



DEPARTMENT OF PARKS
AND RECREATION

CITY OF SACRAMENTO
CALIFORNIA

915 I STREET, 5th FLOOR
SACRAMENTO, CA
95814-2998

ADMINISTRATION
916-264-5200
916-808-8329 FAX

October 19, 2007

Parks and Recreation Commission
Sacramento, California

Honorable Members in Session:

SUBJECT: REPORTBACK ON MUIR PARK

LOCATION AND COUNCIL DISTRICT: 16TH and C Streets, Council District 3

RECOMMENDATION: Review and comment.

CONTACT PERSONS: JANET BAKER, OPERATIONS MANAGER, 808-8234 AND
J.P TINDELL, PARK PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES MANAGER, 808-1955

FOR MEETING OF: November 1, 2007

SUMMARY:

A Sacramento resident spoke to the Parks and Recreation Commission on October 4, 2007, as well as to City Council on September 11 and 25, 2007, expressing strong concern about the designation of Muir Park as a park for children, in that this designation precludes use of a public park by adults unless they are supervising children. Commissioners requested staff reportback on the item. This report provides background and current information on public use, input, design, reconstruction, and the determination to designate Muir Park as a children's park.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Muir Park is approximately 2.7 acres and is one of the original ten Sutter's Land Grant Parks. The park location is challenging as it is bordered on the east by a busy thoroughfare, on the north by a levee supporting a railroad track, and by businesses on the two remaining sides. The park was mainly used by single male adults and experienced many calls for service due to ongoing criminal activity. It was little used by families and children unless a special event was held.

Over the past twelve years, City staff and citizens residing near Muir Park, with support from the City Council, have planned and initiated efforts to improve Muir Park and increase its use and enjoyment by the community. These efforts include special events, grant applications to initiate art programs, organized sports leagues, and physical park improvements focused on children's play elements. To increase safety for children, a fence was erected around the park with a gate. The gate is not locked.

In 2004 and 2005, additional public meetings were held to discuss strategies to increase use of the park and to create a new master plan with all elements focused on children including water play misters, an additional play area, a "little tike's track", and a children's day camp area. Citizens expressed the desire to make Muir Park a destination park for children and families in the downtown and midtown areas.

Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council actions between 2004 and 2006 include the following:

- In February 2004, in response to community input to try to increase family use of the park, City Council authorized \$150,000 to continue to develop children's play features including a tot-sized play course and innovative climbing features.
- In February 2006, the Parks and Recreation Commission's Park Design and Development Committee supported a new master plan for Muir Park, which was then supported by the full Commission in April 2006. The City Council supported the new master plan in May 2006, and the project budget for rehabilitation was \$713,000.
- In September 2006, City Council approved a construction contract to complete various improvements.

The park was reopened in June 2007 with a celebration held June 15th. City staff and the District's Councilmember encouraged use of the park and new play elements by children and families in the area. Chain link fencing on the north side along the levee and railroad track has been broken and vandalized on more than one occasion and will be replaced with tubular steel fencing.

Shortly after the park was re-opened, the park was not used by families and children, and goals were unmet. The park continued to be frequented mostly by single males with some criminal activity, and complaints from citizens stating parents do not feel safe bringing children to a public park under these circumstances.

In response, the Department of Parks and Recreation's Park Safety Services staff researched the possibility of designating the park as a children's park, to be used by children and adults supervising children. Such designations can be found in older urban parks in Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, and Baltimore. The City Attorney's Office advised there was no case law that precluded such a designation. Councilmember Cohn supports this approach to encourage use of the park and new play elements by children and families in the area.

In early September 2007, the Department of Parks and Recreation determined to designate Muir Park as a park for children, and posted a sign at the entrance with the following restrictions: All adults age 18 and older must be accompanied by a child, and that alcohol, smoking and animals are not allowed.

Response by the community has been positive. Parents and children are arriving by automobile and on foot to use the play elements in the park. There have been soccer games, casual drop in use and family gatherings not seen in the park in years.

There are eight parks within one mile of Muir Park that may serve as alternatives for seniors and adults in the area.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:


None with this item.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS:

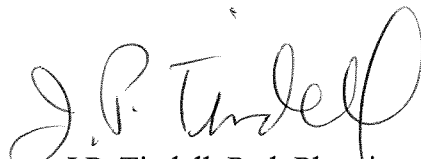
The Department of Parks and Recreation is guided by principles including promoting human growth and development by providing opportunities for engagement and safety.

The investment of public funds to create a destination children's play area is consistent with City Council's goal to enhance livability in Sacramento's neighborhoods by expanding park and recreation facilities.

Respectfully submitted,



Janet Baker, Operations Manager



J.P. Tindell, Park Planning and
Development Manager

Attachment: Muir Park Master Plan

MUIR CHILDREN'S PARK MASTER PLAN

