



Information Item

Date: May 16, 2012

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Martin Pastucha, Director of Public Works
Karen Ginsberg, Director of Community & Cultural Services

Subject: Universally Accessible Playground Project Update

Introduction

This report is to update the City Council on the current status of the Universally Accessible Playground Project (at South Beach) and respond to some of the concerns identified at the [January 10, 2012](#) City Council meeting.

Background

On [June 28, 2011](#), Council approved a professional services contract with Katherine Spitz Associates, Inc. (KSA) to provide design and preconstruction services for the Universally Accessible Playground project. Following execution of the agreement with KSA, the design consultant and City staff initiated a community engagement process for the new playground. The process included a community workshop, a focus group, outreach to the special education and preschool communities, coordination with the Disabilities and Recreation & Parks Commissions and on-going outreach to the immediate neighbors of the project site (Sea Colony condominium complex). The specific program and amenities for the new playground were determined through this process, and by working closely with the Disabilities and the Recreation & Parks Commissions and neighborhood stakeholders. Play features were incorporated in the unique design elements to integrate play for children of all abilities.

On [January 10, 2012](#), Council approved the schematic design for the project and directed staff to move forward with design development plans. Several members of the Sea Colony condominium complex, located across the street from the project site,

attended the City Council meeting and voiced concerns about the bike path traffic on Barnard Way, and security issues. Council directed staff to look into these concerns and report back.

Discussion

After the City Council meeting on [January 10, 2012](#), the project team worked with staff from the Police Department and the Strategic & Transportation Planning Division of the Planning and Community Development Department to respond to concerns addressed at that meeting. In response to the concerns that were raised by project neighbors, the following modifications have been made to the Schematic Design:

Design Elements

The Sea Colony residents expressed concerns about the mass of the ship and possible hiding places, the height of the shade structure, and noise from musical instruments. The following changes were made to address these issues:

- Lowered the ship's prow from 8'3" to 7'6" at its highest point; the ship walls and floor slope upward so that the railing averages 42" height from the interior of the ship; the sensory walls on the south side of the ship are 3'6" high and the walls on the north side of the ship are low-seat walls.
- Enlarged openings in the hull providing increased visibility.
- Reduced shade structure by two masts and two sails.
- Eliminated all musical play instruments.
- Eliminated lighting for the sail structure.
- Changed color of the sails from white to blue and/or green.

Safety and Security

The plans have been reviewed by the Police Department. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) research has shown that pedestrian and active use of an area deter negative behavior. The following recommendations will be implemented:

- Establish new hours for the playground. Currently the park is open all hours, but the new playground would be fenced, closed, and locked during the evening hours.

- Enforce intended use of the playground. Only adults accompanied by children would be allowed in the playground. These rules would be displayed on signage within the playground to allow enforcement by the Police.
- Add additional plant material adjacent to the perimeter playground fence to provide an enhanced barrier.
- Additional large openings on the structure have been provided to enable Police to easily monitor the playground.

Traffic Concerns

The plan has been reviewed by the Transportation staff and Police with regard to the concerns about Barnard Way and the use of the Sea Colony driveway. While this is not related to the playground project, the following recommendations may help to mitigate this concern. The first two are City functions that will be implemented, while the third is up to the Sea Colony to implement.

- Provide additional signage for the parking lot entry way to ensure it is clear to drivers.
- Police would enforce any rules that apply to blocking traffic or illegally turning into the area.
- Relocate condominium complex (Sea Colony) driveway entry gate forward, toward Barnard Way and add a sign marking it as private property.

Bike Path Crossing

The plan has been reviewed by Transportation staff and the Police with regard to concerns for children crossing the bike path to reach the public restrooms and/or to visit the beach and the following measures will be implemented:

- The City will be installing new striping, marking and signage along the entire length of the Santa Monica Bike Path in June 2012 to improve safety and guide pedestrians and cyclists to the appropriate path.
- As part of the marking and signage improvements, there will be a new crosswalk at the nearby restroom as well as striping and signage for the bike path that curves around the playground in order to encourage people to slow down and be aware that children/pedestrians may be crossing ahead.
- The idea to implement dismounting strategies similar to those at Redondo Beach was explored. Since this area is much smaller than the one in Redondo Beach and would require constant monitoring, it is not feasible to do at this time

City staff, including a representative from the Police Department, met with Sea Colony residents on April 10, 2012, to present the above described design changes and recommendations. Residents were generally pleased with the changes and appreciated staff efforts to address most of the major concerns. There is still concern over the height of the prow; however, the portholes and openings will provide visibility for Police to monitor activity at night. Without the rise in height, the slide would have to be eliminated and it would be difficult to achieve the visual impact of a “ship,” which is key to the overall design inspiration of the playground.

The design development plans are complete. The project was approved by the California Coastal Commission on April 11, 2012. KSA is presently preparing construction documents for bidding in summer 2012. The project is scheduled to begin construction in fall 2012 and completion is anticipated in spring 2013.

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