



City of Culver City

Staff Report

File #: 22-321, Version: 1

Item #: A-1.

CC - ACTION ITEM: (1) Approval of a Conceptual Plan for the Revitalization of Media Park; and (2) Direction to the City Manager as Deemed Appropriate.

Meeting Date: April 11, 2022

Contact Person/Dept: Elaine Warner/CDD/Economic Development
Todd Tipton/CDD/Economic Development

Phone Number: (310) 253 - 5777
(310) 253 - 5783

Fiscal Impact: Yes No **General Fund:** Yes No

Attachments: Yes No

Commission Action: Yes No

Commission Name/Date: CAC (11/16/2021); PRCSC (12/07/2021)

Public Notification: (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas - City Council (02/23/2022) (03/23/2022), (04/06/2022); The Actors' Gang, Downtown Business Association and Workshop Attendees (02/17/2022), (04/04/2022)

Department Approval: Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (02/15/2022)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the City Council (1) approve a conceptual plan for the revitalization of Media Park; and (2) provide direction to the City Manager as deemed appropriate.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

In October 2020, the City Council authorized an agreement with SWA to prepare a conceptual plan for the revitalization of Media Park and to conduct community outreach. Design goals include activating the park, accommodating special events/vendors, and integrating the existing green space and tree canopy. Two community meetings were held in February and April 2021 to garner community input on design elements and program components. Representatives from the City of Los Angeles 5th Council District, Department of Recreation and Parks, and members of the Palms

Neighborhood Council also participated in the process in consideration of the park's long-term lease with the City of Los Angeles.

Community Workshops and Plan Development

The first workshop held in February 2021 focused on the park's location, context, and activation opportunities. Participants were engaged through an interactive survey assessing connectivity, ecological issues/open space, social programming, park management, and maintenance. Utilizing input from more than 100 survey responses and meeting comments, SWA developed and presented two conceptual designs at the second workshop in April 2021(Attachment 1).

- Option 1 "The Arc," draws inspiration from the curvature of a movie reel and creates a connection to the area's rich film history. Curved pathways connect the four major zones in the design including an elevated lawn, outdoor amphitheater, pop-up café and swing set.
- Option 2 "The Interlink" celebrates the existing tree configuration located on the west side of the park. The design reflects the curvature of the tree roots both at the ground plane and in the proposed overhead canopy and incorporates a flat, flexible great lawn, pop-up café, public art piece, stage area and large promenade to host special event programming. This option also includes a decked walk above the tree root system on the westside of the park.

Both designs focus on maintaining the existing trees and creating a visual connection to the Ivy Substation. Each design also contemplates removing the diagonal parking along Culver Boulevard and creating parallel parking to expand the park footprint and allow for increased green and/or promenade space. The parking reconfiguration also includes a vehicular drop off zone near the Ivy Substation entrance for theater patrons.

Similar to the first meeting, an interactive survey was conducted during the second workshop held in April 2021 (with a portal to provide input for up to two weeks thereafter) to assess project elements and design preferences. Approximately 200 respondents provided feedback relative to potential parking reductions, open space, and program elements. A majority of the respondents preferred Option 2 relative to layout, open space distribution and connection to Downtown and adjacent neighborhoods. Additionally, a large percentage favored reconfigured parking along Culver Boulevard.

During the meeting there were also several comments concerning the necessity of a commercial business/café, ensuring accessibility, maintaining the ecosystem of the park, and creating stronger connections with and acknowledgement of the Palms Neighborhood to the north.

Staff presented the initial plans to the Economic Development Subcommittee on September 4, 2021, for their review and recommendations. Input from that meeting related to unsheltered park users, activating the park with a consistent commercial vendor/establishment, creating a connection to the Palms neighborhood at the northwest corner, and including a sound/visual barrier along Venice Boulevard. One Subcommittee Member noted a preference for Option 2 "The Interlink" relative to the promenade area for events and potential accommodation of the Farmer's Market.

Farmers Market Considerations

SWA considered opportunities to potentially accommodate the Farmer's Market at Media Park. Option 2, "The Interlink" provides an area for special events and vendors along a Culver Boulevard promenade. In reviewing this option, staff consulted with the City's market manager/contractor to understand potential obstacles relative to potential relocation of the market. The market manager/contractor felt that the existing Farmer's Market would not survive in its current configuration if relocated to Media Park but believes a smaller/boutique market (possibly on weekends) might succeed.

SWA has confirmed that Option 2, with parallel parking, and use of Canfield Avenue, would accommodate the existing footprint of the Farmer's Market; however, further operational study related to utilities, storage, vendor load in/out and parking, and other infrastructure requirements is required. These items would be studied as the design is further developed.

City Commission Review

The conceptual plans were presented to the Cultural Affairs Commission (CAC) on November 16, 2021, and to the Parks, Recreation and Community Service Commission (PRCSC) on December 7, 2021. During the respective discussions, staff received comments regarding accessibility and parking, the commercial activation component, and the inclusion of a performing arts space/stage (Attachments 2 and 3).

The CAC provided comments regarding seating, green space and parking accessibility for those with disabilities and were generally not supportive of a commercial activation given proximity to Downtown Culver City restaurants. They acknowledged that the City needs performing arts spaces but felt the inclusion of a stage component requires a more thoughtful approach. They recommended that a theater consultant be engaged to provide input on stage size, layout, seating, sound, lighting, and programming prior to proceeding with further plan development. The general discussion centered on the premise that the plan may be too ambitious/broad and should be refocused to do one thing well.

The PRCSC was supportive of the plans and commercial activation relative to the inclusion of a kids' area or other community activations that would create a convenient experience for parents, care givers and families (Attachment 4). They acknowledged that the performance space would be a nice feature and could attract other cultural programming uses, however felt that there needed to be more offerings/play areas for children and youth. It was noted that Downtown Culver City does not currently have activities for families and the park is proximate to higher density housing to the north. Overall, the PRCSC felt the conceptual plans were interesting, would improve the Park and complement the adjacent area.

The Actors' Gang

The Actors' Gang (TAG) is the long-term tenant at the Ivy Substation situated within Media Park. They participated in the community workshops and provided feedback relative to lawn capacity, accessibility, and performance seating/programming. Per their request, staff met with members TAG's Board of Directors on February 8, 2022 to discuss these comments and additional issues regarding the parking configuration and performance space.

TAG expressed concerns about the inclusion of the performance space, primarily due to its proposed location on Venice Boulevard and proximity to their theater. They indicated that they were not likely to utilize the space given the relaxed nature of their Shakespeare in the Park performances and had concerns about programming, acoustics, and lighting elements similar to those voiced by the CAC. TAG was also not supportive of the parallel parking option along Culver Boulevard and prefers the existing configuration which provides more space for those with accessibility issues entering and exiting their vehicles.

Design Considerations and Alternatives

These discussions provide perspective on the fundamental question of what Media Park, should be and how it should be revitalized. In order to provide the City Council will options that reflect the community input and recent discussions, SWA developed an Interlink alternative option that replaces the performance space with a community “play area” (Attachment 1).

Staff recognizes the need for more performance spaces in the City however the issues noted by the CAC and TAG highlight potential challenges relative to location, acoustics and crossover programming within Media Park. It is important to note, the recently completed Town Plaza expansion was designed with electrical and subsurface conduit, storage space and public seating to accommodate performance space for art, theater, and music. Cultural Affairs Division staff will be participating in the programming of the performances in Town Plaza, and it will likely serve as a potential space venue for future performing arts grant recipients.

As per previous discussions with the City Council and the Economic Development subcommittee, staff recommends that the plans include a commercial activation with a small food service-related use be considered to enliven the park and offer a place for additional seating, socializing, and a destination for the broader community.

Next Steps

If the City Council approves a conceptual plan (or alternative), staff will coordinate with the City of Los Angeles to present the selected design to the Board of Recreation and Parks Commission for approval per the terms of the park’s lease.

Following approvals from the City of Los Angeles, the plan would proceed through Schematic Design Phase (plan refinements) with high-level architecture and civil components identified. If the City Council desires to proceed with the schematic design phase, staff will return with a proposal for that additional work at a future meeting.

The project design would then continue through the Design Development phase (engineering and material selection) and would be completed with preparation of construction documents (including a complete set of design details related to architecture, landscaping, civil, and electrical).

FISCAL ANALYSIS

Preliminary cost estimates were developed for each plan option relative to parking configurations along Culver Boulevard (Attachment 1):

- Option 1 “The Arc” is estimated at \$5,067,162 and
- Option 2 “The Interlink” is estimated at \$5,365,172 with the removal of diagonal parking.

If the existing parking/street configuration is to remain, costs for each plan would be reduced by approximately \$450,000 for Option 1 and \$290,000 for Option 2.

There is no cost associated with the approval of a conceptual plan. If the City Council wishes to explore further design development, staff recommends collaborating with the City of Los Angeles to identify potential funding sources such as grants, parkland fees, and/or exploring other public/private partnerships to advance the project design and implementation. Once funding for the project is identified, it will be brought back to the City Council for approval. The City currently has approximately \$80,000 available in Parkland Fees that could be allocated to progress this work.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Media Park Concept Design Report
2. Cultural Affairs Commission November 16, 2021, Meeting Minutes
3. Parks, Recreation and Community Service Commission December 7, 2021, Meeting Minutes
4. Community Activation Program Alternatives

MOTION

That the City Council:

1. Approve a conceptual plan for the revitalization of Media Park; and
2. Provide direction to the City Manager as deemed appropriate.