

Memorandum

Public Works Department



Date: August 26, 2015

To: Committee of the Whole

From: Bonnie Richardson - Transportation Planning & Greenscapes
Donna Sullivan-Hancock - CIP Design & Construction Manager

Through: Don Bessler - Public Works Director

Subject: ADOT Tempe Basin 'Bowl Park' Concepts Study

Project History and Purpose

A feasibility study for the Tempe Basin 'Bowl Park,' located along the east side of the I-10, north side of Knox Road, south of Warner Road and west of Priest Drive, was presented to Council in November 2014, with direction to explore concepts examining the recreational potential of this large open space, which is a major active and operating retention basin in the southwest portion of Tempe. The site is 42.5 acres and was built more than 20 years ago by the Arizona Department of Transportation to accommodate rainfall events, freeway drainage and runoff from locations as far as South Mountain in Phoenix. The size and unusual conditions of the parcel, with its required functionality as a drainage basin and close proximity to Tempe, Chandler and Phoenix neighborhoods makes it an exciting opportunity as a public facility.

A multi-disciplinary team comprised of parks maintenance (Oliver Ncube), recreational programming (Kelly Rafferty and Shane Isabell), neighborhood services (Shauna Warner), engineering (Donna Sullivan-Hancock) and transportation and greenscapes (Bonnie Richardson) has been working with the local design team, J2, retained by the City for this study. Data has been gathered pertaining to the site including existing utility data, land maps and plats from surrounding properties, slope analysis and an existing vegetation inventory. Drainage reports, flood/storm data, water inundation levels and history has been reviewed to understand the site constraints and water levels that will need to be incorporated into design concepts for the land.

An inventory was conducted of the existing Tempe, Chandler, Guadalupe and Phoenix public parks and recreational areas located within the area bounded by the US 60 to the north, the SR101L to the east, the SR202L to the south, and 1-mile beyond Interstate 10 into Ahwatukee. The purpose of this inventory was to identify what existing programs and amenities exist within this boundary and what might be appropriate to recommend.

Initial Concepts

Following the analysis of existing parks J2 prepared 7 preliminary concepts. Each design includes a 'conceptual opinion of probable construction costs' and a 'conceptual opinion of probable operations & maintenance costs.' Staff requested proposals for both active and passive uses, and they include:

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|--------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Little league fields | Active |
| 2. Multi-use fields | Active |
| 3. Adventure park | Active |
| 4. Fitness park | Passive |
| 5. Riparian nature trail | Passive |
| 6. Great lawn and stage | Passive |
| 7. Neighborhood park | Passive & Active |

All offer interesting ideas and respond to the challenges of the site in a variety of ways. The extremely steep walls of the basin and the unusual depth (approx. 60'), coupled with the function of retention (most recently a 100+ year flood), and the lack of vehicular access to the site pose challenges that would need to be addressed.

With regard to access, the City will need to negotiate easements with property owners on the north boundary of the site to allow ingress from Warner Road, or consider a road access along the canal. Other considerations include emergency vehicle access to the lower portion of the site, accessibility and safety.

Opportunities exist as well. The basin is located adjacent to the Highline Canal and a triangular property owned by the City. Canal improvements under development could connect to this small 'pocket park,' which would serve new residential communities and also provide access to the Bowl Park for pedestrians, runners and bicyclists.

Refined Concept Development

Recognizing that many of the City's existing parks are in need of repair and 'refreshing,' and that funding is limited, the team focused on refining two of the concepts that meet the following criteria:

- keep impact to existing drainage low;
- provide new types of recreation, and supplement high-demand activities;
- utilize concrete freeway beams on site in design & engineering solutions;
- use low/no water trees, natural grasses, desert landscape;
- use low cost and logically phased development for incremental use;
- are low maintenance
- may include fee-based events and activities

Refined Development 1 – Aviator Park

Phase 1 provides what is necessary for the operation of motorized small aircraft and drones, with launch pads and ‘stadium’ seating that serves as fitness challenges, earthwork, entry drive and parking and a portion of hardscape, as well as fencing and security. Phase 2 constructs the remainder of the hardscape, fitness stations, golf course and yoga. Phase 3 is the triangular park adjacent to the canal, with dog park, children’s playground, restrooms, and basketball.

Refined Development 2 – Adventure Park

Phase 1 provides earthwork, entry drive and parking and a portion of hardscape, as well as fencing and security, the mountain bike course and ropes/bouldering course. Phase 2 is the triangular park adjacent to the canal, with children’s playground, restrooms, and volleyball. Phase 3 completes the amenities, including hardscape, skate park and BMX course.

Current Parks Reinvestment Focus

Our current focus is addressing our existing parks, at Level 1 (public health and safety) and Level 2 (asset management priorities). The ADOT Tempe Basin Bowl Park would be a system expansion; as a Level 3 & 4 item it would require a new funding source. The minimum start-up investment for any of the concepts would be approximately \$3-4 million, in order to provide for safety and security on such a large site.

The ideas explored could be reassembled and all could be phased to accommodate incremental use.

Attachment 1: Tempe, ADOT Basin “Bowl” Park Study, June 2, 2015