



London N. Breed, Mayor
Philip A. Ginsburg, General Manager

Date: March 2, 2021

To: Recreation and Park Commission
Capital Committee

Through: Philip A. Ginsburg, General Manager
Toks Ajike, Director of Capital and Planning Division

From: Melinda Stockmann Sullivan, Project Manager

Subject: Merced Heights Playground Lower Lawn Terrace Renovation

Agenda Wording

Discussion and possible action to approve a conceptual design for the renovation of the lowest terrace of Merced Heights Playground. Approval of this proposed action by the Commission is the Approval Action as defined by S.F. Administrative Code Chapter 31.

Strategic Plan Reference

Strategy 1: Inspire Public Space: Keep today's parks safe, clean, and fun; promote our parks' historic and cultural heritage; and build the great parks of tomorrow

- Objective 1.2: Strengthen the quality of existing parks and facilities
- Objective 1.3: Steward and promote good park behavior

Strategy 2: Inspire Play: Promote active living, well-being, and community for San Francisco's diverse and growing population

- Objective 2.2: Strengthen and promote the safety, health, and well-being of San Francisco's youth and seniors

Background

Merced Heights Playground is located in the Oceanview-Merced Heights-Ingleside (OMI) neighborhood, (Supervisory District 11) between Byxbee and Monticello Streets at Shields Street. The overall park is approximately 1.03 acres in size but the proposed primary project area, which is comprised of the lowest lawn terrace of the facility, is approximately 17,000 square feet, or just over a third of an acre.

Much of the rest of the site was renovated during the Let'sPlaySF! Initiative-driven playground renovation that was completed in late 2020. Aside from new perimeter fencing, however, the

lowest lawn terrace was excluded from this renovation due to scope and budget constraints. The lowest lawn terrace has, for several years, been used as an informal multi-purpose field with no formal programming. It has also been used by the neighbors to let their dogs walk and run in the field.

The lowest lawn terrace is accessed from outside the park along Shields Street. It is also connected to the rest of the facility via stairs internal to the park.

Community Process

In Spring of 2019, members of the community approached Rec and Park staff to request a renovation of the lowest park terrace to provide amenities that would serve senior citizens. In June 2019, with support from State Assembly Member Phil Ting, Rec and Park secured a State Local Assistance Grant, administered by the California State Dept of Parks and Recreation, to provide funding to support these improvements.

Rec and Park staff worked with landscape architects from San Francisco Public Works to develop two design alternatives for the lowest lawn terrace at Merced Heights Playground. These designs were presented at a community meeting on November 20, 2020, at Ocean View Public Library.

A second community meeting was scheduled for March 7, 2020, for community members to provide input to help finalize the design; however, this meeting was cancelled due to the COVID-19-related public health order.

In June 2020, Project Manager Paulina Araica retired from Rec and Park. The project was transitioned to Melinda Stockmann Sullivan. A third party cost estimator was engaged to provide a preliminary cost estimate. Community champions for the project were re-engaged and a second community meeting was held, online due to COVID-19, on February 19, 2021. At this meeting, the same 2 design options were presented, with minor updates.

Community members were provided the opportunity to ask questions and also to discuss and express preference for Option 1 or Option 2, as well as to share their priorities for site furnishings and community recognition. An online survey was also posted on the Rec and Park website and shared broadly, as a means for members of the community, both those who had attended the meeting and those who hadn't, to vote for their preferred option and to weigh in on the other design questions.

A total of 60 people participated in the online survey, with 95% of respondents reporting 94132 zip code. Option 2: Family Lawn + Dog Play area, was the preferred option, with 75% of survey participants favoring it, while 25% favored Option 1: Shared Lawn.

Proposed Design

The proposed design provides for amenities requested by senior citizens who are long term residents of the neighborhood. It provides an open, rolling lawn, with a pathway, seating, and paved gathering space around its perimeter. The design also thoughtfully accommodates the

fairly long-standing use pattern of neighbors bringing their dogs and running them. 51.7% of survey respondents reported bringing their dog(s) to the lower lawn terrace in the past, while 56.7% plan to bring dog(s) to the site once renovated. Providing a designated and delineated off-leash Dog Play Area (DPA) is anticipated to focus off-leash dog use, which should minimize user conflicts and allow a variety of interest groups to enjoy the terrace at the same time.

The design proposes the removal and replacement of the Acacia trees atop the retaining wall along Monticello with new, medium size trees. These trees were assessed as part of the recent playground renovation. The combination of anticipated construction impact as well as potential damage to the retaining wall below them has motivated the decision to replace them with new, medium sized trees, set back further into the park from Monticello. The trees will be replaced at a ratio of 1:1.

The incorporation of some of the same or matching site furnishings as in the upper terrace will help unify the terraces, while close to a third of the lowest terrace will be planted, providing the benefits of nature to both park users and birds and insects.

The design also includes an element to recognize community members for their vision and long term advocacy toward this renovation. Community champions will be recognized for their contributions of time and effort either via a tile or brick work or medallions added to the wall to the middle terrace or integrated with the paving.

The elements listed below will provide a great improvement to this neighborhood park:

- Welcoming, accessible entrance
- Entry plaza with site furnishings
- Adult exercise equipment as an alternate, if budget allows
- Drinking fountain
- Designated and delineated off-leash Dog Play Area (DPA), with synthetic turf surfacing and enclosed by 4' high fencing
- Rolling lawn, encircled by a concrete walking path, with a small paved gathering space at its perimeter
- Irrigation system
- Benches and picnic tables
- Gathering space
- Community recognition
- New trees and planting, including butterfly and hummingbird garden

Funding

Sources:

California State Dept of Parks and Recreation

State Local Assistance Grant

\$1,329,000

Total Sources

\$1,329,000

Uses:

Hard Costs (including contingencies)	\$ 750,000
Soft Costs	\$ 579,000
Total Budget	\$1,329,000

Project Schedule

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Start</i>	<i>End</i>
Planning	Spring 2019	Spring 2021
Design	Spring 2021	Summer 2021
Bid & Award	Summer 2021	Fall 2021
Construction	Winter 2021	Spring / Summer 2022

Environmental Evaluation

On January 12, 2021 the project received a Categorical Exemption from environmental review pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) guidelines Sections 15304, Class 1 Existing Facilities and Class 3 New Construction (Case No. 2020-011357ENV).

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Commission approve a conceptual design for the renovation of the lowest terrace of Merced Heights Playground. Approval of this proposed action by the Commission is the Approval Action as defined by S.F. Administrative Code Chapter 31.

Supported by

Community meeting attendees
Online survey respondents
Ms. Wilma Gardner
Mrs. Dorothy Strickland
Mr. Renard Monroe, Executive Director, Youth 1st Program
Mr. Robert Ellis
District 11 Supervisor Ahsha Safai
State Assemblymember Phil Ting, 19th District

Opposed by

None known

Attachments

A: Categorical Exemption
B: Proposed Conceptual Design
C. Response from Online Survey