

**STAFF REPORT****MEETING**

DATE: July 11, 2024

TO: Recreation, Cultural and Community Services Advisory Commission

FROM: Katie Gauntlett, Parks, Recreation &amp; Community Services Director

**SUBJECT: RECEIVE A PRESENTATION AND PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON RESULTS COLLECTED FROM THE ONLINE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY AND PUBLIC MEETING SEEKING COMMUNITY FEEDBACK FOR FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PLAYGROUND AT JOSEF HOOG COMMUNITY PARK, 558 MARIN OAKS DRIVE**

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**REQUEST**

Receive a presentation and provide feedback on results collected from the online engagement survey and public meeting, hosted on June 27, 2024, seeking to collect community feedback on future improvements to the playground at Josef Hoog Community Park located at 558 Marin Oaks Drive.

**BACKGROUND**

After a year-long development process, City Council adopted the City's first comprehensive Parks Master Plan (PMP) on April 9, 2024. Within the adopted Plan, the Capital Project List outlines forty-nine (49) projects developed from analysis of the PMP's community engagement process, the Americans with Disabilities Access Study, the community needs assessment survey, and the level of service analysis conducted during the PMP project. These identified park projects range in scope, cost and location, and were assigned priority time frames of either short-term (0-5 years), mid-term (6-10 years), or long-term (11+ years) for addressing each project.

Replacement of the existing playground at Josef Hoog Community Park is identified as a short-term priority in the PMP Capital Project List. The project is also identified in the City's Capital Improvement Plan for Fiscal Year 2024/2025. Additionally, implementation of this improvement project reflects the community's number one priority identified in the PMP – to maintain and improve existing parks and recreation facilities before developing new sites.

Josef Hoog Community Park (Hoog Park) is one of seven community parks in the City. While community parks are diverse in nature, they include neighborhood park amenities—and can act as neighborhood parks—however the focus of a community park is on meeting community-based recreation needs. These parks may contain significant athletic complexes, aquatic amenities, walking paths, picnic areas, and various other active and passive amenities depending upon community needs and site suitability. Community parks usually serve multiple neighborhoods, with special amenities serving all City residents. Spanning nearly 10-acres, Hoog Park is in a beautiful location serving the Ignacio area. The park features rolling acreage with a backdrop of tree-studded hills, walking paths, a basketball court (half court only), a playground, benches and picnic tables, and a reservable barbecue area.

The existing playground at Hoog Park is over 15 years old and has reached the end of its useful life. With replacement equipment no longer supported by the original manufacturer, challenges continue to arise as pieces age and break. Additionally, the playground is set in sand which is not an accessible play surface and poses ongoing safety and maintenance concerns. Replacement

of this structure would enhance the park overall, provide increased accessibility, and address ongoing maintenance needs.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

To begin the community engagement phase of this project, staff launched an online survey to collect feedback on features and amenities they would like to see incorporated in the new play structure and play area. A draft of the survey was presented to the Recreation, Cultural and Community Services (RCCS) Commission on May 9, 2024. The RCCS Commission was supportive of the draft survey and the online survey officially launched to the public on June 6, 2024. The survey, and all promotion encouraging participation in the survey, was provided in both English and Spanish to all residents and featured questions around preferences in play surfacing, fencing, play equipment, and overall aesthetics such as equipment colors/themes. Promotion of the survey was shared through the Department and City's social media channels (Facebook and Instagram), email campaigns including the City's June e-newsletter, and flyers at our customer service locations, park kiosks, programs, and events. While Hoog Park is a community park serving the larger Novato community, staff ensured the residents in the immediate neighborhood were aware and engaged in the process by delivering flyers to their mailboxes on two separate occasions to encourage their participation.

The online survey closed on Sunday, June 30 at 11:59pm with 301 attendees to the site and 204 collected responses. The overwhelming majority of respondents, 97.1%, were Novato Residents with 56.4% residing in the 94949-zip code. The majority of respondents, 28.4%, reported visiting the playground a few times a year, with weekly visits being the second highest response at 24.5%, and monthly visits at 21.1%. When asked what featured play elements they would consider their top priority for Hoog Park, 77.5% of respondents selected "Swings", followed by "Climbers/Balance/Agility" at 76.5%, "Slides" at 69.6%, "Motion Play" 49.0% and finally "Sensory or Music Play" at 27.5%. The survey also asked respondents their color scheme preferences around the playgrounds design, 42.2% prefer "Cool" shades such as blues, while 34.8% prefer "Nature-based" such as tans and greens. An overwhelming majority of respondents also selected "Rubberized Surfacing" as their preferred play surfacing at the park, as well as 66.7% of respondents would like to see perimeter fencing installed at this site to fully enclose the play area. A total of 122 individual comments were also submitted with the survey responses. The complete survey results and comments are included as Attachment 1 of this Staff Report.

In addition to the online survey, staff hosted a public meeting on Thursday, June 27, 2024, at Hoog Park. The purpose of this community meeting was to discuss the project's goals with residents, gather input and feedback about the future renovation and encourage participation in the online survey. There were a total of 30 adults and approximately 14 children in attendance. Staff led a discussion about plans for this future renovation and then guests were asked to participate in a "priority voting" activity where they placed sticker dots ("votes") on the amenities they would like to see at the renovated playground. Guests also had the opportunity to provide additional feedback about the park and playground by posting post-it notes to a collective board. Results of the voting activity at the community meeting showed that the majority of respondents would like to see a "Nature-based" color scheme of greens and tan at the renovated site. Priority preference of featured play equipment from the community meeting participants included "Swings" with the most votes, followed by "Climbers, Balance, Agility", "Slides", "Motion Play", and finally "Sensory or Music". Images of the engagement boards from this meeting are included in Attachment 2.

The details of this public meeting were included on the flyers that PRCS staff placed in all neighboring park residents' mailboxes. In addition to social media promotion, and a press release issued in partnership with the City's Communications Team, an email blast promoting the meeting and the survey was initially sent on June 18, 2024 to 11,002 email addresses from the Department's registration database. This initial email campaign featured a 63.1% open rate and a 1.8% click rate. A second, "reminder" email, was sent on June 26, 2024 with another

successful open rate of 63.8%.

As this project progresses, staff will continue to utilize a variety of outreach methods to ensure the community is well informed about the project, and ensure residents have multiple opportunities to share their feedback and engage in the process. This consistent and strategic outreach effort will include the curation of Hoog Park specific content for press releases, social media and email campaigns, features in the City's e-newsletter, as well as management of a dedicated project webpage. Additionally, the distribution of flyers, in-person and electronically, in both English and Spanish at events and programs, posted in park kiosks, and shared at public facing customer service counters at the City Administrative Offices, Margaret Todd Senior Center, Downtown Recreation Center, and the Novato Gymnastics Center will support outreach and education about this project, including promotion of future community meetings.

At this time, staff are requesting the RCCS Commission's review of collected community feedback (Attachment 1) and provide feedback. Community feedback collected during this initial engagement period will be incorporated into future design plans for the playground renovation, before being brought back to the community and the RCCS Commission for additional input. Staff are currently exploring potential grant opportunities to support the completion of this project, before moving through the bid, planning and design phases. Staff anticipate presenting draft design plans in the early fall to the RCCS Commission.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

This item was noticed per standard City of Novato City Council agenda noticing procedures for including posting the agenda at least 72 hours in advance on the community bulletin board in front of City Administrative Offices located at 922 Machin Avenue, posting on the City's website at [novato.org/councilagendas](http://novato.org/councilagendas) and sending an email notification to all e-notification subscribers.

This item will be promoted via the City and PRCS Department's social media channels, Facebook and Instagram, on July 8, 2024.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The City's Adopted F/Y 2024/2025 Budget includes \$200,000 of Facilities Long-Term Maintenance and \$520,000 of American Rescue Plan Act funds to support this project. To date, no funds have been spent.

Implementation of the online engagement survey seeking to collect community feedback on future improvements to the playground at Josef Hoog Community Park, located at 558 Marin Oaks Drive, was designed and implemented in-house and does not have any impact on the identified project budget.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Receive a presentation and provide feedback to staff.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Provide alternative direction to staff.

### **ATTACHMENT**

1. Online Engagement Survey Results for Future Improvements at Josef Hoog Community Park Playground
2. Community Meeting Engagement Boards from June 27, 2024 Meeting.