



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Planning Commission Motion No. 18639

GENERAL PLAN REFERRAL

HEARING DATE MAY 24, 2012

Case No.: 2010.0016R
Project: **Golden Gate Park Beach Chalet Athletic Fields Renovation Project**
Block/lot: **AB 1700/001 (ptn)**
Project Sponsor: Recreation and Park Department
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ADOPTING FINDINGS OF CONSISTENCY WITH THE GENERAL PLAN AND WITH THE PRIORITY POLICIES OF PLANNING CODE SECTION 101.1 FOR THE PROPOSED RENOVATION OF THE GOLDEN GATE PARK BEACH CHALET ATHLETIC FIELDS AND FINDINGS UNDER THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT.

WHEREAS, Section 4.105 of the City Charter and 2A.53 of Administrative Code require General Plan referrals to the Planning Commission (hereinafter "Commission") for certain matters, including determination as to whether the lease or sale of public property, the vacation, sale or change in the use of any public way, transportation route, ground, open space, building, or structure owned by the City and County, would be in-conformity with the General Plan prior to consideration by the Board of Supervisors.

On June 15, 2010, the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department ("Project Sponsor") submitted an Environmental Evaluation Application to the Planning Department ("Department"), Case No. 2010.0016E, in connection with a project to renovate of the Beach Chalet Athletic Fields facility, located at 1500 John F. Kennedy Drive in Golden Gate Park, which includes replacing the existing grass turf fields with synthetic turf, installing field lighting, renovating the existing restroom building, installing player benches and seating, and completing other modifications for parking, circulation, and spectator amenities to improve the overall conditions of the facility and increase the amount of athletic play time ("Project").

On February 2, 2011, the Department issued a Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (NOP) for the Project.

On October 26, 2011, the Department published the Draft Environmental Impact Report ("DEIR" or "Draft EIR") for the Project and provided public notice in a newspaper of general circulation of

the availability of the DEIR for public review and comment. The DEIR was available for public comment until December 12, 2011.

The San Francisco Planning Commission held a public hearing on the DEIR on December 1, 2011 at a regularly scheduled meeting to solicit public comment regarding the DEIR.

The Department prepared responses to comments on environmental issues received at the public hearing and in writing during the 47-day public review period for the DEIR, prepared revisions to the text of the DEIR in response to comments received or based on additional information that became available during the public review period, and corrected errors in the DEIR. This material was presented in a Draft Comments and Responses document, published on May 9, 2012, distributed to the Planning Commission and all parties who commented on the DEIR, and made available to others upon request at the Department.

A Final Environmental Impact Report ("FEIR" or "Final EIR") was prepared by the Department, consisting of the Draft EIR and the Comments and Responses document.

Project Environmental Impact Report files have been made available for review by this Commission and the public. These files are available for public review at the Planning Department at 1650 Mission Street, and are part of the record before this Commission.

On May 24, 2012, the Planning Commission reviewed and considered the Final EIR and found that the contents of the report and the procedures through which the Final EIR was prepared, publicized, and reviewed complied with the California Environmental Quality Act (California Public Resources Code section 21000 et seq.) ("CEQA"), 14 California Code of Regulations sections 15000 et seq. ("CEQA Guidelines"), and Chapter 31 of the San Francisco Administrative Code ("Chapter 31").

The Commission found the Final EIR was adequate, accurate and objective, reflected the independent analysis and judgment of the Department and the Commission, and that the summary of comments and responses contained no significant revisions to the Draft EIR, and approved the Final EIR for the Project in compliance with CEQA, the CEQA Guidelines and Chapter 31.

The Planning Department, Linda Avery, is the custodian of records, located in the File for Case No. 2010.0016E, at 1650 Mission Street, Fourth Floor, San Francisco, California.

Department staff prepared a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program ("MMRP") for the Project and these materials were made available to the public and this Commission for this Commission's review, consideration and action.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Project Sponsor, the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department ("SFRPD"), is proposing to renovate the Beach Chalet Athletic Fields facility, an approximately 9.4-acre public sports field facility located at 1500 John F. Kennedy Drive, along the western edge of Golden Gate Park ("Project Site"). The Project Site currently includes four grass turf athletic fields surrounded by an 8-foot-tall metal chain link fence, an approximately 25,320-square-foot, 50-space asphalt parking lot (including one disabled-accessible space), a restroom building, and a cargo container being

used as a maintenance shed. The Project includes replacing the existing grass turf fields with synthetic turf, installing field lighting, renovating the existing restroom building, installing player benches and spectator seating, expansion of the parking lot and various other modifications intended to improve the overall conditions of the facility and increase the amount of play time available on the athletic fields.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

On May 24, 2012, the Planning Commission (hereinafter "Commission") conducted a public hearing on the Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Project. The Commission reviewed and considered the EIR and found the contents of said report and the procedures through which the EIR was prepared, publicized and reviewed complied with the California Quality Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code section 21000 *et seq.*) ("CEQA"), the CEQA Guidelines (14 Cal. Code Reg. section 15000 *et seq.*), and Chapter 31 of the San Francisco Administrative Code.

On May 24, 2012, the Commission certified the Final EIR by Motion No. 18637. Additionally, the Commission adopted approval findings, including findings rejecting alternatives, amending a mitigation measure, and making a statement of overriding considerations, and adopted a mitigation monitoring and reporting program ("MMRP") pursuant to CEQA by Motion No. 18638, which findings and MMRP are incorporated by this reference as though fully set forth herein.

The proposal addresses the following relevant objectives and policies of the General Plan:

RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

Objectives and Policies

OBJECTIVE 2: DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A DIVERSIFIED AND BALANCED CITYWIDE SYSTEM OF HIGH QUALITY PUBLIC OPEN SPACE.

POLICY 2.2: PRESERVE EXISTING PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

The Beach Chalet soccer fields in Golden Gate Park have been designated as recreational use for approximately 75 years, yet issues of drainage prevent them from being used close to their full potential. This area of the city has few other opportunities for this kind of active recreation and either their loss or continued underperformance contradicts the General Plan's clear guidance to provide recreational opportunities in all neighborhoods.

OBJECTIVE 4: PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RECREATION AND THE ENJOYMENT OF OPEN SPACE IN EVERY SAN FRANCISCO NEIGHBORHOOD.

POLICY 4.1: MAKE BETTER USE OF EXISTING FACILITIES.

Neighborhood parks as well as citywide facilities require regular maintenance in order to carry out effective recreation programs and permit maximum public use and enjoyment. The City's operating budget must provide the necessary resources for the city-owned open spaces to ensure a high level of maintenance if neighborhood needs are to be met by intensified use of existing facilities. Frequency of maintenance and the extent of capital improvements should relate directly to intensity of use. For example, low cost, efficient maintenance techniques could be used in parks and open spaces that are relatively undeveloped.

The General Plan calls for the City to provide a diversified and balanced system of public open space, and provision of public open space throughout the City. The proposed project would refurbish the athletic play fields in Golden Gate Park, converting natural turf fields to synthetic turf, which will support greatly increased activity levels, and make better use of the City's existing athletic fields. The project will also provide additional amenities and ensure that the facilities are accessible.

POLICY 4.3: RENOVATE AND RENEW THE CITY'S PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES.

Maintenance and Capital Improvements

In the years ahead, major ongoing efforts will need to be continued to assess the renovation needs of parks and recreation facilities and to restore them. Once renovated, parks and recreation facilities that are now marginally useful may support increased use.

Many parks and facilities have been in continuous public service for decades without having been restored or renovated. The project will renovate the Beach Chalet athletic fields in Golden Gate Park, install other improvements, as well as renovate rest room facilities to meet ADA access requirements. The project will ensure that the recreation facilities are better able to sustain increased use. The proposed improvements would retain the current athletic field configuration. The athletic field improvements are essential to accommodate increasing recreational use.

GOLDEN GATE PARK

OBJECTIVE 2: DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A DIVERSIFIED AND BALANCED CITYWIDE SYSTEM OF HIGH QUALITY PUBLIC OPEN SPACE.

Golden Gate Park is the keystone of the citywide system because of its size and the specialized landscape elements and recreational opportunities available within it. Other highly visible landscaped city parks, hilltop open spaces, waterfront parks and plazas are also important elements in the citywide system. Although primarily undeveloped at present, John McLaren Park because of its size has the potential of becoming a major component of the citywide system.

POLICY 2.2: PRESERVE EXISTING PUBLIC OPEN SPACE.

The City's policy should be made clear: where new recreation and cultural buildings are needed they should be located outside of existing parks and playgrounds. When new indoor facilities are needed, the City should allocate funds for land acquisition as well as for construction.

Additions to cultural and recreation facilities should be limited to the existing footprint and to that which can be accommodated on the site without creating a negative impact on the surrounding area by reason of excessive height and bulk. A goal of planning should be to limit the size of any necessary additions. Additions should be limited primarily to publicly accessible recreational and cultural uses, or facilities which directly support them. Alternative locations for non-publicly accessible functions should be carefully explored. When additions are planned, careful planning should limit the size of the required enlargement.

The limited availability open space in the city requires judicious use of those spaces already designated as public open space. This means minimizing the amount and size of non-recreational uses in parks, including parking lots and buildings that do not have publicly accessible functions. For this reason, the expansion of the parking lot is not consistent with the strong language in both the General Plan and the Golden Gate Master Plan that requires the park to be less oriented towards the automobile and more towards sustainable modes of transport.

POLICY 2.4: GRADUALLY ELIMINATE NON-RECREATIONAL USES IN PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS AND REDUCE AUTOMOBILE TRAFFIC IN AND AROUND PUBLIC OPEN SPACES.

Prohibit construction of new roads and parking lots in developed public open spaces.

Encourage walking, and the use of bicycles and public transit for recreational travel.

The plan should expand access to the improved playing fields through improvements to sustainable modes of transport, including transit, bikes and walking, and not by increasing access by private automobile.

POLICY 2.6: MAKE OPEN SPACES ACCESSIBLE TO PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS.

The City should ensure that public open spaces are accessible to all San Franciscans, including persons with special recreation needs. These may include seniors, the very young, people with disabilities. In order to achieve this policy, park and recreation facilities should be planned and programmed for people with special recreation needs in mind.

The proposed plan makes appropriate improvements to the facilities to ensure universal access to the buildings and playing fields.

POLICY 2.10: DEVELOP A MASTER PLAN FOR GOLDEN GATE PARK.

Golden Gate Park plays a key role in the public recreation system in San Francisco. With 1,017 acres, it is the largest and most diverse park in the city system and provides places for active recreation, cultural institutions, as well as landscaped areas of pastoral character. The park is enjoyed by city and Bay Area residents, as well as national and international visitors.

The park is over one hundred years old. Some of its infrastructure needs to be replaced or renovated. Some buildings and recreation facilities no longer serve the purpose for which they were intended. Forested areas and woody vegetation are over-mature or diseased. Conflicts exist between the need for additional recreational development, maintenance of the park's historic and naturalistic character, and the preservation of its valuable open space. Transportation problems have developed, including excessive through-traffic, all-day commuter parking, and unsatisfactory pedestrian access and circulation.

To address these problems, work on the Master Plan has begun. The overall goal of the Golden Gate Park Master Plan should seek to retain the integrity of the park's original design while having sufficient flexibility to accommodate society's evolving needs.

1979, the Recreation and Park Commission, adopted "Master Plan Objectives and Policies for Golden Gate Park," to guide any necessary changes, act as a blueprint to guide maintenance of the park's rich landscape, and steward Golden Gate Park through the next century. The objectives are to:

1. Acknowledge Golden Gate Park's contribution to the diversity of cultural and recreational activities available to residents of San Francisco and the Bay region; recognize the park's importance as an American cultural resource.
2. Provide for the protection and renewal of the park landscape.
3. Preserve the open space of Golden Gate Park.
4. Create and maintain a park-wide system of recreation roadways, pathways and trails. Minimize vehicular traffic.
5. Foster appropriate use of park recreation resources.

Land Use

The land use element should update the existing inventory of land uses, facilities, structures, and recognized landmarks and identify appropriate areas for required land uses throughout the park. All activities, features and facilities should be subordinate to the present design and character of the park. The plan should preserve the park's valuable open space and not permit construction of new recreation or cultural buildings within Golden Gate Park unless incidental to enjoyment of the Park's open space. No additional roadways should be allowed to encroach on the

park. Emphasis should be given to activities which do not diminish open space.

The primary function of the park is to serve the recreation needs of all San Francisco residents. Neighborhood serving facilities should be located in the adjacent neighborhoods themselves.

Landscape Design and Features

The landscape design element of the master plan should provide for the protection and renewal of the park's unique landscape areas. The size and form of the park's major pastoral landscape elements, its meadows and wooded areas should be retained and renewed. Similarly, the overall evergreen landscape character of the park should be maintained as the dominant design element. This element should closely coordinate with the forest management element.

Existing formal gardens and colorful horticultural displays should be retained, in areas designated in early park plans; however, new colorful horticultural displays should not be introduced into predominantly evergreen areas. Landscape design standards should be employed to guide restoration and maintenance of meadow areas, lake and water course edges, park entrances and pedestrian pathways, intensive recreation use areas, and roadways and other paved areas.

The General Plan clearly acknowledges the need to renew and renovate park facilities to keep pace with contemporary needs. It further states that the City should have the flexibility to improve facilities to meet society's changing demands. It also states, however, that the naturalistic character of the park is integral to its identity and should be respected. Landscape design standards sensitive to natural landscapes are required to ensure this identity is maintained and not eroded. There is some question whether the scale of the lights and the introduction of nighttime use are consistent with naturalistic character that dominates most of the park. The Concourse is a notable and very positive exception to this, where nighttime use has only served to increase the attractiveness of Golden Gate Park and augment its cultural standing in the city and region.

WESTERN SHORELINE*

Golden Gate Park

Strengthen the visual connection and physical access between the park and the beach. Improve the western end of the park for public recreation and when possible eliminate the sewer treatment facilities. Extend the reforestation program, which has been established to replace dead and dying trees at the windbreak along the ocean, throughout the park to ensure vigorous forest tree growth and maintain high visual quality. Emphasize the naturalistic landscape qualities existing at the western portion of the park, and encourage increased visitor use in the area.

(Golden Gate Park is more fully discussed in the Citywide System section, policy 11.)

The General Plan recognizes both the recreational needs the park should meet, while also recognizing the sensitive character of the naturalistic landscape. The key to successful improvements lies in the careful design of recreational facilities that blends modern athletic field design with the park's natural landscape and ensuring no facility becomes a jarring contradiction to the otherwise bucolic character of the park.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ELEMENT

POLICY 7.1: PRESERVE AND ADD TO PUBLIC OPEN SPACE IN ACCORDANCE WITH OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES OF THE RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE PLAN.

The project implements this policy.

1. *The Beach Chalet Athletic Fields Renovation Project is consistent with Planning Code Section 101.1(b) Priority Policies as follows:* That existing neighborhood-serving retail uses be preserved and enhanced and future opportunities for resident employment in and ownership of such businesses enhanced. *The Project would have no adverse effect on neighborhood serving retail uses or opportunities for employment in or ownership of such businesses.*
2. That existing housing and neighborhood character be conserved and protected in order to preserve the cultural and economic diversity of our neighborhood. *The Project would have no adverse effect on the City's housing stock or on neighborhood character. Neighborhood character will be conserved and improved by its implementation.*
3. That the City's supply of affordable housing be preserved and enhanced. *The Project would have no adverse effect on the City's supply of affordable housing.*
4. That commuter traffic not impede MUNI transit service or overburden our streets or neighborhood parking. *The Project would not result in commuter traffic impeding MUNI's transit service, overburdening the streets or altering current neighborhood parking.*
5. That a diverse economic base be maintained by protecting our industrial and service sectors from displacement due to commercial office development, and that future opportunities for residential employment and ownership in these sectors be enhanced. *The Project would not affect the existing economic base in this area.*
6. That the City achieve the greatest possible preparedness to protect against injury and loss of life in an earthquake. *The Project would not adversely affect achieving the greatest possible preparedness against injury and loss of life in an earthquake.*
7. That landmarks and historic buildings be preserved. *The proposed improvements to the Beach Chalet Athletic Fields have been found to represent a significant impact to an historic resource. The Project would affect landmarks by converting the existing turf play fields to synthetic turf, install field, pathway and other lighting, and install player and spectator seating where none currently exist. These project elements would affect historic resources on park property, and would affect the park landscape and historic resources.*
8. That our parks and open space and their access to sunlight and vistas be protected from development. *The Project would have no adverse effect on parks and open space or their access to sunlight and vistas. Renovation of the athletic fields and related facilities would improve the public open space resources.*

Deleted: ¶

The Commission conducted a duly noticed public hearing at a regularly scheduled meeting to consider the proposed findings of General Plan conformity on May 24, 2012.

On May 24, 2012, the Commission conducted a duly noticed public hearing at a regularly scheduled meeting to consider the General Plan Referral application, Case No. 2010.0016R. The Commission heard and considered public testimony presented at the hearing and has further considered written and oral testimony provided by Department staff and other interested parties.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Commission hereby adopts the CEQA Findings set forth in Motion No. 18638 and adopts the MMRP (attached thereto as Exhibit A) and finds the proposed renovations to the Beach Chalet Athletic Fields, as described above, to be consistent with the General Plan of the City and County of San Francisco, including, but not limited to the Recreation and Open Space Element, Urban Design, and Environmental Protection Elements, and is consistent with the eight Priority Policies in City Planning Code Section 101.1 for reasons set forth in this motion.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Motion was adopted by the Commission at its meeting on May 24, 2012.

Linda D. Avery

Commission Secretary

AYES: Commissioners Fong, Wu, Antonini, Borden

NOES: Commissioner Moore

ABSENT: Commissioners Miguel and Sugaya

ADOPTED: May 24, 2012

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