To: Recreation and Parks Commission
From: City Staff
Subject: Presentation, Discussion and Possible Action on the Feasibility Study and Master Plan Layout for the Memorial Park Redevelopment and Expansion Project.

Introduction
This report provides background on the Feasibility Study and Master Plan Layout for the Memorial Park Redevelopment and Expansion Project. It is recommended that the Recreation and Parks Commission review and take a formal action regarding the proposed master plan layout and programmatic concepts, for consideration by the design team and for transmission to City Council.

Background
The Memorial Park Redevelopment and Expansion Project would combine the existing 10.3-acre Memorial Park with the adjacent former Fisher Lumber site – a City-owned, 2.9-acre property adjacent to the existing park – into a newly renovated and expanded community park. The combined site is bound by Colorado Avenue to the north, 16th Street to the east, Olympic Boulevard to the south and 14th Street to the west.

The need to expand and redefine the role of Memorial Park was established in Santa Monica’s Parks and Recreation Master Plan, which was adopted in 1997 (Attachment A). The City purchased the Fisher Lumber site in 2004 with the possibility of expanding Memorial Park. Since 2005 when the City took occupancy of the site, the property has been used to house equipment and staff of the City’s Public Works Department.

On March 22, 2016, Council adopted the recommendation of the Recreation and Parks Commission and formally selected the City’s highest priority park projects to be included in the Los Angeles Countywide Parks Needs Assessment Report (Attachment B). The Recreation and Parks Commission’s recommendations included the expansion of
Memorial Park to include the former Fisher Lumber Site as a priority project to be included in the Countywide Needs Assessment Report. After a competitive procurement process, Council awarded RFP #SP2509 to AHBE Landscape Architects on January 23, 2018 to provide professional design services for the development of a feasibility study and master plan layout for an expanded and redeveloped park (Attachment C).

Following Council direction, the RFP specified that the consultants:

- Maximize opportunities for fields with a focus on diamond sports;
- Consider community programs such as the gymnasium, Santa Monica Police Activities League (PAL), and fitness facilities;
- Integrate appropriate buffering along busy vehicular corridors;
- Integrate the City’s Bicycle and Pedestrian Action Plans;
- And consider of the park’s relationship to the surrounding neighborhood and City context.

**Discussion**

Memorial Park is Santa Monica’s primary public park for hosting diamond sports activities. Youth baseball, youth fast pitch softball, high school baseball, and adult league softball use the fields at Memorial Park. The park also houses the only public gymnasium and skate park in Santa Monica.

The existing park includes six baseball/softball fields – four of which have limited playability due to overlapping outfields, a skate park, four tennis courts striped for pickleball, a small children’s play area, on-site surface parking, restrooms, an off-leash dog run and three City-owned and operated community buildings. The existing buildings house the Santa Monica Police Activities League (PAL), community meeting rooms, staff offices, a fitness gym and the Memorial Park gymnasium.

Along the park’s north boundary sits the former Fisher Lumber site, which currently houses the City’s Public Landscape Division offices, covered storage areas and vehicle and equipment storage lots. The City is in the process of relocating the Public Landscape Division offices and storage areas to a site at the Santa Monica Airport.
The feasibility study and master plan process included an examination of existing conditions and park program elements and completion of an extensive community outreach process. The result is a single, cohesive park master plan layout that is intended to define the project program and address long-standing issues at the existing park including but not limited to field functionality, perimeter/edge conditions, connections to the surrounding neighborhood, and the provision of restrooms and other amenities. The master plan layout will inform the design and phased implementation of the Project.

**Community Outreach Process**

An extensive community outreach process informed the development of the master plan layout. Several hundred park users and stakeholders engaged in this process through focus groups, online surveys, and community workshops. Public input guided the master planning effort and resulted in a layout and program that is responsive to community aspirations and Council direction.

The outreach process commenced with a series of focus group discussions in April/May 2018. The focus group discussions included meetings with skate park users, gymnasium users, field permit holders, Field Sports Advisory Council (FSAC), PAL Youth Leadership Council, PAL Board, Santa Monica College, and City staff. The focus group discussions provided an initial opportunity for user groups to share thoughts on the existing park and ideas for its expansion and redevelopment.

In April/May 2018, the City conducted an online survey to solicit input from park users, stakeholders and the community at-large. The survey was open for over 40 days and received 608 responses. Results of the survey were analyzed by the design team and later presented to the public at Community Workshop #1 on May 23, 2018. Key findings from the survey included the following:

- over 70% of respondents live in the zip code areas immediately adjacent to the park;
• 75% of respondents drive to the park;
• the park is family-oriented – a majority of respondents visit with children;
• 75% of respondents visit the park at least once a week or more;
• sports activities are most popular although respondents indicated that the facilities need updating;
• parking is the primary challenge for respondents when visiting the park.

Community Workshop 1 was held on May 23, 2018 at the Memorial Park gymnasium and was attended by over 155 park users, residents, and stakeholders, who shared their aspirations and program requests for the renovated and expanded park. The design team gave a brief presentation summarizing initial observations and findings and led small group discussions. The public input received at Community Workshop 1 validated what the design team heard from the focus groups and online survey.

Input from the community was used to inform the development of three conceptual layouts that were presented to the public at Community Workshop 2, which was held on August 13, 2018 at the Civic Auditorium’s East Wing. Over 170 attendees provided feedback on the three conceptual layout options through facilitated table discussions.

Option 1 included:
• Six diamond sports fields: four synthetic turf combo fields located along Colorado Avenue and two renovated natural turf youth baseball fields in their existing location;
• A central community hub with children’s play area, park restrooms, concessions, and sports/park storage;
• A new Community Recreation Center within the footprint of the existing buildings at 14th Street and Olympic Boulevard;
• A renovation of The Cove skate park without an expansion of the space;
• Four on-grade tennis courts striped for pickleball located adjacent to 16th Street;
• An expanded surface parking lot along 14th Street;
• A new dog park located along Colorado Avenue between the two combo fields.
Option 2 included:

- Six diamond sports fields: two synthetic turf combo fields at the corner of 14th Street and Colorado, two synthetic turf combo fields along 16th Street, and two renovated natural turf youth baseball fields in their existing location;
- A central community hub with children’s play area, park restrooms, concessions, sports/park storage, and a small dog run;
- A new Community Recreation Center on the corner of 16th Street and Colorado Avenue with four tennis courts striped for pickleball on the roof;
- A renovation of The Cove skate park and an expansion of the space;
- A new surface parking lot at the corner of 14th Street and Olympic that did not increase the on-site parking capacity.

Option 3 included:

- Six diamond sports fields: four synthetic turf combo fields located along Colorado Avenue and two renovated natural turf youth baseball fields in their existing location;
- The new Community Recreation Center along 16th Street with integrated concessions, sports/park storage, and park restrooms;
- A children’s play area located in the center of the park;
- A renovation of The Cove skate park and an expansion of the space;
- A new dog park on the corner of 14th Street and Olympic Boulevard;
- Four elevated tennis courts striped for pickleball over an expanded surface parking lot along 14th Street.

All three options included a community walking loop with exercise stations and planted landscape areas within the park and along its perimeter.

Throughout the event, workshop participants made repeated requests for additional fields – more fields than were shown in any of the three layout options. Attendees also voiced support for the following elements that were shown in the concept alternatives:
• a new community recreation center within the footprint of the existing buildings at 14th Street and Olympic Boulevard;
• a central community hub with children’s play area, concessions, restrooms and storage;
• elevated tennis courts striped for pickleball over an expanded surface parking lot;
• an expansion of The Cove skate park;
• and a community walking loop with exercise stations.

Following the second community workshop, the design team revisited the conceptual layouts in an effort to incorporate additional field space. The team held a working session with leadership from field permit groups, representatives from the Field Sport Advisory Council (FSAC) and from the Recreation and Parks Commission. Attendees collaborated on optimal/minimum field dimensions, field quantity and layout, and desired field amenities. The working session resulted in a layout that incorporates an additional field dedicated to youth fast pitch softball.

A third community outreach package was released in June 2019 to share the culmination of the design team’s efforts to date. Conceptual plans, renderings and program element diagrams were posted to the project’s webpage for public review and comment. An info booth was set up at Memorial Park on June 1, 2019 with these materials on display, and City staff was on hand to answer questions and gather community comments. In addition, the materials were presented at a meeting of the Field Sports Advisory Council (FSAC) on June 6, 2019. After discussion and open public comments, FSAC voted to formally support the plan for transmittal to the Recreation and Parks Commission.

A handful of off-leash dog run users voiced their opposition to the master plan layout at the info booth at Memorial Park and during the FSAC meeting. Although a new, larger dog park was included in each of the three conceptual layout options presented at Community Workshop 2, it was later eliminated due to space constraints that resulted from community prioritization of other program elements. In addition, certain dog park
adjacencies would be problematic. For example, a dog park next to the skate park or bleachers/dugouts would create potential conflicts.

The existing off-leash dog run at Memorial Park is a small, rectilinear space (25-feet wide by 260-feet long) with capacity for about 10 dogs. It is enclosed by chain link fencing and surfaced with decomposed granite. There are no amenities provided for dogs (i.e. drinking water source) in the space. Hedges screen the off-leash dog run from the adjacent tennis courts.

The existing off-leash dog run at Memorial Park is one of four off-leash dog areas in the Santa Monica park system. Others include Joslyn Park (1.2 miles away), Pacific Street Park (1.5 miles), and Airport Park (2.8 miles away). The Santa Monica Parks & Recreation Master Plan Update Needs Assessment Report was released in February 2019 and presents several key findings using community input and analysis of the park system today. The Needs Assessment Report found that Santa Monica residents have aspirations for off-leash dog parks in several neighborhoods, but in comparison to peer cities, Santa Monica has more off-leash dog parks per capita than most. In addition, there is also a noticeable lack of dog parks on the north side of the City, where currently none exist. The Santa Monica Parks & Recreation Plan Update, to be completed in 2020, will address desire in the community for additional off-leash dog areas in the city. Within Memorial Park itself, a small, off-leash dog-run could be explored during the design process for Phase 1 of the master plan. It is possible that a portion of either the Community Hub or the pedestrian promenade extending into the park from Colorado Avenue could be dedicated to this program.

**Master Plan Conceptual Layout**

The proposed master plan layout was informed by the public input gathered during the community outreach process and City Council’s directive to pay particular attention to meeting the needs for diamond sports at the site, particularly baseball and softball. The layout reflects the limited area of the site, the inclusion of many and varied park program elements, and the large spatial requirements of programs such as sports fields,
parking, tennis/pickleball courts, and a community recreation center. To achieve this layout, the park’s footprint is proposed to be expanded into portions of 16th Street and Colorado Avenue, where street parking would be eliminated. On-site parking within Memorial Park will be increased. The expansion and redevelopment of Memorial Park also provides the opportunity to reimagine the aesthetic character of the park and better connect it to the surrounding neighborhood. The layout includes 20' wide pedestrian promenades within the park that act as extensions of the neighborhood pedestrian network and provide open, unobstructed view corridors. The layout also calls for extensive tree planting and landscaped areas within the park and along its perimeter streetscape. The landscape will shade park pathways, soften the park user experience, and buffer play activities on the fields. Pedestrian lighting and park furnishings will ensure the comfort and safety of visitors.

The proposed conceptual master plan layout establishes seven diamond sports fields at the park that will allow for more simultaneous games and greater flexibility. Four of those fields, referred to as combo fields, utilize synthetic turf to create adaptable play space for baseball and softball groups of all ages. Three natural turf showcase fields will be dedicated to youth diamond sports. A centrally located community hub with a large children’s play area, park restrooms, concessions and storage will serve the entire park. The master plan layout also includes a community fitness trail with exercise stations, an expansion of The Cove skate park, four tennis courts striped for pickleball with dedicated storage, covered onsite parking totaling approximately 128 spaces with a drop-off and turnaround area, a Class I shared use bike path along Colorado Avenue, and opportunities for a new, expanded community recreation center at the southwest corner of the site where the gymnasium, PAL building and community meeting rooms currently exist..

- Combo Fields: The combo fields are designed for flexibility. The use of synthetic turf, movable pitchers’ mound, multiple base alignments and temporary outfield fencing allows for the maximum combination of diamond sport uses. A combo field can accommodate a regulation high school baseball game, an adult softball
game, two youth baseball games, or two youth fast pitch games played simultaneously. Each field has covered dugouts, shade covered spectator seating and LED field lighting. The combo fields are low maintenance and can remain open and in use year-round.

- **Youth Baseball Showcase Fields:** The youth baseball fields are natural grass with skinned infield baselines sized specifically for little league baseball. These showcase fields have all the amenities of a first-class facility including but not limited to, covered dug outs, batting cages, electronic score boards, shade covered spectator seating and LED field lighting.

- **Youth Fast Pitch Softball Showcase Field:** The youth fast pitch softball field is natural grass with skinned infield baselines sized specifically for youth fast pitch softball. This showcase field has all the amenities of a first-class facility including but not limited to, covered dug outs, batting cages, electronic score boards, shade covered spectator seating and LED field lighting.

- **The Cove Skate Park:** An expansion to The Cove, an existing skate park, provides space to accommodate additional skateboarding elements and amenities as well as, shade for spectators.

- **Community Fitness Trail:** The community fitness trail is a dedicated ½ mile walking loop with a series of interspersed exercise stations. The path travels around the parks’ perimeter along 14th Street, 16th Street and Colorado Avenue, traverses the park’s interior, and connects to the community hub located in the center of the Park.

- **Tennis/Pickleball Courts:** Four tennis courts striped for pickleball are elevated over the new on-site parking lot and include stairs and an elevator for access. The courts feature LED sports lighting, wide aprons, and dedicated equipment storage directly adjacent to the play area for ease of access.

- **Parking:** The covered parking lot increases on-site parking from 79 existing spaces to 128 spaces. It also includes a safe and convenient passenger loading zone, turnaround area, and dedicated van parking. The parking lot’s central location makes it easily accessible to all park users. To accommodate the proposed field dimensions and provide for ample sidewalks and a Class 1 shared
use bike path along Colorado Avenue adjacent to the park, the footprint of Memorial Park is proposed to be expanded into portions of 16th Street and Colorado Avenue, resulting in a reduction of on street parking spaces adjacent to the park. Eighteen (18) of the 42 existing metered parking spaces along 16th Street are proposed to be eliminated as would 19 metered parking spaces on Colorado Avenue.

- Community Hub: The community hub is centrally located within the park and includes a children’s play area, restrooms, concessions, storage for field permit groups and park maintenance equipment, and a small office for field monitor staff. The playground will be universally accessible and features integrated shade. The location of the community hub relative to the diamond sport fields, tennis/pickleball courts, The Cove skate park, and parking make it the active center of the park.

- Park Perimeter/Streetscape Improvements: 4’-wide planted areas will provide a buffer between generous 8’-wide perimeter sidewalks and field activity within the park. Street trees and parkway planters will create a sense of comfort for pedestrians walking along the street. A Class I shared use bike path will allow for future connections to the Exposition Corridor Bike Path.

- Community Recreation Center: The Community Recreation Center (CRC) would integrate the functions of the existing gymnasium, PAL building, community rooms, and staff offices into one facility. The CRC will be designed to create a strong connection to the park, a flexible floor plan to allow for a wider array of recreational and community functions, a larger gymnasium, and increased storage.

**Phasing and Cost Estimates**

The master plan envisions a phased approach that would be implemented over time as funding is available. Phase 1 – to include four synthetic turf baseball/softball fields; a temporary natural turf practice field; covered parking lot; tennis/pickleball courts; and the community hub – is estimated to cost approximately $25-30 million ($20 million of which will be funded through bond proceeds from Santa Monica College Measure V approved
by the voters in November, 2016) and involve roughly 18-24 months of construction that would be staged to minimize disruptions to existing park use. Due to funding limitations for Phase 1, perimeter streetscape improvements are included in Phase 2 as noted below. If perimeter streetscape improvements were to be added to Phase 1, they would increase the cost by approximately $4 million.

Phase 2 – to include two natural turf youth baseball fields; a natural turf youth fast pitch softball field; community walking loop with exercise stations; expansion of The Cove Skate Park; and perimeter streetscape improvements including: street trees, parkway planters, planted area buffers, and a Class I shared use bike path along Colorado Avenue – is estimated cost approximately $15-18 million and involve roughly 12-18 months of construction that would be staged to minimize disruptions to existing park use.

Phase 3 – to include construction of the new community recreation center (CRC) – is estimated to cost approximately $60-68 million and involve roughly 24-30 months of construction.

**Next Steps**
It is anticipated that the master plan layout will be presented to City Council in October 2019 for approval and direction on next steps for phased implementation to include design of phases I and II of the project and necessary funding agreements with Santa Monica College for use of the $20M in bond proceeds to facilitate construction of Phase I improvements with a goal to complete Phase I improvements by 2023.

**Recommendation**
It is recommended that the Recreation and Parks Commission review the Memorial Park Master Plan Concept Layout, take public comment, and take a formal action regarding the proposed master plan layout and programmatic concepts, for consideration by the design team and for transmission to City Council.
Phase 1
» Clear Fisher Lumber Site
» Demolish Existing Tennis Courts, Parking Lot, Childrens Playground
» Demolish Existing Restrooms and Concession Stand
» Construct new Community Hub with Restrooms and Concessions
» Construct Combo Fields (1, 2, 3, 4)
» Construct Practice Field (5)
» Construct Surface Parking Lot with four Rooftop Tennis Courts
» Construct Children's Playground
» Completed in Two Stages

Estimated Construction Cost: $25M-$30M
Estimated Construction Duration: 18-24 Months

Phase 2
» Demolish Little League Field
» Expand Memorial Park east into portion of 16th Street
» Construct Youth Baseball Fields (5 & 6)
» Construct Youth Fast Pitch Softball Field (7)
» Construct Community Walking Trail and Exercise Stations
» Renovate and Expand “The Cove” Skate Park
» Streetscape Improvements along 14th Street, Colorado Avenue, and Olympic Boulevard.

Estimated Construction Cost: $15M-$18M
Estimated Construction Duration: 12-18 Months

Phase 3
» Demolish Existing Community Recreation Center (Memorial Park Gymnasium, PAL Building, Community Building).
» Construct NEW Community Recreation Center.

Estimated Construction Cost: $60M-$68M
Estimated Construction Duration: 24-30 Months
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Attachments:

A. Parks and Recreation Master Plan – 1997 (weblink)
B. March 22, 2016 Staff Report (weblink)
C. January 23, 2018 Staff Report (weblink)