



Agenda Report

22-197

Agenda Date: 2/22/2022

REPORT TO COUNCIL

SUBJECT

Action on the Parks & Recreation Commission's Recommendation to Approve the Schematic Design-Master Plan for the New Public Neighborhood Park located at 3905 Freedom Circle (Greystar Development)

COUNCIL PILLAR

Enhance Community Sports, Recreational and Arts Assets

BACKGROUND

The Santa Clara City Code 17.35 requires new residential development to dedicate parkland and/or the payment of in lieu fees. Greystar Real Estate Partners submitted an application to the City for a General Plan Amendment from High-Intensity Office/R&D to High Intensity Mixed-Use and Planned Development (PD) rezoning to allow for a new residential mixed-use development (Project). The Project area includes 13.3 acres comprising two parcels (APNs: 104-40-021 & 104-40-036) that are bounded by Freedom Circle, Mission College Boulevard, Highway 101, and San Tomas Aquino Creek. The Project site is also part of the proposed General Plan - Freedom Circle Focus Area under a separate development process by the City that encompasses 108 acres in northern Santa Clara.

The Project proposes to construct 1,075 apartment units and will meet its parkland dedication requirements through an 87,728 square foot (2.014 acres) public neighborhood park with connection to the San Tomas Creek Trail. The public park will be dedicated to the City in fee title. Public park improvements will be constructed by the developer to the City's design criteria and standard specifications and will be maintained by the developer after dedication.

The Schematic Design Master Plan for the public neighborhood park features: a ½-acre natural grass field, landscaped and furnished park-like quiet area, playground for children ages 2-5 and 6-12, a basketball court, a family picnic area with tables, barbeques, a bocce court, an enclosed off-leash dog area with separate areas for small and large dogs, pathways, trees, landscaping, and a connection to the San Tomas Creek Trail. Twenty off-street parking stalls for park visitors are proposed to be provided in Buildings B and C. The proposed Schematic Design was reviewed by the Parks & Recreation Department, and as configured, meets the Department's research based best practices and requirements for public park design, such as: inclusive, age-friendly, sustainable design elements; support for an active recreation program; playgrounds that contain all elements of play; public access from public right of way that provides safe routes & pathway connectivity to and through the park; off street parking; adjacent restroom; place-making; natural habitat value; approved plant palette; consideration for efficient and effective operation and lifecycle maintenance.

On July 20, 2021, RHAA Landscape Architecture and Planning (RHAA) presented the Neighborhood Park schematic design proposal to the Parks & Recreation Commission. The Commission provided

input on the proposed Schematic Design-Master Plan, including the configuration of the sport court as a multi-use facility (basketball, pickleball, volleyball, other), and recommending that additional public input be solicited through social media channels, an in-person meeting, and an online community survey. The Commission deferred action on the schematic design until the September 2021 regular meeting.

Community Input

On Saturday August 21, 2021, RHAA and City Parks & Recreation staff conducted community outreach and collected public input on the Park Schematic Design at the “Celebrate Santa Clara” Citywide special event in Central Park with approximately 150 responses from all ages including children. In addition, from August 19, 2021 until September 2, 2021, an online survey was hosted on the City website which collected 342 responses representing over 17 hours of public comment.

The top three favored park elements in the Schematic Design were the trail connection (51%), open lawn space (46%), and the picnic and BBQ areas (43%). Over 47% favored a multi-colored play structure for ages 2-5. Over 69% favored use of resilient surfacing in the play space. Given that the residential area will be new, most survey respondents envisioned driving to the park (66%), and 50% imagined visiting the park as presented “often” or “frequently”.

The proposed Park site plan, features and amenities seem to support the activities most desired by the public. While the survey indicated other potential activities, the remaining space available would not be able to accommodate field activities such as a disc golf course without displacing the other primary and more desirable park amenities.

DISCUSSION

On September 21, 2021, the Parks & Recreation Commission reviewed the community input and the proposed Schematic Design. After discussion, the Commission made a unanimous recommendation that Council approve the preferred Schematic Design-Master Plan for the proposed Neighborhood Park.

Council will review the Parks & Recreation Commission recommendation for approval of the proposed Mini Park Master Plan - Schematic Design (Attachment 1). Council approval will confirm the park schematic design and master plan for the 87,728 square foot (2.014 acres) public neighborhood park to be dedicated to the City in fee title located at 3905 Freedom Circle. Once approved, the Developer will complete the construction documents for building permit, execute Park Construction and Park Maintenance agreements, complete the improvements to the acceptance of the City, and record the parcel dedication and maintenance agreement with the County of Santa Clara. Public park improvements will be constructed by the developer to the City’s design criteria and standard specifications and will be maintained by the developer after dedication.

Once dedicated and placed into the City’s park inventory, the park and its master plan will be subject to the conditions of Measure R, a voter approved initiative in November 2016, which added Section 714.1 Protection of Parkland and Public Open Space to the City Charter. Measure R prohibits selling, leasing, or otherwise disposing of parkland for a period of one hundred eighty (180) days or more, and also prohibits its use from changing, being abandoned, or discontinued without such sale, lease, disposal or changed use having first been authorized or ratified by a two-thirds majority vote of the electorate during a general municipal election for that purpose. Measure R also prohibits changes in park use for over 180 days without a majority vote of the electorate and substantial building,

construction, reconstruction, or development upon dedicated parkland except pursuant to ordinance subject to referendum. The referendum process is set forth in the Elections Code.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The review and approval of the schematic design of a new public neighborhood park does not constitute a "project" within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15378(b)(5) in that it is a governmental organizational or administrative activity that will not result in direct or indirect changes in the environment.

The impacts of the Greystar General Plan Amendment, development proposal and Freedom Circle Focus Area will be described in an Environmental Impact Report provided to the Planning Commission and City Council in their consideration of the approval of the project.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact to the General Fund for the current action. The developer will construct the public park improvements, provide a park sign, and maintain the park in perpetuity, all to City standards and at no cost to the City.

COORDINATION

This report has been coordinated with the Finance Department, City Attorney's Office and the Community Development Department.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Public contact was made by posting the Council agenda on the City's official-notice bulletin board outside City Hall Council Chambers. A complete agenda packet is available on the City's website and in the City Clerk's Office at least 72 hours prior to a Regular Meeting and 24 hours prior to a Special Meeting. A hard copy of any agenda report may be requested by contacting the City Clerk's Office at (408) 615-2220, e-mail clerk@santaclaraca.gov.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council approve the Schematic Design-Master Plan for the New Public Neighborhood Park to be located at 3905 Freedom Circle.

Reviewed by: James Teixeira, Director of Parks & Recreation

Approved by: Deanna J. Santana, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

1. Neighborhood Park - Schematic Design-Master Plan - 3905 Freedom Circle