

City of Culver City, California
City Council Agenda Item Report

Meeting Date: 06/23/08		Item Number: <u>A-1</u>	
AGENDA ITEM: (1) Approval of an Agreement with the County of Los Angeles for the Establishment of a Smart Gardening Demonstration Learning Center in Culver City; (2) Consideration of Recommendations of Possible Park Locations for the Learning Center; and (3) Designation of a Location for the Learning Center in a Park within Culver City.			
Contact Person/Dept.: Catherine A. Vargas/Public Works Environmental Programs and Operations		Phone Number: (310) 253-6411	
Fiscal Impact: Yes ☐ No ☒		General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☒	
Public Hearing: ☐		Action Item: ☒ Attachments: ☒	
Public Notification: Master E-Mail Notification List (06/18/08).			
Department Approval: Damian Skinner for Charles Herbertson, Public Works Director and City Engineer (6/10/08); William La Pointe, Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Services (06/11/08).		City Attorney Approval: Carol Schwab (by H. Baker) (06/18/08)	
Chief Financial Officer Approval: Jeff Muir (by M. Noller (06/18/08)		City Manager Approval: Jerry B. Fulwood (06/18/08)	
<u>RECOMMENDATION:</u> Staff recommends the City Council: (1) approve an agreement with the County of Los Angeles for the establishment of a Smart Gardening Demonstration Learning Center (Learning Center) in Culver City; (2) consider recommendations by the Parks and Recreation Commission and staff regarding possible park locations for the Learning Center; and (3) designate a location for the Learning Center in a park within Culver City. <u>BACKGROUND:</u> The Countywide Smart Gardening Program was established in 1994 by the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works to help meet the Assembly Bill 939 goal of reducing disposal of solid waste in landfills by 50% by the year 2000. The Countywide Smart Gardening Program provides free workshops, participation in regional events and public outreach (Attachment 1). On-site workshops are held at the eleven (11) compost Demonstration Learning Centers located throughout the			

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County to provide hands-on teaching of composting, vermicomposting, grasscycling, and water-wise gardening (Attachment 2). Affordable backyard composting bins made of 100 percent recycled plastic are also available at the centers. This program is funded via the Solid Waste Management Fee collected by the County. The fee is part of the (per ton) tipping fee collected at the landfills.

Culver City expressed an interest in the Smart Gardening Program and was chosen as a potential site primarily because of its Westside location and the support for the project demonstrated by the community and City staff. In addition to the Culver City location, Los Angeles County Public Works (LACPW) will be adding four (4) additional sites to be located and designed in areas that are lacking this type of facility. The other locations have already confirmed participation. The LACPW is ready to go out to bid for the contractors once Culver City confirms their interest in participating by the offering of a site location. Culver City has until the end of June 2008 to identify a site location on which to design, build, and maintain a Demonstration Learning Center and to enter into an agreement with LACPW.

The Smart Gardening Program would guarantee to host three, 4-hour workshops per year. The facility would be available for community use and for additional educational workshops throughout the rest of the year. In addition, the facility would encourage self-learning opportunities through its informational signage and displays.

DISCUSSION:

Smart Gardening in Culver City

Staff researched and reviewed all park spaces within the City to identify a feasible location. After considering the available spaces in the various parks by category (Regional Park, Community Park, Neighborhood Park and Pocket- or Mini-Park) and geographical location, Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department staff recommended consideration of areas within:

- Culver City Park (a Regional Park),
- Veterans Park, Fox Hills and Syd Kronenthal Park (Community Parks),
- and El Marino Park and Culver West Alexander Park (Neighborhood Parks).

Descriptions of these standard park categories are included in Attachment 3, along with aerial maps of the recommended park sites.

Public Works staff considered these park and open space options with the staff of the Los Angeles County Public Works and focused on the following site location criteria:

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- ADA accessibility
- Open to the public during regular park hours
- Visibility while in the park as well as while passing by
- The nature of the surrounding neighborhood (e.g., residential, commercial, school district, etc.)
- Size of the space in the park available for the Center (Demonstration Learning Centers are typically 1600-2500 square feet) in relation to the available space as a whole
- Availability of nearby restrooms
- Other park amenities available in the various parks

Parks and Recreation Commission Actions

At the April 1, 2008 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting, the Commission discussed the Los Angeles County Smart Gardening Program and considered making a recommendation to the City Council that a Demonstration Learning Center be constructed in a park within Culver City. There was Commission consensus that staff's recommendation of Culver City Park as the site for the Learning Center would not be supported by the Commission. However, the Commission supported the Smart Gardening project and requested that staff return with additional suggestions as to the appropriate site for the Learning Center (moved by Commissioner Daly Redholtz; seconded by Commissioner James; passed 3-1-0-1 with Deen dissenting and Shapiro absent). An excerpt of the minutes of the April 1, 2008 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting are provided as Attachment 4.

At the May 6, 2008 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting, the Commission again discussed the Los Angeles County Smart Gardening Program and considered making a recommendation to the City Council that a Demonstration Learning Center be constructed in a park within Culver City. Staff presented an area within Veterans Memorial Park as a recommended site location, but the Commission did not concur. In addition, the Commission once again emphasized its strong opposition to locating the Learning Center within Culver City Park. The Commission then took action to recommend that the City Council approve an agreement with the Los Angeles County of Public Works to design and build a Smart Gardening Demonstration Learning Center in a park within Culver City and stated that, through community and staff input, the park location for the Learning Center would be recommended to the City Council at a later date (moved by Commissioner Daly Redholtz; seconded by Vice Chair Shapiro; passed unanimously). An excerpt of the draft minutes of the May 6, 2008 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting are provided as Attachment 5.

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On May 21, 2008, the PRCS Director, Public Works Environmental Program and Operations staff, and Los Angeles County staff met with the Parks and Recreation Commission's Subcommittee on the Comprehensive Plan (Chair Cooper and Commissioner Daly Redholtz). Los Angeles County representatives provided a detailed presentation on the program. Attendees discussed a timeline for making a recommendation to City Council that would incorporate additional input from the Culver City community.

At the June 3, 2008 meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission, staff presented the item for further discussion and community input. The Commission took action to adjourn the meeting to June 7, 2008 at 9:00 a.m. for the purpose of hearing additional community comment (moved by Commissioner Daly Redholtz; seconded by Chair Cooper; passed 3-0-0-2 with Deen and James absent).

In noticing the June 7, 2008 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting, several steps were taken to promote further community input. The following public outreach was done:

- Postcards mailed to fifty-one (51) Culver City Homeowner's Associations.
- A press release emailed to all local print media. Notice of the meeting was subsequently published in the June 5, 2008 issue of the Culver City News.
- An announcement containing detailed information posted on the City's website in three locations: Culver City Highlights, the PRCS Homepage, and the Environmental page.
- A cable crawler televised during Culver City meetings broadcast on Channel 35 during the week of June 2.
- 1,935 recipients email contacts notified on both June 2 and June 5.
- 400 half-page flyers distributed at various Culver City parks.

The June 7, 2008 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting was attended by ten community members, seven City staff members, two Los Angeles County staff and three Commissioners. Two comments by members of the public taken at the podium were in support of the conservation message that the Smart Gardening program offers. Additional comments received by staff via email were read into the minutes. These comments, along with a summary cover page, are provided as Attachment 6.

After receiving all public comment and discussing the matter, the following motion was moved by Commissioner Daly Redholtz, seconded by Commissioner James and passed unanimously (3-0-0-2 with Deen absent and Shapiro excused):

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THAT A) THE COMMISSION ENTHUSIASTICALLY SUPPORTS THE SMART GARDENING DEMONSTRATION LEARNING CENTER IN CULVER CITY; B) TO RECOMMEND THAT THE CITY COUNCIL CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING AS POSSIBLE PARK LOCATIONS FOR THE PROJECT IN THIS ORDER: 1) VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK, 2) CARLSON PARK, AND 3) EL MARINO PARK; AND C) RECOMMEND TO CITY COUNCIL THAT THE SMART GARDENING CENTER NOT BE PLACED IN CULVER CITY PARK.

An excerpt of the draft minutes of the June 7, 2008 Parks and Recreation Commission is provided as Attachment 7.

Staff Evaluation of the Learning Center Location

Culver City Public Works Department and Parks Division staff met several times to discuss the project and consider various locations for the Smart Gardening Program Learning Center in Culver City based on the aforementioned site location criteria. Each park in the City was considered and assessed as to its suitability for the project from an objective perspective that included park type, park geographical location, upcoming Park and Recreation Master planning activities and review of additional types of amenities in each park and at community locales. LACPW staff participated in several of these discussions and visited Culver City to view specific parks as potential Learning Center sites.

Considering the above information, staff recommends that in addition to the Parks and Recreation Commissions recommendation of (1) Veterans Memorial Park (a Community Park), (2) Carlson Park (a Neighborhood Park), and (3) El Marino Park (a Neighborhood Park), the following Culver City park locations also be considered for the Smart Gardening Learning Center:

- Culver City Park (a Regional Park)
- Syd Kronenthal Park (a Community Park)

The Next Steps in the Process

Currently the County is in the process of procuring a landscape architect to design the new Demonstration Learning Centers. Should the City Council approve building the Demonstration Learning Center at a park within Culver City, Los Angeles County will, in consultation with Culver City staff, develop a conceptual design for the Demonstration Learning Center. Any construction and/or development will be coordinated through the Public Works and Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Departments to achieve the best possible construction timeline for the

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Learning Center. In addition, design plans for the Center will come before the Parks and Recreation Commission and the City Council for comment.

Should the City Council approve building the Demonstration Learning Center at a park within Culver City, the City Attorney's Office will review/prepare an agreement with Los Angeles County that protects the City's land tenure within that park and clearly delineates both parties' responsibilities with respect to the Center.

FISCAL ANALYSIS:

Los Angeles County will fund the design, construction and maintenance of the Smart Gardening Center. Culver City's contribution will be providing the space for the Center, providing staff coordination during the design and construction of the Center and for on-going coordination of composting workshops (approximately three workshops per year). Approximately 100 hours of staff time will be required during the design, development and construction stages of this project.

The City will have no maintenance responsibility for the Center. Once the Demonstration Learning Center design is completed, the centers, including any exterior landscaping, are maintained by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Los Angeles County Smart Gardening brochure
2. Current Smart Gardening Demonstration Learning Center locations
3. Categorization of park types and aerial views of recommended Smart Gardening Demonstration Learning Center locations
4. Excerpt of the approved minutes of the April 1, 2008 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting
5. Excerpt of the draft minutes of the May 6, 2008 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting
6. Stakeholder comments received via email and read into the public record at the June 7, 2008 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting (with summary cover sheet)
7. Excerpt of the draft minutes of the June 7, 2008 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting

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MOTION:

That the City Council:

1. Approve a Los Angeles County Smart Gardening Demonstration Learning Center in Culver City at a designated park; and,
2. Authorize the City Attorney to review/prepare the necessary documents; and,
3. Authorize the City Manager to execute such documents on behalf of the City;

and

4. Consider recommendations by the Parks and Recreation Commission and staff of possible park locations for the Learning Center, including:

- a) The Parks and Recreation Commission's recommendations (in priority order) of:

- (1) Veterans Memorial Park,
- (2) Carlson Park, and
- (3) El Marino Park,

- b) and staff's recommendations of Culver City Park and Syd Kronenthal Park;

and

5. Designate a Location for the Learning Center in a Park within Culver City.