

Equity and Human Relations Advisory Committee

Report on Soccer Prohibition Signs in Culver City Parks EHRAC Meeting 4/22/25

Ad Hoc Subcommittee Members: Haifaa Moammar, Benicio Mora-Fattorini, Carlos Valverde

The ad hoc subcommittee reviewed archived Council minutes and documents dating back from 1994 regarding the Soccer Prohibition signs located in all parks in Culver City.

The matter of the soccer signs and signage began to be addressed in 2018 by the Parks and Recreation Commission. During this discussion, "Commission members expressed an interest in gaining a better understanding of the background and implications of this prohibition" (Staff communication to Valverde).

At a later meeting in 2018 by the PRC the Commission's discussion referenced a

"The nine month study that was conducted in 1994 demonstrated several reasons that the adult soccer was prohibited in Culver West Park and eventually throughout parks in Culver City. Behavioral issues from players, damage to the turf and conflicts with other activities in the parks were that main justifications. There is no backup for as to why only adult soccer specifically was prohibited and no other sports. Staff can only guess that adult soccer was the issue at that time and other adult sports were either not having problems in the community or were not as prevalent (Staff communication to Valverde).

On 9/01/20, the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Commission held a meeting to discuss "Park Prohibitions Signage in Culver City Parks and the Removal and/or Replacement of Existing Signs." During public comments, several members of the community expressed concerns that the presence and presentation of these signs are insensitive, unwelcoming and its translation in only one other language (Spanish) targets a specific ethnic group. The PRCS Commission moved to recommend that the City Council remove all signage that prohibits soccer. The motion failed with two Ayes, three Noes.

The EHRAC's Soccer Signage ad hoc subcommittee also reviewed personal anecdotal information provided by Carlos Valverde, member of this ad hoc subcommittee, a lifetime resident and 28-year CCHS teacher. For many years, the topic of these signs were often brought up by students who felt disturbed about these signs; not necessarily about the prohibition of adult soccer activities but about how it targeted a Spanish speaking population. In addition, Valverde's participation in the AYSO program for five years included numerous conversations with members of the community, fellow AYSO parents, and neighbors. Within these conversations the signs seem to carry a meaning that people perceive beyond an issue of turf damage, but rather of exclusion.

In August 2020, prior to the PRCS meeting in September, Valverde posted a picture of these signs on his personal Facebook account. The post did not ask a question and was intended to elicit unprompted responses/opinions from his Facebook followers, who mostly lived, studied or currently live in Culver City. Comments included:

“You know why it’s in Spanish... and who plays soccer at the parks?”

Another comment explained, *“... agreed the verbiage allows any CCPD officer to stop anyone with a soccer ball on the field. We all know Raza is its biggest enthusiast and will play in almost any park. As they should!”*

At the time, a community member and former CCUSD school board member added to my post an announcement for a PRCS meeting which would discuss the removal of these signs as she described them as *“anti-adults, anti-Latinx, and anti-access to public parks.”* After the PRCS vote to remove the signs failed, another Facebook comment appeared:

“So whats it going to take to get the racists off the commission?”

Throughout the years since the signs went up, there is a general attitude, especially among Latinos, that these signs are problematic and not emblematic of who we are as a City.

In examining the history of these signs, the EHRAC’s Soccer Signage ad hoc subcommittee framed its analysis of these documents within a framework of historical practices by city officials to control public spaces that were discriminatory and unfair to certain ethnic or racial groups. With the recent release of the **Culver City Historical Context Study**, it reminds us of our City’s history of discriminatory attitudes that persisted through unfair housing practices, racial covenants, schooling, etc. The study explains that in communities such as Culver City, “suburban communities increasingly used the power to control public spaces as a way to manage racial dynamics and protect the interests of White homeowners, often cloaked, somewhat putatively, with “colorblind” language” (CCHCS, 52).

The study goes on to cite the example from 1982 where the “Fox Hills Property Owners Association,” a politically powerful consortium of property owners and real estate interests in the southernmost section of Culver City, petitioned city officials to remove basketball courts at Fox Hills Park.” (p. 52). According to the study, more recent examples of discrimination are “not as explicit as the exclusionary attitudes of years past, but nonetheless continued to work against people of color and often made them feel like outsiders in their own community” (CCHCS, 52).

The EHRAC’s Soccer Signage ad hoc subcommittee believes that another possible factor to consider within the framework of this analysis is the historical context of when these signs first went up in all Culver City Parks. We believe that the signs were posted during a time when California was experiencing restrictive and reactionary response to immigrant populations, primarily Latino immigrants, as evidenced through the rise of anti-Latino sentiment due to the

campaign to pass Proposition 187 and the Pete Wilson gubernatorial election in November 1994. Based on the review of the documents, it appears that these signs went up in the fall of 1994.

Ad hoc subcommittee Next Steps:

The EHRAC's Soccer Signage ad hoc subcommittee finds that despite the signs being scheduled for removal in the fall of 2025, the history and impact of these signs should not go unnoticed by today's Council.

Our intentions are as follows:

1. Inform the Council of this committee's work on this issue. We would like to designate an EHRAC member to present at a future Council meeting during "Items from CBC Members/Staff."
2. Within the presentation, make the recommendation to remove these signs before their scheduled replacement.
3. The ad hoc subcommittee will draft a script in preparation for this meeting.
4. If the Council votes to agendize the item, the ad hoc subcommittee will prepare any information requested by staff.