Legislation Text

File #: 20-1040, **Version:** 1

Recommendation to receive and file a report on the DeForest Park Vision Plan; and, accept Statutory Exemption SE-20-082. (District 9)

On July 24, 2018, the Uptown Open Space Vision Plan was adopted by the City Council, which identifies new and innovative opportunities to fill the need for publicly-accessible open space and recreation facilities in North Long Beach's Ninth City Council District. Since that time, several projects and plans included in the Uptown Open Space Vision Plan have been pursued. One such effort is planning for the future of DeForest Park, which was produced in partnership with Conservation Corps of Long Beach (Conservation Corps), Camp Fire Angeles, the DeForest Park Neighborhood Association, and the Parks, Recreation and Marine Department.

The DeForest Park Vision Plan (Vision Plan) serves as a visionary document to guide potential future development of DeForest Park (Attachment A). The Conservation Corps was awarded $100,000 from the Rivers and Mountain Conservancy State Proposition 1 (Water Bond) grant to fund the Vision Plan. The Vision Plan includes an existing conditions analysis, examination of opportunity types, summary of the public outreach process, and community-driven vision and implementation strategies. The Vision Plan looks back to how the park system has evolved to its current state and the previous efforts in planning and development that have informed the path forward. The Vision Plan is a plan for future park investment, anticipated over a long-term horizon, which will be implemented incrementally over time as productive sponsorships or partnerships can be established or as capital, maintenance, and operating resources allow.

The Vision Plan empowered community members to examine and reimagine their seemingly limited park environment with creativity and imagination, while setting expectations in reality through a series of forced-choice decision-making workshops. The Project Team coordinated with the DeForest Park Neighborhood Association to host a series of community workshops, a series of design charrettes, and online digital engagement over the course of eight months. As part of the existing conditions analysis, the park review involved creating a reliable survey tool designed to evaluate the physical condition of parks and their potential to promote physical activity. All outreach and activity materials were introduced consistent with the City's Language Access Policy.

The first workshop series involved gathering information from the community and through research about the existing conditions of the park. This information was collected through in-person surveys, park walk assessments, and a prioritization exercise on what guiding principles future improvements to the park should reflect. The survey was made available online and in-person at public workshops and was promoted through social media and by postcards sent to

each household in the DeForest Park neighborhood.

The second workshop series focused on identifying potential opportunities for the park to best serve the needs of all park users. Through a 'Design Your Park' activity, players broke out into small groups with an illustrative map of DeForest Park and with board game pieces worked together to decide what activities and programs they imagine taking place in the park's future. The third workshop series included a park design charrette where community members evaluated two alternative park design concepts that each included consensus-based park elements. This was done virtually, in response to the COVID-19 Safer at Home Health Order, and an online survey captured feedback from those who were not able to participate in the live design charrette. To promote the survey, 12 temporary park pole signs that advertised the survey were installed throughout DeForest Park along the walking path, attracting parkgoers practicing social distancing to take the survey. Additionally, a robust digital strategy was created involving sharing to North Long Beach community listservs and spreading promotional content on various stakeholder social media platforms.

The Vision Plan is designed to provide a complete picture for why, where, when, and how to improve publicly-accessible open space in DeForest Park. It is grounded by case studies, best practices, park data and statistics, considerable community input, and adopted policy, ensuring that the projects, programs, and policies proposed in the Vision Plan contain significant value. The Vision Plan also helps address the 0.9 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents in North Long Beach versus the 5.6 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents citywide by identifying amenities, more effectively lays out the park to effectively maximize open space programming, and is an important step in seeking future grant funding opportunities. On July 16, 2020, the Parks and Recreation Commission approved the Vision Plan (Attachment B).

This matter was reviewed by Deputy City Attorney Arturo D. Sanchez and Revenue Management Officer Geraldine Alejo on September 30, 2020.

SUSTAINABILITY

While the Vision Plan has no immediate sustainability impact, individual projects developed through the implementation of the Vision Plan support the City's existing pedestrian, bike, and park plans. These plans provide for safe connectivity between neighborhoods, commercial corridors, and parks, and create additional improvements to acres of open space in an underserved part of Long Beach. Future projects are anticipated to incorporate sustainable elements and materials, wherever possible, and comply with the City's green building and water efficiency policies.

The Vision Plan was reviewed in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and was issued Statutory Exemption SE-20-082 (Attachment C).

City Council action is requested on October 20, 2020, to allow for the implementation of partner projects where funding has been identified and position the City to be eligible and competitive for

upcoming grant funding.

The total cost of the Vision Plan was $100,000. The cost was directly paid for by the Conservation Corps through a Rivers and Mountain Conservancy State Proposition 1 (Water Bond) grant. The Vision Plan is intended to be the framework for future investment and provides initial cost estimates for priority projects. Funding for projects has not yet been identified and further detailed cost estimates will be determined as implementation resources are identified. As municipal resources for ongoing maintenance and programming of existing park facilities are already strained, the Vision Plan is long-term, intended to be phased in over time, as projects, operations, and maintenance funding becomes available, or as greater stewardship from community and corporate partners is identified. This recommendation has no staffing impact beyond the normal budgeted scope of duties and is consistent with the existing City Council priorities. There is no local job impact associated with this recommendation.

Approve recommendation.

BRENT DENNIS
DIRECTOR OF PARKS,
RECREATION AND MARINE

APPROVED:

THOMAS B. MODICA
CITY MANAGER