CITY OF SAN MATEO

APPROVED

PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 24, 2015

The meeting convened at 7:30 p.m. in the City of San Mateo Council Chambers and was called to order by Chair Drechsler, who led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Those present were Commissioner Whitaker, Commissioner Massey, Vice-Chair Hugg and Chair Drechsler

A motion was made by Commissioner Massey, seconded by Vice-Chair Hugg to approve the minutes of the Regular meeting of February 10, 2015
Vote: 4-0 Motion Carries

A motion was made by Commissioner Whitaker, seconded by Hugg to approve the minutes of the Regular meeting of March 10, 2015.

Vote: 4-0 Motion Carries

***** PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair Drechsler opened the public comment period.

No other individuals wishing to speak, the Chair closed the public hearing.

ITEM 1
STUDY SESSION
PA15-019 CENTRAL PARK MASTER PLAN – This item was heard second on tonight's agenda.
Julia Klein, Senior Planner and Sheila Canzian, Director of Parks & Recreation gave the staff presentation.

The next step after this Commission is a study session before the Public Works Commission. All comments will be forwarded to the P&R Commission and the City Council, a date uncertain.

Sheila Canzian spoke first and introduced the project to the Commission.
Jeff Ferber (design consultant) provided back ground information on the design of the master plan designs; various social media used to keep the public informed. The three concepts before the Planning Commission tonight were discussed.

The Planning Commission had the following questions for the applicant or staff.

- Alternate Option #1, indicates a new path inside the Kohl fence. *Consultant: new pedestrian gateway to allow pedestrian entry into the park and a loop walkway that would avoid the El Camino*
- The landscaped architect office goes away from all 3 options? *Staff: we have not gotten to the point where we would plan the office spaces. We would hope to remove the office space.*
- Greenhouse and the gardens surrounding the Kohl Pump House stay? *Staff: yes they do.*

Planning Commission Input on:

- physical & visual connections to/from Central park
- Parking
- Design of New buildings
- Other Comments?

Vice-Chair Hugg asked about outreach regarding translations to individuals. *Staff: Spanish speaking translators were available as well as translators for Self-Help for the elderly.*

Chair Drechsler opened the public comment period for this item. The following people spoke: Elizabeth Cookson, San Mateo; John Sarconi, San Mateo; Victor Ip, San Mateo; Rick Cod, San Mateo; Ben Toy, San Mateo; Kelly Chew, San Mateo; Christina Kahn, San Mateo; Kumi Ishida, San Mateo; Florence Hongo, San Mateo; Beth Bhatnagar, San Mateo; Jean Ainsworth, San Mateo; Vicki Hatfield, San Mateo; John Horan, San Mateo; Katheryn Louie, San Mateo; Michelle Mei, San Mateo; David Huang; Rosa Roo, San Mateo; Jim Jong, Burlingame; Linda Lim, San Mateo; Roz Koo, San Mateo; Kathee Tyson, San Mateo; Alvin Janklow, San Mateo; Martha McKenna, San Mateo; Tom Sanfilippo, San Mateo; Bill Williams, San Mateo; Kara Cox, San Mateo; Greg Komo, San Mateo; Christine Stiles, San Mateo; Diana Pettit, San Mateo; George Baxter, San Mateo; Stephen Weller, San Mateo; Bill Huth, San Mateo; Geri Kwong, Belmont; Margarett Centrella, San Mateo; Chris Heinze, San Mateo; Nancy Miceli, San Mateo; Carol Marks, San Mateo; Brian Haverty, San Mateo; Edward Schlesinger, San Carlos; Riaz Shiuji, San Mateo; Michael Heagerty, San Mateo.

- Please continue to preserve the park as it is. Appreciate the efforts of professional park design professionals. Central Park is really special and the city should be congratulated for maintaining the park.
- There are possibilities of providing tennis courts on top of building.
- Angled parking on Laurel is not a good idea. Disaster waiting to happen. Emergency vehicles can have a potential problem with backing out into traffic.
- No dog park belongs on Laurel. Have it by the baseball field where it is now.
- Don't get rid of all the tennis courts. Keep half of them.
- Don't like to hear about too many trade-offs; more for less. None of the options provided are viable Central Park should be a place where ALL residents congregate to enjoy life.

- As population grows and demographics change, growing need for serving our Asian population. I envision families of many ethnicities enjoying the park. Expand community center capacity to serve future needs, not contracted. Disappointment with City Council and other decision-making individuals in the city. Disenfranchised the residents of the city. We are having everything taken away. We are the only city on the Peninsula without a hardball/baseball playing field. Who is benefiting from all of this? The park is wonderful.
- Would suggest option #1 with new recreation center. Strategic location in the park and ideal for seniors including him and other baby boomers. We should build the center for the future (20-30 years), not for us right now.
- Lots of seniors visit our facilities at the Central Park Recreation center, 80-90 per day. This is a great location for those who come. 56% of the senior population in San Mateo does not drive. This location is very important to these people.
- HICAP is a free Medicare counseling program that works with Self-Help for the Elderly at the Central Park Recreation Center. This is a key site for us, offering counseling; people can walk or take public transit to the center.
- Volunteer in San Mateo County – Japanese Garden in Central Park. Individual spoke regarding the creation of the Japanese Tea Garden.
- Deeply concerned about services at the Central Park Recreation Center. Self-Help for the Elderly is an important service for our aging population. It is an important asset to downtown.
- League of Women Voters partner of Self-Help for the Elderly. Many people come to the recreation center because of the variety of programs provided.
- Support for Self-Help for the Elderly. Dismayed to hear of the removal of the recreation center in Central Park. Self-Help for the Elderly is a help to many. A fun place and a great alternative to staying at home. There are many who do not read/write English and Self-Help for the Elderly is very beneficial for them. Recreation center a very nice place for our families. We hope you continue this.
- Self-Help for the Elderly a great help after a liver transplant. I use Central Park for many activities. I really love this place and hope you try to keep the recreation center, Japanese Tea Garden and other areas. We do not like to see too many cement forests.
- I am only one of many people that enjoy the programs provided by Self-Help for the Elderly. Some of their programs help me keep my health and I want to continue these programs. The location is very important to many of us.
- We would like to submit a 2-part request: 1) we would like to see a new recreation center and green architecture, open space for public art. 2) Self-Help for the Elderly is one of the occupants of the new building. We can provide a level of stability for the building. There are many things the building can be used for.
- Speaking on behalf of the Stratford Residence. Placement of a dog run at the proposed location is unacceptable. Parking on Laurel Ave. should remain in its current state.

- Appreciates that the park needs to be looked at periodically to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the community. Do not understand why the tennis courts would be taken away.
- Most people do not seem to want the park to change. Why would the fence be removed from the side of the ball field? Please keep the tennis courts. I understand the older people wanting their services, but the young people need the ball field.
- Too much emphasis on getting people to drive to the park. Would prefer children and not dogs. Parking off El Camino a disaster, too close to signal light at 9th. Don't need Plaza, need a park. Seems as though it is turning into a destination for people who drive.
- Seems that a lot of emphasis on things that happen once in a while and not on things that happen every day. We don't need to take away the baseball; we don't need to take away the tennis courts. I am passionate about not removing old-growth trees. Nothing has been said about expanding the train. It's a great little train. It needs access to the playground. Don't funnel families in/out of one spot. No dog park on Laurel. We are being informed and want to be involved.
- We need to do more for the youth of our city. Over 700 people have signed a petition on change.org. Why did the city allow the tennis courts to get into disrepair? If the city has funds, then fix the tennis courts.
- We have been given choices. We (the people with dogs) share the baseball area with the chili cook-off, the youth playing baseball; we don't want the proposed dog park put on Laurel.
- Please replace the tennis courts with more of them. We are taking away from the park and adding more parking. Appreciate the open space idea.
- Three premises that are false; 1) the master plan outdated; 2) move ball parks that provide exercise, wrong; 3) the proposed new entryway isn't justified.
- I am a fan of the tennis courts and the baseball field. My family has used them. Suggestions of using places other than Central Park are not welcomed. I walk to the park and want to continue walking to the park.
- Playing tennis for many years. I am concerned that moving the tennis courts to another location could mean less time for people to play. Beresford is already too busy, Joinville will invite Foster City and this is not the greatest place for the tennis courts. I don't think there is the need for plazas, we need more green space. We are taking away the areas for exercise and adding in more places to eat.
- I am in Central Park with my 2 children every day. I support the removal of the fence at the ball field as it would allow more people to use the area. Redwood City has a big plaza that has become an asset to the city. The plaza proposed in Central Park would also be an asset. No more buildings in the park. There are two proposed buildings on either side of the park, we don't need more.
- Have been going to Central Park for almost 15 years. I exercise with the individuals from Self-Help for the Elderly on the weekends, walk through the park daily, people are playing

tennis early in the morning, dog park a good idea but not where proposed, ceramic studio a good idea and please keep.

- Currently run San Mateo Little League. Enrollment is increasing and we do not have enough fields (play areas) for youth. Can we leave the park as is and invest more money so that we can acquire more land and put in more parks?
- If it isn't broke, don't fix it. The park is beautiful as it is. It is a great mix of a lot of different things. Nicely balanced.
- Help a lot of people to learn to play tennis – it is great exercise. Please fix the tennis courts before someone gets hurt and there is liability to the city. The proximity of the park is good and to have to travel for the tennis courts would not be ideal. Improve the courts, improve the park.
- Appreciate the on-line ability to comment, have a voice. Cannot lose even one baseball field or we will have to restrict the number of young people playing baseball. We need more ball fields and not concrete plazas.

No one else wishing to speak, the Chair closed the public comment period.

The Commission is recessing for a short break.

The Planning Commission had the following questions/comments.

The Chair asked that staff answer some of the questions and provide clarifying points.

- Parking. A lot of the new parking facilities are completely underground.
- The need for the retrofit of the recreation facility, where are we with that? *Staff: We do not have that information available this evening; but we can look that up and provide you with that information.* The design is something we should be considering. Proposal is not to remove parking, but where is the best place for it? *Staff: yes.*
- There have been at least 6 instances of public outreach and more will be upcoming. Heard this evening that some speakers felt like there was either none or not enough outreach. Everyone knows this park is the jewel of the Peninsula. We are committed to preserving this valuable asset. Huge strides have been made to reach out to people.
- Baseball field – What types of baseball can be played on that field? A comment was made that hardball was not played. *Staff: the short right field does not play well for older aged hardball players. The ball park has been used primarily for adult softball. The primary Little League ball fields are at Trinta and Lakeshore. .*
- How heavily used are the bleachers? *Staff: we have not had an event in Central park in my tenure as Director of Parks and Recreation where the bleachers are ¼ filled. They are not used heavily. The first 4-5 rows are used more.*
- Parking – Can you explain the two concepts? *Consultant: The parking could either be increased or be decentralized or both. Would primarily be underground parking.*

- What was the impetus for the diagonal parking? *Consultant: To increase the number of parking spaces which would be adjacent to the park and to downtown. Increasing parking would be consistent with the recommendations in the Downtown Parking Management Plan.*
- Water use: is there any thought as far as a net loss in water usage? *Consultant: We are very early in the planning stage for this park. The trend is to put turf when it's needed. A policy regarding water use can be included.*
- Topography: Any additional thoughts regarding adding more topography? *Consultant: We have a topography map of the park; but the park is mostly flat. The biggest challenge would be the trees and the significant root system; and would change the topography impact the urban forest?*

The Planning Commission had the following comments:

- Important process to move forward. As we move into the future, the community is going to change and the park needs to meet the changing needs of the community. This park is very unique and serves as one of the primary urban respites that are accessible. This park needs to serve as many needs as possible, particularly as means of escape.
- Sustainable Streets Plan integrates into this. Transit accessibility of park is important, having bus/transit services. Green space important, but the ability to connect is an important aspect of this park.
- The event lawn is heavily used, not just for music but to connect with friends and family. When you are in Central Park, you don't feel like you are in burgeoning city.
- Appreciate the variety of opportunities in the park. Need to maintain the recreation center in some capacity. Like option 3. Concerned about the expanded train and kids.
- The parking at the southern edge of the park means the loss of the barbecue area. This is big for our Latino community. Not a fan of the dog park pushed up against Laurel Ave would prefer an alternative fenced location. Like the plaza, size and scale in question, the range of uses that will drive it. Need to be tied into San Mateo Drive. Appreciate the additional landscaping.
- Transit and physical linkages, north-south, are important. There needs to be connection/linkage between the park and the proposed private development project on the north side of 5th Avenue. Find ways to build community through plaza, casual and shared experiences. Linkage at 5th & El Camino corner – see opportunity for thematic intersection, corner can emphasize Park presence and historic fence line. South San Mateo Drive & 5th Ave intersection is opportunity for enhancement, arch into Central Park, thematic intersection.
- Concerned about parking lot near 9th & El Camino, traffic counts, opportunity for bikes, consider shrinking lot or restrict access for employees & not public use. Transit stops – there is opportunity to build transit stops, bulb-outs, lower the bar and increase transit accessibility opportunities.

- Happy to see the final master plan may not be one of the options but a combination and possibly other ideas.
- 2004 charrette "Gateway to Central Park", local AIA was involved in that. Concern: San Mateo Dr. is main link between Park & downtown, want something that signifies Park, not a building; but do something different than what it is now, see that Option 2 achieves that best. Option 1 - the placement of new rec. center encroaches on large open space. Option 3 shows hardscape plaza, want open space, not city plaza.
- Parking – understand the reason; but don't like parking off of El Camino Real because it's too close to 9th Ave intersection. Don't like taking valuable open space & turning into parking lot.
- Building – keep view corridors open, no buildings in those spots. Other comments: support Option 1, new rec. center because it fills important need in community
- Physical – agree w/ other commissioners that it's important that if you are in the vicinity of Park that you know you are looking at a Park, not an extension of downtown. Laurel at 5th & 6th – gives you that sense now, dog park near Laurel would create a barrier.
- Along El Camino – trees and fence blocks views into park; but want to keep trees & fence, not sure how to solve that. Like idea of proposed walkway inside fence.
- Field and bleachers are barriers. Look to enhance entryway at 5th & El Camino and new walkway. Problem is 5th Ave and access from San Mateo Drive – if the bleachers came down, it would open up vista into park. Connection should be more at San Mateo Dr. to say it's the entryway to the Park, not sure that a plaza does that.
- Know that the city has previously asked for a plaza in downtown as a gathering place; but not sure that a park/open space is the place for that. It would be better to prioritize green space. Parking – not sure this is place to seek more above ground parking, concerned about 5th Ave access because it's narrow, not sure how diagonal parking on Laurel could work, parking near 9th is not a great idea.
- Building – keep building to a minimum, should not be fronting on 5th Ave, does not need to be a landmark, building should fade into the park, 1-story not 2-story. Other – there is a case for honoring existing uses, like BBQ in park, fan of train; but understand concern about it blocking access to playground. Heritage trees – important that effort will be made to preserve urban forest. Like Option 3 with the in-ground Kohl building outline. There is expectation that things will change. Parking on Laurel is good, more parking will help, needs to happen.
- Central Park provides open space in heart of a very busy place. Are we ever going to see open space/green space, if we cover this up with a bigger building? Urban park of the future is surrounded by taller buildings. We need to preserve as much open space as possible.
- If we can't fit everything in the park, need to focus on what is truly most important. Open spaces develop through generations, multiple uses of spaces should be prioritized. Can services be provided in a building that approximately the same footprint?

- Want to see visual connection, special feature at entrance from San Mateo Dr. Keep Japanese Garden as is. There is no historical connection of dog parks in Central Park. Do not want Central Park to be like Redwood City's plaza, we should treat it like a unique open space asset.
- Like Option 3 at 5th & El Camino, that allows people to see into park. Like walking trail. Enhance side gate. Lower barriers to use. Underground the parking.
- Heard tennis court and sporting activities in public park; but that's not the only locations. Heard that some schools do not allow use of fields to the neighborhood, people could write letters to the superintendent of schools to allow use. All elementary schools open their fields. Don't think sports should be highest use of this park. Continue maintaining mature landscaping & trees, think about low water-use landscaping. Consider engaging kids with hands-on demonstration garden to go from low to no-water use.

ITEM 2
STUDY SESSION
Development Process – this item was presented first.

Ron Munekawa, Chief of Planning, gave the staff presentation. The development review process was explained.

Chair Drechsler opened the public comment period for this item. The following person spoke: Daniel Galbreath, San Mateo.

- After a project has been approved by the Planning Commission, staff often takes it upon themselves to change a project. The public is not given an opportunity to comment and the project does not go through another public hearing.

The Planning Commission had the following questions/comments:

- Please explain difference between study session and public hearing. *Staff: study session is preliminary and no vote is taken, no decision is made. Strictly to elicit questions and comments from the public and Planning Commission. Also no formal recommendation. At a public hearing there are conditions of approval, findings for approval; vote will be taken on a project pending a 10-day appeal process. Public hearing votes are final with the Planning Commission unless recommendation given for the City Council.*
- I hope that this will be put up on the website for others to view and understand the process.

COMMUNICATIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Communications from Staff
   a. 4/1 Downtown Futures forum
   b. 4/6 Climate Action Plan going to the City Council
   c. 4/14 Study session on Los Prados Motel

d. 4/28 Commissioner Whitaker absent
e. Application time for the vacant Commissioner has been extended to 3/31.
f. 4/18 Planning Commission field trip. Potential locations St. Matthew's Episcopal, St. Matthew's Catholic Parish, Bay Meadows, Polo Court (Park 20)

2. Communications from the Commissioners
   a. Commissioner Whitaker out on 4/28
   b. Vice- Chair Hugg out the latter half of May 2015

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items before the Planning Commission, the meeting adjourned at 11:35 pm.