
Date: April 5, 2022

To: Honorable Mayor Garcia and Members of the City Council

From: Councilwoman Suely Saro, Sixth District
Vice Mayor Rex Richardson, Ninth District

Subject: Request to Identify Funding and Begin Pre-Planning Efforts to Develop Martin Luther King Jr. Park Vision Plan

RECOMMENDATION:

Request the City Manager to work with the Public Works Department and Parks, Recreation and Marine Department, and in conjunction with Community Partners, to identify funding and begin pre-planning efforts to develop a park vision plan for Martin Luther King Jr. Park and report back within 90 days.

BACKGROUND:

Located on 1950 Lemon Ave, Long Beach, CA 90806, Martin Luther King Jr. Park offers green space, community programs, and is a source of cultural and historical significance to the Black/African community. A statue of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a civil rights leader who advocated for human rights, stands in the park, and every year the community comes together to host a festival following the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. parade. The park has not seen improvements or renovations in over a decade. The purpose of creating a vision plan is to improve future development of the park environment while honoring Dr. King's legacy.

The park was dedicated on June 13, 1964 and was originally named 19th Street Playground. Following the assignment of Dr. King in 1968, the park was renamed to Martin Luther King Jr. Park (MLK Jr Park) in his honor¹. Since its dedication, the park has expanded to include facilities, programs, and amenities through funding from federal, state, and local sources.

The park was first expanded in 1969-1970 from 1.17 acres to 5.86 acres. It included a ball field, game courts, tennis court, and community recreation center. In the late 1970's

¹ <https://www.longbeach.gov/park/park-and-facilities/directory/martin-luther-king-jr--park/>

the Central Facility Center was added to include Health and Human Services Department programs and an office for the 6th District City Council staff. Around 1980, the park was expanded again by 3 acres to 8.9 acres from funding from federal Land and Water Conservation Fund and the state Parks Bond Act of 1984. Improvements included an outdoor swimming pool. In the late 1980's, the Boys and Girls Club built their recreational facility in the park².

The outdoor swimming pool was added in 1996, with the restrooms and showers in the Boys and Girls Club through funding from the Los Angeles County Safe Neighborhood Parks Bond Act of 1992. Locker rooms, restrooms, staff offices, and a classroom for the pool were completed in 2007, finishing the swimming pool with funding from the state Safe Neighborhood Park Bond Acts of 2000 and 2002³. Since the last 15 years, no additional improvements have been added to the park.

A vision plan for the MLK Jr. Park is needed to provide guidelines for future developments of the park. The process of creating the MLK Jr. Park Vision Plan will include a planning team in coordination with Community Partners. The team will examine how the park system has evolved to its present state and the previous efforts in the parks' planning and development. The MLK Jr. Park Vision Plan will include an analysis of existing conditions, examination of opportunity types, summary of the public outreach process, and community-driven vision and implementation strategies. The vision planning process will empower community members to be active participants in creating a visionary document to guide potential future development of their park environment.

The MLK Jr. Park Vision Plan is a plan for future park investment. Improvements are anticipated to be implemented incrementally over time as sponsorships or partnerships can be established or as capital, maintenance, and operating resources allow.

This matter has been reviewed by Budget Manager Grace H. Yoon on March 28, 2022.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The recommendation requests the City Manager to work with the Public Works Department and the Parks, Recreation and Marine Department, and in conjunction with Community Partners, to identify funding and begin pre-planning efforts to develop park vision plan for Martin Luther King Jr. Park and report back within 90 days. The requested action is anticipated to have a moderate impact on staff hours beyond the budgeted scope of duties and a moderate impact on the existing City Council Priorities.

SUGGESTED ACTION:

Approve Recommendation.

² <https://www.longbeach.gov/park/park-and-facilities/directory/martin-luther-king-jr--park/>

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