Date: December 6, 2023

To: Recreation and Park Commission

Through: Philip A. Ginsburg, General Manager
        Stacy Bradley, Director of Capital & Planning Division

From: Alex Schuknecht, Project Manager

Subject: 11th and Natoma Park – Conceptual Design

Agenda Wording

Discussion and possible action to approve a conceptual design for the 11th and Natoma Park (official park name to be determined). 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 Place: Keep today’s parks safe, clean, and fun; promote our parks’ historic and cultural heritage; and build the great parks of tomorrow
  - Objective 1.1: Develop more open space and improve access to existing facilities to address population growth in high-need and emerging neighborhoods
    - H. Finalize concept plan and complete CEQA for development of 11th and Natoma Park

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
  - Objective: 2.2: Work with partners to activate parks through organized events, activities, and unstructured play

Strategy 4 – Inspire Stewardship: Strengthen the City’s climate resiliency by protecting and enhancing San Francisco’s precious natural resources through conservation, education, and sustainable land/facility management practices
  - Objective 4.1: Conserve and strengthen natural resources
  - Objective 4.3: Enhance the connection of children and nature
Background Information and Acquisition

In 2012 the Recreation and Park Department (RPD) and Supervisor Jane Kim’s office convened a community task force to address the need for new public open space in District 6 which then encompassed the Tenderloin, South of Market, Rincon Hill, South Beach, and Mission Bay. The Tenderloin and SoMa have fewer parks per resident than other areas of San Francisco, and the goal of the Task Force was to identify potential new park sites. The Task Force’s work culminated in a report in July 2013 that identified priority areas for open space acquisition. After narrowing open space acquisition opportunities to 15 potential new park sites, the City’s Real Estate Division negotiated the purchase of the 11th Street properties, comprised of five contiguous parcels totaling 19,570 square feet and located within an area of highest need as identified by the Task Force. The Commission approved the purchase of these parcels in 2016 under resolution 0816-006.

The location is in a relatively park-poor area where the nearest public open spaces are approximately one-half mile to one mile away, including Howard and Langton Community Garden to the east, the Civic Center Plaza and UN Plaza across Market Street to the north, and SoMa West Skate Park and Dog Park to the southeast. The area is also zoned for and anticipates significantly higher density in the coming years, meaning that 11th and Natoma Park will serve not only the existing residents and office workers, but also the many new residents and professionals who will inhabit future developments.

For additional planning-phase context, please see Attachment B: 11th St. Properties Acquisition Staff Report (2016).

Planning and Outreach Phase

In May 2022 the Recreation and Parks Department in collaboration with SF Public Works conducted its first community meeting related to the programming and design of the future park at 11th and Natoma. During the outreach phase the team ultimately conducted four community meetings, stakeholder meetings with local neighbors, institutions and community groups, and deployed three surveys garnering around 900 responses.

At the outset of the outreach phase the project team and the community developed three overarching project goals to guide the design process:

- **Promote neighborhood connection**: Create a space to serve a diverse community through a variety of park uses.
- **Connect people to nature**: Increase everyday access to nature in this dense urban environment.
- **Design for sustainability** : Create a park that is climate appropriate, ecologically valuable, maintainable, and long lasting.

Many residents spoke to the need for active play and programming to serve the families, nearby schools and social service institutions in the neighborhood. At the same time, the site’s location in a “park-poor” neighborhood contributes to the feeling by many residents that the area is
severely lacking in and in need of access to nature, suggesting more passive programming and
generous planting areas. Although these two programming needs presented moments of potential
conflict, the final concept design evolved to represent a cohesive plan where nature, community,
and active play can all coexist in a half-acre of public open space.

**Proposed Design**

During the second community meeting, three concept diagrams were presented, representing a
range of programming with more or less space dedicated to active play or passive use. A
subsequent survey and focus groups led to the final concept design proposal, intended to be a
mix of the two preferred concepts. Survey respondents’ top preference, labeled “The Garden”,
represented the most passive park program, while the option with the most second place votes,
labeled “The Commons”, included a half basketball court that can be used for other recreation
purposes and a larger adult fitness area.

The final concept, labeled “The Terraces”, represented the overarching idea that each primary
park program would have a “terrace” devoted to it, and that each terrace would serve the others,
and the whole park, well. The main elements of The Garden included meandering paths around
large planter beds and seating with tables under shade trees. In the final concept these spaces are
located in the sunny core of the site. At the main park entrance along 11th Street, the active
terrace provides a vibrant street frontage and natural site surveillance with a multi-use court,
adult fitness area, drinking fountain, dog relief station, and plenty of seating. The rear of the site
is dominated by a children’s play area (CPA) and small nature exploration area. The CPA is
located away from traffic in the most protected part of the site and includes picnic tables with
seating.

The park elements summarized below will provide a wonderful improvement to the West SoMa
neighborhood:
- Meandering walkways with a variety of seating and café tables surrounded by lush
  planting areas
- A flexible community plaza with tables and seating for small events, community
  gatherings and everyday social uses
- Play area for school-age children which includes climbing, swinging, sliding,
  unstructured adventure play and picnic tables
- Nature exploration area for tots and youth
- Half basketball court that can be used for other recreation activities like pickleball,
  volleyball, tai chi, yoga and many other activities, with linear seating along back edge
- Adult fitness area
- Seating throughout the site surrounded by planting, with good views overlooking the
garden and playground
- Accessible entry at 11th Street
- RPD maintenance access and shed at Minna Street frontage
- Dog relief area near park entrance
- Perimeter fencing
- Park lighting and irrigation
- Shade pergola over seating in the garden
The project Conceptual Presentation as part of the Civic Design Review process with the Arts Commission is complete with commendation and a recommendation to undertake a consolidated Phase I and II review at the schematic phase of design. Staff also began the Art Enrichment process with the Arts Commission - two separate community meetings have been held focusing on art enrichment options and the community-led park naming process. Members of the park naming committee, comprised of interested community members, have been determined and the group has met separately to push that process forward with assistance from Recreation and Parks Communications staff.

**Funding**

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<th>Sources</th>
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<td>Market Octavia Development Impact Fees</td>
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<td>Natoma Properties Revenue</td>
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<td>Open Space Acquisition Fund</td>
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**Project Schedule**

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**Environmental Review**

The project has been reviewed by the Planning Department and a Categorical Exemption (2023-004402ENV) under Class 1: Existing Facilities, and Class 4: Minor Alterations to Land.

**Staff Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the Commission approve a conceptual design for the 11th and Natoma Park. Approval of this proposed action by the Commission is the Approval Action as defined by S.F. Administrative Code Chapter 31.
Supported By
Matt Dorsey, Supervisor District 6
SOMA West CBD
SOMA Pilipinas
SOMCAN
Aikido San Francisco
The Arc SF
Access SFUSD: The Arc
Brian Pepin, PROSAC District 6
Cyntia Salazar, PROSAC District 5

Opposed By
No opposition known

Attachments
Attachment A: 11th and Natoma Park Conceptual Design Package
Attachment B: 11th St. Properties Acquisition Staff Report (2016)