To: Mayor and City Council
From: Susan Cline, Public Works Director
Subject: Relocation of Park Maintenance from Memorial Park to the Airport

Introduction
This report is to update the Council on the temporary relocation of the Public Landscape Division’s (PLD) Park Maintenance staff from Memorial Park to the Airport Maintenance facility. The PLD is a crucial component of the City’s Public Works operations and maintenance. They maintain and enhance Santa Monica’s 28 public parks, including sports fields, playgrounds, and water features. They are also responsible for the upkeep of public medians and street trees. The PLD Park Maintenance staff currently operate from a location at Colorado Yards, adjacent to Memorial Park. Plans to expand the park include use of the Colorado Yards, which requires staff and equipment to be temporarily relocated to the Airport until a permanent location is identified.

Background
The process to expand and redefine Memorial Park, a goal established in Santa Monica’s 1997 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, began when the City purchased the adjacent Fisher Lumber site in 2004. At the time, the PLD operations were headquartered at the Airport and were being displaced by the construction of Airport
Park. On May 10, 2005, the Council directed staff to relocate the Public Landscape operations from the Airport on an interim basis to the newly acquired Fisher Lumber site.

In FY 2017-18, Council approved funding to begin planning the expansion of Memorial Park with the intention of starting construction in 2020. As a permanent location for Public Landscape operations has yet to be identified, staff began evaluating options for a new interim solution. On November 27, 2018, as part of the Revisions to FY 2018-19 Capital Improvement Program Budget, the Council approved allocating $800,000 in funding from the Public Works Department Expenditure Control budget savings for the Public Landscape Relocation Project.

Discussion
Staff reviewed all City properties and identified the City Yards and the Airport as the remaining viable alternatives for the relocation of PLD Park Maintenance operations. Many of the City properties that were previously designated for temporary uses (surface parking lot in civic center, Hansen aggregate storage lot at the City Yards, Deauville lot adjacent to Beach Maintenance, Colorado Yards at Memorial Park) have now been, or are being developed for their intended permanent uses.

As part of the 2017 master planning process for the City Yards, staff analyzed the possibility of building a permanent structure that would consolidate all city operations and maintenance activities in one location. This was deemed infeasible at this time due to the high construction cost, the lack of adequate land area without the construction of an onsite parking structure, and the fact that expanding City operations in the Council approved Master Plan at the City Yards would encroach into Gandara Park. Accordingly, the Master Plan moved forward without the inclusion of the PLD operations, and staff began evaluating opportunities at the Airport.

Multiple locations were reviewed for the possible relocation of PLD Park Maintenance operations back to the Airport, including all unleashed airport properties. Available
properties with existing buildings, such as 2501 and 3011 Airport Ave., were inadequately sized and lacked the necessary infrastructure or site access. Dividing the operations over multiple properties at the Airport was deemed impractical due to the resulting operational inefficiencies. The undeveloped northeast corner of the Airport was evaluated as both a permanent and temporary solution. It was deemed unusable for this project due to the high cost of construction for a permanent facility, the lack of an existing building that could be used as an interim solution, inadequate size without considerable earthwork done to the area, and the need to bring new utility services to the area. Ultimately, the existing Airport Maintenance building was identified to be suitable and adequately sized to accommodate both the Airport Maintenance and Park Maintenance operations with an upgrade of some existing utilities. The space is an existing Public Works operations area, albeit at a far lower intensity use, which PLD will share with the current four Airport Maintenance staff already housed at this location. PLD staff operates Monday to Thursday from 6:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. with light Fridays, 6:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Due to unavailability of Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funding, the project was funded by the Public Works Department’s operational savings. Given the limited budget, and the temporary nature of the site, the original intent was to limit improvements to the bare minimum necessary. Using existing contracts and on-call vendors, staff began the process of designing the necessary improvements for building code compliance in the fall of 2018. Upgrades included fire/life safety systems such as fire alarm and fire sprinkler, Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant pathways and restrooms, and increased electrical service to accommodate electrical vehicle charging. The permitting process was completed in the summer of 2019.

Community Concerns
With the start of construction, nearby residents became concerned with the improvements underway and the possibility of ongoing operational impacts to the neighborhood. Through multiple site walks with community members, Airport
Commissioners and public comment at the Airport Commission’s meeting on September 23, 2019, residents largely voiced the following concerns with the original design and intended operations:

- Disruptive noise from the PLD operations starting at 6:30 a.m.;
- The perceived safety concern from an increase in vehicle traffic, specifically large trucks, along 25th Street;
- Disruption of existing views into the Airport from Clover Street;
- Location of bulk material storage bins and equipment storage containers near adjacent residents;
- Concern that hazardous and open material storage areas would lead to air pollution; and,
- Concern that investing funds into the existing building would mean this proposed interim solution would become permanent.

Proposed Solutions
Staff have actively listened to these concerns and believe they can be addressed through proposed changes to the construction and future operational procedures. Attachment A lays out the progression of the design from the original intent, to a second iteration presented at the Airport Commission, and finally to a newly revised proposal that staff will present to the Commission on October 28, 2019.

Proposed mitigation efforts include:

- Loading equipment/materials at the end of each day with vehicles positioned to deploy in the morning. This would greatly limit the amount of early morning noise;
- On-site equipment and/or materials storage opportunities at other City facilities would be established to reduce the amount of equipment and materials staging at the Airport Maintenance facility;
• Park Maintenance vehicles and equipment would only enter and exit the site using the 28th Street gate. Personal vehicles and intermittent deliveries would use the 25th Street gate;

• Planting plans for Clover Street, at the Airport Maintenance facility and in the park have been developed to maximize screening options and provide a more visually appealing site perimeter;

• Storage containers, equipment and bulk materials storage have been rearranged in response to community concerns about potential noise, sightlines, and dust. Staff is proposing to move the storage area to the east side of the site, which is furthest from the residential area. Bulk material storage would have a retractable cover to prevent dust and debris from blowing away. Larger vehicles will be parked directly east of the building, to prevent obstruction of residents’ views of the airfield.

The PLD move is a temporary relocation into an existing building that would not require the development of any additional land area at the Airport. The proposed improvements are not intended as a long-term solution to meet future Park Maintenance needs, but rather as an interim solution to keep Park Maintenance services operational. The planning process for the future of the Airport property will proceed with significant community input and will not be impacted by this temporary occupancy.

Next Steps
Staff intend to bring these revised mitigation measures back before the Airport Commission on October 28, 2019 for additional feedback. The PLD relocation to the Airport Maintenance facility is now a standing item on the Airport Commission
agenda to be discussed monthly until residents’ concerns are addressed. Staff also propose to keep the community informed by:

- Offering ongoing tours of the Airport Maintenance facility to community members;
- Issuing public notices to community members about any activity in the public right-of-way around the Airport Maintenance facility;
- Posting all relevant documents related to the project on the Airport’s website; and,
- Hosting a community open house event upon completion of construction.

Staff anticipate moving PLD Park Maintenance into the new space in January 2020. Immediately after PLD moves out of Colorado Yards, the SWIP project that Council approved on September 10, 2019 will use the Colorado Yards location as a staging site until the start of construction for Memorial Park expansion expected to begin in December of 2020.

Prepared By: Christopher Dishlip, Capital Program Manager

Attachments: Attachment A: Site Plan Revision
Revisions made to the site plan to incorporate comments from neighborhood site walks:
- Secured storage containers and equipment moved to the east
- Bulk material storage bins moved to the east
- Additional planting and irrigation added
Revisions made to the site plan to incorporate comments from Airport Commission meeting on 10/23:

- Secured storage containers moved to the northeast
- Bulk material storage bins will be covered and moved to the north in order to be in line with the building
- Smaller vehicles and employee vehicles will be parked to the south to limit view impacts
- All City vehicles to enter/exit the site from the 28th St. gate