



City of Santa Barbara

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Deborah Schwartz, Chair
Planning Commission
City of Santa Barbara
630 Garden Street
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**SUBJECT: Ortega Park Master Plan (604 East Ortega Street, APN 031-172-002)
PLN2018-00508, PRE2019-00523, PLN2019-00425, & PBW2019-00678**

Dear Chair Schwartz and Commissioners:

The City of Santa Barbara Parks and Recreation Department (Department) requests Planning Commission approval of the proposed Ortega Park Master Plan (Project) to ensure consistency with Municipal Code Section 30.40.030, and a modification to allow street parking in the front set back along Salsipuedes Street and Ortega Street.

The Project will complete a full scale rehabilitation of the 5.46 acre Ortega Park with a synthetic turf field, new year-round pool that provides for instruction, lap swimming, aqua programs and children's slide and splash play features, new park restroom facilities, enhanced community building, new playground and family picnic area, and a multi-generational activity zone with a skate park, basketball, bocce ball, corn hole, and other amenities. The project includes site access and circulation improvements with pedestrian pathways surrounding and through the park, accessible entries and expanded street parking. Ortega Park is a prime location due to its proximity to Santa Barbara Junior High School, various youth serving agencies, and the ability to meet the needs for existing and future residential development in the neighborhood.

Background

A City park since 1930, Ortega Park suffers from numerous deficiencies including an outdated pool facility, limited sports turf, lack of field and park lighting, outdated playground, undersized restroom, lack of picnic and family gathering areas, limited recreation amenities, and poor pedestrian circulation around and through the park due to the lack of sidewalks and pathways. The current park layout and amenities date from the early 1950s and last received limited enhancements in 1975.

Although the turf area is popular for youth soccer and baseball, most of the park goes underused by the neighboring residents, and misuse issues abound. The outdated pool facility has limited use for youth swim instruction since it is only open during the summer season.

It does not have the size, capacity or facilities to support year-round use. A former splash play area was abandoned 20 years ago due to code and structural issues. The Department cannot make minor improvements without triggering a range of code and access upgrades. The playground is outdated and the picnic area was removed due to blighted conditions. The restroom facility needs updating. The over use of the turf area requires regular field closures for rehabilitation and loss of critical field space in limited supply in Santa Barbara. Despite being in a prime location, Ortega Park's outdated facilities severely limit the full potential of the park. In addition, development of the park amenities, which occurred over a 60 year period, resulted in dysfunctional use of space. Existing pathways, gathering areas, and park entry points contribute to poor circulation, do not create welcoming public spaces, and do not meet today's accessibility standards. Given the current dilapidated and blighted conditions of the park, it does not provide much needed recreation amenities to serve as a neighborhood park for residents and their families.

Ortega Park Master Plan Development

Initiated in 2018, development of the Master Plan for Ortega Park included extensive community engagement through meetings, community workshops and on-site forums, an online survey, and presentations to the Parks and Recreation Commission, Neighborhood Advisory Committee, and Architectural Board of Review. The Department used a variety of methods to provide advance notice of the meetings and encourage participation, including direct mailers and emails, on-site park and storefront posters, advertisements in local newspapers, and radio advertisements. Notifications were made in both English and Spanish, and Spanish language translation was made available at the workshops. More than 450 community members participated in the development of the Master Plan, via the following outreach efforts:

Stakeholder Interviews: Interviews with park user groups and neighboring residents and businesses identified recreational needs, key safety concerns, and other issues such as parking and circulation. These meetings included discussion of existing park use by nearby youth-serving organizations, suggested improvements for recreation and site safety, potential new or expanded facilities, and pedestrian and vehicle access within the neighborhood. Over twenty youth serving community organizations and athletic associations frequent the park including Girls Inc. of Greater Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara Boys and Girls Club, Santa Barbara Soccer Club, Santa Barbara Pony Baseball, Haley Street YMCA, Santa Barbara Junior High School, Special Olympics, and AYSO Soccer, among others.

Community Workshops and Meetings: Two community workshops engaged several hundred participants through interactive exercises to identify new park amenities and a preferred alternative plan for Ortega Park. At the first workshop, participants identified a broad vision for the park's character and ambiance, as well as specific features they would like to see in the redevelopment of the site. At the second workshop, participants considered the two conceptual plans illustrating potential park amenities and overall park character. Two additional community meetings held on-site focused on how the park improvements could better serve youth soccer and other field sports, and the significance of maintaining cultural spaces for neighborhood and family gatherings.

Community Online Survey: Following the second workshop, an internet-based survey gathered further input regarding community interest and support in the various park elements. The results generally reinforced the input provided at the community workshops, with overall support for the preferred concept plan included in the Master Plan and specific support for the recreational swimming pool, artificial lighting for the sports field, and the multi-generational sport area.

Public Hearings: A special joint meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) and Neighborhood Advisory Council (NAC) was held on August 22, 2018. The Architectural Board of Review (ABR) evaluated the Master Plan design on October 22, 2018, September 9, 2019, and May 4, 2020. On November 14, 2018 and September 25, 2019, the Parks and Recreation Commission reviewed the Master Plan and recommended advancing the preliminary design of the proposed park improvements. The City Council approved the Master Plan and authorized the next phase of Project development on January 8, 2019.

Project Description

The Project will complete a full scale rehabilitation of the 5.46 acre Ortega Park with a synthetic turf field, new year-round pool that provides for instruction, lap swimming, aqua programs and children's slide and splash play features, new park restroom facilities, enhanced community building, new playground and family picnic area, and a multi-generational activity zone with a skate park, basketball, bocce ball, corn hole, and other amenities. The project includes site access and circulation improvements with pedestrian pathways surrounding and through the park, accessible entries and expanded street parking.

Synthetic Turf Field: The current grass field is only suitable for limited use due to its configuration, surface, and lack of lighting. It is utilized by youth organized soccer on Saturdays, and for soccer practices during the weekdays for two hours in the evening. The softball field is used currently by Santa Barbara PONY baseball and Special Olympics on Saturdays, and two hours in the evenings during the weekdays. High turf use results in up to four field closures per year for rehabilitation and the loss of field use for four months.

The construction of a synthetic turf field with lighting in the northern portion of the park will allow for both youth and adult soccer, youth baseball, rugby, lacrosse, ultimate Frisbee, as well as drop-in play. The use of synthetic turf allows for year-round use, reduces water requirements, and requires a less intensive maintenance program than a natural grass field. The 360-feet-long and 180-feet-wide field will be maximized to allow the greatest playable surface while preserving mature trees on the eastern portion of the park.

Aquatic Facility: The proposed aquatic facility will address a significant unmet need for a community pool. An Aquatics Complex Feasibility Study completed in 2003 revealed a shortage of local aquatic facilities to adequately serve the public's demand for youth and adult swim lessons, therapeutic instruction, recreation and many other free and fee based aquatic activities and programs for residents. Public outreach meetings identified a long list of aquatics programs that a new pool at Ortega Park could provide, including Learn to Swim, Introduction to Water, and Mommy and Me Classes, Life Safety, Health, Wellness & Fitness, and Lap Swimming.

The proposed facility includes a 26,870 square foot multi-purpose pool area featuring three distinct zones to accommodate year-round activities simultaneously. The pool area will include: wet play/wading pool; non-competitive lap pool; pool slide/play feature; pool facility building with restrooms, and showers. The existing Ortega Welcome House will be incorporated into the aquatic facility area. Constructed in 1952, the 1,650 square foot existing community building will be upgraded to provide access to the pool areas as well as serve as a community gathering location.

Multi-Generational Recreation Zone and Skate Park: The Multi-Generational Activity Zone will be located at the southern corner of Ortega Park. The area will serve as a key day-to-day activator for the park and provide activities for various age ranges throughout the year. Most notably, this allows the incorporation of amenities that were selected and highly supported by the community through the public input process. These include a skate park, basketball court, bocce ball, ping pong, corn hole, shaded seating, and bike racks.

The area balances the various active uses by placing the more intensive uses (such as the skate park and basketball court) further from the edge of the street and placing the less intensive areas (i.e., corn hole, bocce ball, and ping pong) near the perimeter. To help reduce the heat-island effect of surface areas, the proposed design incorporates new shade trees with year-round interest. Site furnishings such as benches, trash and recycling receptacles and bike racks will complement the overall circulation and design of the space.

The proposed skate park was developed by a professional skate park designer in collaboration with the local skating community during two workshops. During the first workshop, participants developed three dimensional conceptual designs using play clay materials. The second workshop included the presentation and refinement of the proposed design options.

Playground and Family Picnic Area: The Project includes an 11,370 square foot playground adjacent to a 2,300 square foot family picnic and plaza area. Located in the center of the park, the new area will serve as an activator for the park, providing recreation for children and families that may also be participating in other park activities. The location will provide additional protection from vehicular and pedestrian traffic outside of the park, allowing parents to be able to keep a watchful eye on play areas.

Park Use

The purpose of the project is to renovate a dilapidated City park that has not seen reinvestment since 1975, including a pool facility is almost 70 years old. Although a popular location for youth soccer and baseball, the fields, buildings, pool and playground are in poor condition. Park safety concerns limited neighborhood use along with lack of parking, park pathways, and valued park amenities and activities. At the same time, residential density has increased and the area is slated for further infill development with multi-family housing. Limited park space make the renewal of Ortega Park even more critical. Through renovation, the park will see increased use by area residents as well as Santa Barbara families for youth team sports, year-round aquatics, skate boarding, court sports, and community gatherings. The proposed amenities were identified and prioritized during a yearlong community based master plan process.

With current annual use numbers (by permit) of 70,000, for the natural turf fields, it is anticipated that the synthetic sports field use could double as a result of increased field availability and reduced seasonal closures for turf maintenance. Although there are no use numbers for the skate park that existed onsite from 1998-2005, the addition of a new skate park could bring 200-350 users each week for an average of 15,000 per year, and the aquatics facility, designed to serve as a recreational pool amenity for all ages will increase use from 4,000 youth in the summer to 40,000 of all ages over the entire year. These estimates are based on a review of similar public facilities in other California cities. The current pool facility is severely undersized and therefore is only used for summer learn to swim programs for youth. A wading pool was removed 25 years ago due to health code restrictions. It is anticipated that access to the park will include families travelling by car, families walking and biking, organized transportation and area youth organizations accessing the park by walking. The Parks and Recreation Department has a long history of collaborating with Santa Barbara Junior High School which includes, when needed, additional parking to support youth sports activities.

Tree Removals and Planting

The Project proposes the removal of 40 trees, retention of 18 trees, and planting 108 new trees. Once complete, the park will have 126 trees. Of the 40 trees proposed for removal, two are street trees, one is a setback tree, and 37 are park trees. None of the trees on the project site, including the 18 trees to be retained, are designated Specimen Trees, as defined by Santa Barbara Municipal Code 15.20.020(J). Proposed tree replacement ratios exceed a 2:1 ratio. Once complete, the project site will have 126 trees versus 58. The City's Urban Forest Superintendent determined the proposed 2:1 mitigation is more

than satisfactory when analyzing comparative biomass loss. The proposed species used for planting and their mature size mitigates the loss of the trees removed and exceeds the existing biomass on site. It is expected that the same biomass will be achieved within a 10 year period or less. The retention of trees on site, combined with the proposed plantings results in a net positive gain in habitat and biomass. The proposed tree removals were reviewed by the Street Tree Advisory Committee on September 18, 2019 and approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission on September 24, 2019.

Gates and Fencing

The Project includes entry gates and a perimeter fence around Ortega Park to allow the park to be secured after-hours when the park is closed. Special recreation activities would be allowed in the park by permit only, if consistent with City policies and regulations.

Bicycle Parking

The Project will include long-term and short-term parking. Twenty-four (24) spaces will be installed for short-term park visitors and two long-term spaces (like lockers) will be provided for park employees.

Trash and Recycling

The project includes a trash enclosure for trash and recycling located mid-block along Ortega Street against the multi-sports field fence. A four cubic yard dumpster will store trash and a four cubic yard dumpster will hold recycling. A green waste dumpster is not proposed, as the Department's standard procedure is to collect and remove all green waste from the site on the day it is generated.

Water Use and Conservation

Water conservation will be achieved through the use of recycled and recirculated water where applicable. A pool cover, limitations on seasonal use of splash pad and water slide, and drought tolerant landscaping will also further reduce water use and promote conservation practices. Recycled water is proposed for irrigation only. Recirculated water is proposed for use in the splash pad only. Proposed potable water demand from amenities is estimated at approximately 654,763 gallons per year compared to an existing pre-drought demand of approximately 621,630 gallons per year. Recycled water demand for irrigation is estimated at approximately 1,143,438 gallons per year compared to existing pre-drought demand of approximately 1,567,920 gallons per year.

Lighting

The Project proposes new lighting in the public right of way and on-site. All lighting will conform to the City of Santa Barbara's Outdoor Lighting Ordinance (SBMC 22.75) and adhere to the Outdoor Lighting Design Guidelines set forth in 2009. On May 4, 2020, Architecture Board of Review found the project in compliance with the Outdoor Lighting

Design Guidelines. Photometric studies of the proposed lighting conclude the proposed lighting would not spill over to adjacent properties.

Street Lighting Existing and Proposed: The existing street lights surrounding the park are located at the corners and one mid-block, except for Salsipuedes Street. The project proposes to add one B-16 Slim Line Street Light mid-block on Salsipuedes Street. The project will also replace one street light mid-block on Ortega Street with a B-16 Slim Line Street Light per Public Works and City standards to provide safety and uniformity but avoid glare, light trespass, and over-lighting. Title 24 lighting standards are met or exceeded with these fixtures.

Security Lighting Existing: There are currently 5 tall pole lights on site with two or three fixtures on each pole. They are approximately 40 in height and are illuminated all night for security purposes. Fewer pole lights are currently needed because there are multiple fixtures on each pole and the taller the pole, the greater the light spread. However, the taller security lighting creates a greater impact on neighboring residential units as they do not shield the glare. Existing security lighting will be removed and replaced.

Security Lighting Proposed: On site security lighting will be provided by fifteen 14-foot pedestrian pole lights, is a standard fixture in City parks. A photometric analysis was prepared for the project site. This analysis provides a point by point foot-candle plot on the site plan showing the illuminance to 20' beyond the property line. Minimum, average, and maximum foot-candles with uniformity ratios are provided in the illumination summary tables. These calculations demonstrate there is no impact to the adjacent residential uses. On Ortega Street, the illuminance does not exceed the maximum 0.1 foot candle per Lighting Design Guidelines. Areas adjacent to commercial uses, such as Salsipuedes Street, do not exceed 0.2 foot candle at 10' beyond the property line. As a result, the illumination levels provided in the current design are compatible with the adjacent residential use and light trespass/glare levels are far below the maximum allowable output. Park lighting shall be reduced after park hours.

Field Lighting Existing and Proposed: Field and court pole lighting were installed on site as early as 1965. In 2004, four 60-foot pole lights and two 40-foot pole lights illuminated the ballfield, however, they were removed due to different maintenance issues. The Project proposes field lighting for the artificial turf fields to allow for evening play. The synthetic turf field will be illuminated by three 70 foot pole lights and three 60 foot pole lights. The six pole lights may not all be illuminated at once as some are only for the ballfield portion of the synthetic turf field. The basketball court will be illuminated by two 40 foot pole lights. Field lighting will be operated by special permit only and shall not be on past 10:00 pm.

Street Right-of-Way and Parking

The Project Street Right-of Way Improvements were designed in conjunction with Public Works Transportation staff and include additional parking, loading areas, sidewalks, and

street lighting. The Project proposes to maximize available on-street parking by creating 90-degree nose-in parking on Salsipuedes Street (33 regular stalls and 2 ADA stalls) and reverse angle parking on Ortega Street (26 regular stalls and 4 ADA stalls), as well as three pick-up/drop-off zones in front of the Welcome House. Sidewalks will be installed within the park and adjacent to Ortega Street and Salsipuedes Street. Existing street lights will be retained and one additional light will be located mid-block on Salsipuedes Street to illuminate the new sidewalk.

Modification to Allow Parking in Front Setback

The request to allow parking in the front setback on Ortega and Salsipuedes Streets is required to improve off-site parking and passenger loading in the right-of-way. Currently, there are approximately 40 parallel parking spaces total on Ortega Street and Salsipuedes Street adjacent to the park and no passenger loading areas. The modification is required to meet minimum street widths, while provide 90-degree and angled parking. The modification will allow the vehicles to overhang into the Park property and increasing parking from 40 spaces to 63 spaces with three new loading areas. Approval of the modification will accomplish increased parking, a key priority of community members during the development of master plan. As recommended by the Transportation Division, the Department will defer application of any restricted timed parking signage until after completion of the project. Once the park is operational for a period of time, it may be determined if there are any issues related to unrestricted parking, and the signage could be installed at that time.

Technical Studies

Noise Analysis: The current and past recreational amenities are very similar to the proposed amenities that include a multi-use artificial turf field, basketball court, bocce ball and corn hole court, ping pong table, aquatics building and pool, splash pad, playground, restrooms, and skate park. No amplified noise such as music or a PA system will be permitted. The park will be fenced and locked after designated operating hours (8 am to ½ hour after sunset) to limit noise at night. Any after-hours use of the park will be by special permit only issued by the Parks and Recreation Department.

A noise analysis of the proposed skate park studied potential impacts on sensitive receptor locations (housing) close to the site. The study used typical noise levels from similar skate parks and determined the below grade concrete design with very smooth hand trowel finish, the assessment of existing ambient noise at the site, the distance from surrounding uses, and the hours of operation (8 am to a ½ hour after sunset), all mitigate the proposed skate parks potential noise impacts to less than significant.

Hydrology Calculations & Storm Water Management Plan: Stormwater quality reports are provided for both onsite and offsite improvements. Based on the findings of the reports, the Project meets the applicable standards and requirements for the City of Santa Barbara. The proposed drainage plan is consistent with the City's Storm Water Management Program design criteria for development. In summary, the proposed design

treats the runoff from the site for the 1-inch 24-hour storm event for the offsite improvements. For the onsite improvements, the Project reduces the post-development peak flow of runoff to below the pre-development rate of the 2- through 25-year storm events; reduces the post-development volume of runoff to below the pre-development rate for the 2- through 25-year storm events; and treats the runoff from the site for the 1-inch 24-hour storm event.

Historical Significance of the Ortega Welcome House: On August 12, 2019, City Historian Nicole Hernandez determined the Welcome House does not represent an intact, unique or particular style that is important to the heritage of the City nor forms an integral component of a thematic complex or district and does not qualify as a historic resource.

Archaeological Resources: An archaeological resources investigation by David Stone, Wood Environmental, determined there are no archaeological resources at Ortega Park. Based on the absence of prehistoric cultural remains, the proposed project is not considered to have the potential to impact intact, significant or important historic or prehistoric cultural remains as defined in the City MEA, or to provide unique information capable of meeting the criteria for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources (Pub. Res. Code §§5024.1, Title 14 CCR, Section 4852; California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines 15064.5[3]), as follows:

- (A) Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California's history and cultural heritage;
- (B) Is associated with the lives of persons important in our past;
- (C) Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of an important creative individual, or possesses high artistic values; or
- (D) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history.

As a result, no further measures are recommended. The standard City condition would apply.

Contaminated Soils: Part of the site was used as a municipal waste dump from at least 1902 until 1927. A Phase II Environmental Site Assessment determined the following contaminants onsite in concentrations exceeding state standards: volatile organic compounds (VOCs), total petroleum hydrocarbons (TPH), benzo (a) pyrene (BaP), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), arsenic, barium, chromium, lead, mercury, thallium and zinc. A Soils Management Plan (SMP) was reviewed and approved by Santa Barbara County Environmental Health Services. This plan presents methodology and protocols to properly handle, store, transport, and dispose of impacted soil that is encountered during grading. Contaminated soils disturbed as part of this project will be removed from the site following the required method in the SMP.

Project Construction

The Project will be constructed in three phases. Phase 1 (4 months) including Street Right-of-Way Improvements, Phase 2 (8 months), includes demolition grading and sports field development, and Phase 3 (14 months) includes construction of pool facility, all buildings, skate park and courts. The Department developed a comprehensive approach to minimize construction impacts and stage from the project site (sheet D-2 provides a summary and graphic of the proposed improvement area.) Details include areas proposed for construction vehicle parking, construction staging, where fencing will occur, reduction measures for construction noise, and an estimated construction duration period. Limitations on construction activity and locations of construction fencing and gates are shown. Gates will be located away from housing when possible. Demolition, grading, and the removal of contaminated soils in Phase 2 will take place during the summer, when the adjacent Santa Barbara Junior High School is not operating. As Phase 1 will generate noise in closest proximity to adjacent residences, a 6 foot tall construction fence with sound reduction blankets or plywood will be installed along the 480 foot length of property along Ortega Street to mitigate acoustical impacts. Acoustifence (or equal) will be used as the sound reduction blanket with an STC of 28 which gives you a transmission loss of 28 dB through the material.

Site Grading

The 5.46 acre site requires grading to create amenities like the multi-sport field, aquatics facility, skate park, court area, and right of way improvements. These amenities must be accessible, creating additional grading requirements. The estimated cut is 10,600 cubic yards (CY) and estimated fill is 480 CY for a net 10,120 CY of cut that would be hauled off site. There is also a requirement from the Soils Management Plan to remove soil to groundwater depth below the storm water infiltration areas. The breakdown of the 10,120 CY total export is approximately 1,870 CY export of clean soil, 8,250 CY export of contaminated soil, and no import.

Design Review:

The Architectural Board of Review (ABR) reviewed the Project on October 22, 2018, September 9, 2019, and May 4, 2020. On May 4, 2020, the ABR found that the Project met the Compatibility Analysis Criteria per SBMC 22.68.045.B.

Summary

The renovation of Ortega Park will provide area residents and community members with a dynamic recreation area that serves a broad cross section of youth, adults and families. Designed to serve multi-generations, Ortega Park will provide much needed upgraded outdoor recreation and community gathering spaces as the City fosters increased residential densities and a mix of housing in the downtown.

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The Department looks forward to the favorable consideration of this Project. Please contact Justin Van Mullem, at ivanmullem@santabarbaraca.gov or 805-897-1972, or Jill Zachary at jzachary@santabarbaraca.gov, or 805-564-5430.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Justin Van Mullem". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Justin" on top, "Van" in the middle, and "Mullem" on the bottom right.

Justin Van Mullem
Project Planner

cc: Jill E. Zachary, Parks and Recreation Director