap day exclusively for kids

- Recycling Saturday where people could bring bottles, cans, plastic, paper, etc. to the park. Music, coffee and donuts could be provided.
- Chess tournament with a grand master challenging several opponents at once.
- o **Provide an opportunity for people to eat in the park.** At least one food vendor and a small outdoor cafe area with movable seating, umbrellas and tables should be added to the park both to provide a service and an attraction to park users and to contribute to a sense of security in the park. The cafe should be open in the morning and through the afternoon and could serve coffee, croissants, sandwiches and carry newspapers, magazines, information on Sacramento, etc. The cafe seating could be managed separately by the Parks Department or by the vendor, but it should provide public seating for anyone who uses the park during hours of operation by the vendor, whether they buy food from the vendor or not. It should be located in the area around the central fountain near the vendor. The movable furniture could be stored in the unused portion of the restroom building or just the umbrellas stored and the tables and chairs stacked and chained together at night. A few permanent benches should be added around the fountain in the center of the park.
- o **Develop an area for a sport that would attract people on weekends and particularly in the evenings.** Additional research will need to be done on the appropriate sport, but bocci and volleyball are possibilities. The courts should be temporary, lighted at night, and operated in

conjunction with an existing league or program that will guarantee a user clientele. Special events and tournaments should be developed around the sport such as "Late Night Volleyball" or "Open Air Bocci Ball in Plaza Park".

- o **Paint light fixtures.** In the short term, rather than investing in new light fixtures, the existing ones could be painted either black or dark bottle green.
- o **Remove the low wall and flag poles on the northern edge of the park and use this space instead for the stage for events.** When the stage is not set up, the area could be used for cafe seating or for sports activities.
- o **Prune trees at entrances and throughout the park to increase visibility into and through the park.**
- o **Design and construct a decorative paving pattern for sidewalks and intersections bordering the park to create a sense of a square.**
- o **Institute several management oriented changes in the park.** In order to improve people's overall perception that the park is a safe, well-managed space the following ideas should be considered in the short term:

- A uniformed police officer should be in the park during all events, including the farmer's market. The officer should be chosen based on his/her ability and interest in getting to know park users and should walk through the park on a regular basis talking with people. The officer should be especially adept and sensitive to tactfully handling problems with undesirable behavior that may occur.
  
- A youth corps to supplement existing park maintenance staff could be set up. The youths, who would be managed by park staff, could participate in all horticulture activities such as planting, pruning, etc. (Information on existing programs in other cities will be provided to the Parks Department.)
  
- An overall retail plan and strategy should be developed for the ground floor spaces adjacent to the park. With the planned construction of the two new buildings, a unique opportunity exists to coordinate planning of ground floor uses. Active, rather than passive retail should be considered. That is, uses such as restaurants and small shops rather than banks, brokers, etc. should be sought after.

#### V. Strategy for Implementation

The recommendations that are made in this report involve making some immediate design changes (i.e. paving improvements, market structure, vending kiosk,

movable seating) but primarily rely on strong management, and regular programming as well as the ability to fast track the project and to obtain private funding and sponsorship for some activities. The critical element in the management of the park are the people selected to run it. They must be familiar with existing programs such as City Life, knowledgeable of the City processes, respected by area merchants, and able to establish a rapport with existing park users.

A steering committee could be utilized to manage the park over the next few years while surrounding development takes place, but in the future a nonprofit corporation should be established specifically to assume this responsibility. Both the public and private sectors should be involved both in the short term, and in the long term as members of a board of directors as well as financially. Potential Steering Committee members should include, in addition to the City, representatives of the library and the Library Plaza Tower, major property owners facing the park, representatives of the merchants near the park, the farmer's market and others who will be directly involved in the park and its activities in the future.

Once development of the Library/Galleria, Library Plaza Tower, and Civic Center Plaza Parking Garage has taken place, and Plaza Park has experienced further program activity, permanent design changes which reflect the most successful uses of Plaza Park should be implemented and managed by a nonprofit corporation thereafter.