

## REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL

**Approved by:**

*Joseph Hebert*

Joseph Hebert, Parks & Community Services Director

*Arnoldo Rodriguez*

Arnoldo Rodriguez, City Manager

**Council Meeting of:** October 4, 2023

**Agenda Number:** E-1

**SUBJECT:**

Riverview Park Playground Equipment Installation

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Receive a summary report of the neighborhood meeting and provide direction on plans to install playground equipment at Riverview Park

**SUMMARY:**

The Department of Transportation (Caltrans) awarded the City of Madera \$832,350 under the Clean California Local Grant Program (CCLGP). The grant award is to be used for the completion of several non-infrastructure and infrastructure projects to address beautification and improvement projects in and along the Fresno River and the Vernon McCullough River Trail. These include:

- Litter abatement in the Fresno River.
- Restoration of the Vernon McCullough cross-city trail system.
- Installation of exercise equipment in a section of the trail.
- Removal of current trash bins and installation of new trash receptacles along the trail.
- Installation of playground equipment with a swing set at Riverview Park which sits adjacent to the Fresno River.
- Installation of educational signage and trail markers along the trail.

Staff is seeking affirmation from the Council about the plans to move forward with the installation of the playground equipment with a swing set at Riverview Park, as several residents have voiced opinions requesting for the installation to not occur at the park, or for the installation to occur at a different location within the park.

**DISCUSSION:**

Caltrans developed the CCLGP as part of a two-year program. Approximately \$296 million will go to local communities to beautify and improve local streets and roads, tribal lands, parks, pathways, and transit centers to clean and enhance public spaces. Through the combination of adding beautification measures and art in public spaces along with the removal of litter and debris, the CCLGP is intended to enhance communities and improve spaces for walking and recreation.

On January 19, 2022, staff brought before the Council the initial intent to apply for grant funds under the CCLGP. The application intended to address the increase in refuse in the Fresno River and immediate surrounding areas over the last few years. The application planned to augment the work already being done by the City under the riverbed cleanup pilot program and add beautification projects and an educational component as part of the maintenance aspect. Grant applications were due February 1, 2022.

Due to the selection of the Fresno River and Vernon McCullough River Trail as the grant project site, staff sought grant components that would fit the grant intent and allowable purposes. With Riverview Park not having park amenities, and the purpose of the grant being to enhance communities and improve space for recreation, the idea of adding playground equipment to the park was finalized. Staff also took into consideration the limited playground equipment on the northwest side of town and the fact that there are no swing sets on the west side of town.

During the summer of 2022, the City was notified of being selected as an awardee for the CCLGP. Awards were given to 105 projects, or approximately 30 percent of the received applications, totaling \$295,993,146 in requested grant funds. The CCLGP team received 329 applications by the application deadline that sought \$758,485,147 in grant funds. The City was 1 out of 105 applications selected to be funded, being awarded the full request amount of \$832,350.

On June 1, 2022, staff brought before the Council the request to approve a Restricted Grant Agreement for the CCLGP funding of \$832,350. Council did approve the Restricted Grant Agreement. Staff Report confirmed play equipment to be installed at Riverview Park was an approved component of the grant application. The grant performance period was identified as June 30, 2024.

Since then, staff have worked diligently to execute components of the grant components.

- A total of \$195,000 has been reimbursed for litter abatement efforts in the Fresno River.
- Staff ensured procurement processes were followed for the motion-capable exercise and playground equipment. The equipment has been received and was set to be installed by the end of September 2023.
- Staff released an Invitation for Bid for the trail restoration of the Vernon McCullough River Trail; Invitation for Bid 202323-07. Bids are due October 16, 2023.
- Staff also began planning to procure 36 trash receptacles to replace the outdated and worn-out receptacles along the trail. This will take collaboration between City and local partners such as Madera Unified School District and the Madera County Arts Council, as

trash receptacles shall have educational artwork with eco-friendly and environmental messaging, which staff plans to have as much community participation as possible.

Pertaining to the installation of the playground equipment at Riverview Park, staff put the installation plans on pause after several residents voiced requests for the installation of the playground equipment to not occur at the park, or for the installation to occur at a different location within the park. Initial comments were submitted the week of August 25, 2023. Initial comments included:

- The playground will bring unwanted noise to a quiet neighborhood.
- Neighbors were not aware of the project.
- The playground would increase the amount of trash left in the neighborhood.
- The playground would obstruct views of the Fresno River, State Route 99, and Fairgrounds.
- The playground could potentially devalue homes.
- The playground will most likely cause visitors to park in front of residential homes.
- The playground would not be utilized, as there are very few children in the neighborhood.
- The playground is an unwanted risk.
- The playground will bring additional out-of-the-area people into the neighborhood.
- The playground will increase or attract activity and the presence of people who may be experiencing an unhoused situation.

As proposed, the current playground dimensions are 90 feet by 40 feet and include plans for a toddler lot for ages 2-5, and a swing set geared towards ages 5-12, with the overall play area designed for children 2-12. Worth noting is that the swing set does include an inclusive swing seat, able to provide a secure molded seat, high back, adjustable harness, and a neutral body position. For context, the initial proposed site plan for the playground area is identified in Attachment 1 and the initial playground location at the park is identified in Attachment 2.

During the first week of September, the City Manager and Parks & Community Services Department Director conducted a site visit at Riverview Park to confirm the location for the placement of playground equipment was ideal.

On Monday, September 11, 2023, Parks & Community Services (PCS) Department staff, consisting of the PCS Director, Administrative Analyst, and Parks Supervisor conducted a site visit with the Public Works Electrical/Facilities Manager to explore any effects of placing the equipment farther on the east side of the park, towards Lillian Street, as there are two light poles that may have underground lines impacting any digging. After inspection, the Public Works Electrical/Facilities Manager confirmed the light poles at the site were not sub-surface and should have no underground lines, unless otherwise noted by an Underground Service Alert inspection.

On Tuesday, September 12, 2023, the Parks Supervisor met with West Coast Arborists to conduct a site visit to explore the options of placing the playground equipment at a different location in the park. West Coast Arborist noted that moving the playground farther to the east, towards

Lillian Street, would require removing a large tree estimated to be over 100 years old. West Coast Arborists confirmed the current proposed playground location was best fitting, as moving the playground farther west or east would result in removing trees to accommodate the equipment. Attachment 3 identifies the tree and location of the tree within the park, estimated to be over one hundred years old.

On Wednesday, September 20, 2023, City staff, consisting of the PCS Director, Administrative Analyst, and Parks Supervisor conducted a site visit with the contracted playground installer to explore possible alternatives for the placement of the playground equipment in another location of the park. The installer confirmed moving the playground farther to the east would result in close proximity to the intersection of Lillian Street, further raising safety concerns, as well as the concern for tree roots if the playground was moved to the east. The installer did confirm the playground equipment could be moved a few feet to the west, towards Joy Street. During the inspection, the idea of alternating the playground equipment so the toddler lot was on the west and the swing set on the east could possibly aid in decreasing concerns of view obstruction for the front door residents. Attachment 2 identifies the new proposed location of the playground area, moved slightly to the west. The new configuration would allow the toddler lot to sit across the way from an alley, garage, and driveway and the swing set would now sit across from the resident's front door, creating a less obstructive view.

On Monday, September 25, 2023, City staff facilitated a neighborhood meeting at Riverview Park to further make time for residents to share their opinions. City staff:

- Posted notice of the meeting on City's social media platform
- Notified residents of the meeting via flyers delivered to over 60 residences in the immediate neighborhood.

Over 20 residents, including parents with children, couples, and individuals, attended the meeting. The City was represented by Councilmembers, PCS staff, and the Police Department. Similar opinions as the initial comments noted previously were shared. Opinions in favor included:

- The playground would increase the value of homes in the neighborhood.
- Having a park with a playground increases the leverage of the Police Department to dedicate patrolling in the area, as any space designed for children is a priority to keep safe.
- A playground area is much better than a vacant lot area.
- Having a neighborhood park can be a valuable experience for neighborhood children to have access to a play area.
- The addition of a playground in the area would attract neighbors to get to know each other, building a community where people know their neighbors and look out for one another.

- The addition of a playground would not either increase or attract additional illicit activity, as the presence of families and people, in general, tends to drive that type of activity away.
- There is ample parking space along Riverview Drive on the park side of the street, should visitors drive to the park.
- Parks make life better.

The meeting's intent was to hear the neighborhood residents' perspectives and provide a safe opportunity for dialogue. Leading the meeting were Councilmember Steve Montes, and the PCS Director. People actively participated in the discussion. All in attendance were allowed to voice their respective concerns. At the end of the meeting, an informal poll was taken, and the majority voted in favor of the play structure. It should be noted that attendees in opposition were predominately those who resided either directly across the street or near the park equipment to be installed. Overall, the meeting was well received, and many residents personally thanked the Council and City staff for listening and offering further insight and compromise where possible. Ultimately it was shared guidance on the installation of the playground equipment at Riverview Park would be further discussed at the October 4, 2023, Council meeting.

It should be noted that the City is not proposing a picnic area or restrooms, two features that tend to attract people from outside the immediate neighborhood or entice individuals to stay at the park for long periods. Instead, the features are intended for young children and to serve the immediate neighborhood in an area lacking park amenities. Moreover, as highlighted during the neighborhood meeting, parks offer a place to socialize and build neighborhood bonds and a sense of neighborhood identity.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

The playground equipment was purchased in conjunction with motion-capable fitness exercise equipment, totaling \$247,279.59. It should be noted that the total cost includes the playground equipment costs, fitness equipment costs, surfacing materials costs, shipping and freight costs, and installation costs for both the playground and fitness equipment. This also included excavation, disposal of existing spoils, installation of concrete curbing, temporary fencing while work is under construction, and transportation of equipment from the City's Corporation Yard to the job site. The actual costs for the playground equipment total \$89,550 out of the \$247,279.59 total, without the additional components of the purchase listed above.

Table 1: <i>Playground Equipment Costs</i>		
Item	Vendor	Amount
Play Structure Custom Round 5 Steel Play System	Playcraft	\$81,456
8-foot Arch Swing (2 seats)	Playcraft	\$3,071
8-foot Arch Swing (2 seats) AB	Playcraft	\$1,935
Full Bucket Seat	Playcraft	\$296
Inclusive Seat	Playcraft	\$840
Belt Seat	Playcraft	\$247

2-12 Age-Appropriate Sign	Playcraft	\$333
6-foot Bench (with back)	Playcraft	\$1,372
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$89,550</b>

Since the City has received the playground equipment, staff submitted a reimbursement request to Caltrans under the CCLGP reimbursement process. The City has been fully reimbursed for the \$89,550 associated with the purchase and receipt of the playground equipment.

Additional costs to install the playground equipment consist of the installation of safety perimeter fencing only around the play area. The safety perimeter fencing would be a four-foot-high fence, meeting playground equipment standards of four feet to deter climbing. The fencing would include self-closing and self-latching mechanism gates, to ensure they stay closed when not in use. Fencing is required due to the proximity of the street and river to the playground area. Costs for a four-foot rod iron-style fence and installation of fencing are estimated at \$35,000. Costs would be covered by available funding in the CCLGP award balance.

#### **ALTERNATIVES:**

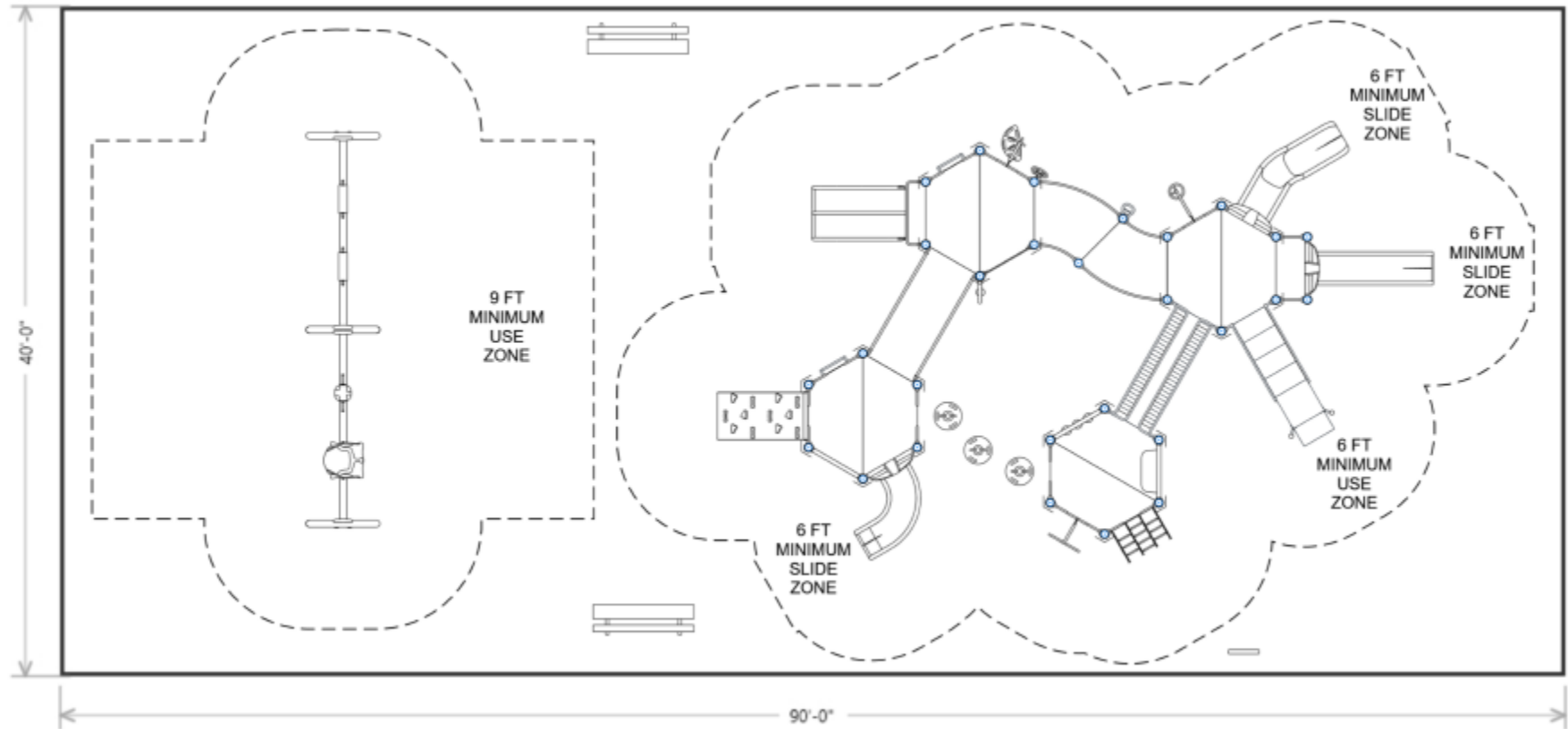
Council may request additional information be brought forth at the next meeting regarding additional park site alternatives, should the Council recommend that Riverview Park not be the site for the installation of the playground equipment. It should be noted that any site changes to the installation of the playground equipment would have to be ultimately approved by Caltrans, as part of a change to the grant scope of work, project site, and possibly the grant outcomes.

#### **ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Site Plan of Playground Area at Riverview Park
2. Initial Location of Playground Area at Riverview Park
3. New Proposed Location of Playground Area at Riverview Park
4. Photos of Riverview Park

**ATTACHMENT 1**

**SITE PLAN OF PLAYGROUND AREA AT RIVERVIEW PARK**



**ATTACHMENT 2**

**INITIAL LOCATION OF PLAYGROUND AREA AT RIVERVIEW PARK**



**ATTACHMENT 3**

**NEW PROPOSED LOCATION OF PLAYGROUND AREA AT RIVERVIEW PARK**



#### ATTACHMENT 4

LOCATION OF TREE AT RIVERVIEW PARK ESTIMATED TO BE OVER 100 YEARS OLD

