



## CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS STAFF REPORT

**Meeting Date:** July 24, 2012  
**To:** Honorable Mayor & City Council  
**From:** Steven Zoet, Director of Community Services  
**Subject:** Presentation by Landscape Architect Mia Lehrer Regarding  
Progress and Decision Points Associated with the Proposed  
Beverly Gardens Restoration Project  
**Attachments:** None

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### INTRODUCTION

The City Council was preliminarily presented by staff with the concept of a privately funded park restoration proposal on December 6, 2011 and was formally presented with a proposal for the same by former resident and local business owner Steve Gordon on January 24, 2012. Mr. Gordon's intent is to raise funds sufficient to cover the anticipated costs associated with desired restoration improvements to Beverly Gardens Park.

City Council was unanimous in their support of Mr. Gordon's interests and directed staff to assist Mr. Gordon and a local landscape architectural firm with information and support necessary to achieve the desired objectives. Local landscape architect Mia Lehrer, who has been retained by Mr. Gordon to assist in the design and cost estimating associated with the effort, will be presenting an update to City Council to show progress that has been made to date and to seek Council direction on project elements that she and staff are in need of at this time.

### DISCUSSION

Pursuant to the direction provided on January 24th, staff has held numerous planning meetings with Mr. Gordon and Mia Lehrer and her staff. Additionally, Council liaison (Mayor Brien and Councilmember Gold) meetings and discussions with the Recreation and Parks Commission have also occurred to further discuss and plan for desired improvements to the entire expanse of Beverly Gardens Park. Mia Lehrer will provide a Power Point presentation to update Council on the progress that has been made thus far and will pictorially show the project's conceptual intent.

At this point, staff, Mr. Gordon and the architectural team seek City Council approval on the plan's progression thus far and direction regarding certain decision points that are integral to the design, project cost and related fundraising efforts moving forward. These items include the following:

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- Reintroduction of the lily pond in front of the historic Beverly Hills sign and, if desired, what design option might be most beneficial for present day circumstances
- Redirection, supplemental or leaving alone of the parkway's decomposed granite (dg) paths at the north-south street intersections
- Introduction of low voltage security and landscape lighting

The lily pond was an historical element that was taken out of service by the City many years ago. Reintroducing the pond would displace certain programmed uses of the space such as support for the biannual Art Show and the current benefit afforded tourists and others when taking commemorative photos in front of the Beverly Hills sign. Staff feels that displaced operations associated with the Art Show can be properly accounted for in other existing areas within the primary three block area of the show without compromising the number of participating artisans or the overall quality of the event and experience.

Regarding considerations for preserving photographic opportunities, options will be presented to Council showing how persons could access an area in front of the Beverly Hills sign as it is the interests of all involved to preserve this occurrence. Failure to create a formal area for this to occur will likely further contribute to persons climbing on the sign to create their own photographic opportunities.

With this restoration effort, staff feels that it is appropriate to reassess the park's current pedestrian pathways and to seek Council direction as to whether there is the desire to redirect the existing decomposed granite pathways to cross at street intersections, supplement the existing path crossings with a secondary option that would introduce a new trail segment connecting street intersections to the existing pathways or to leave the existing pathway orientations unchanged. The architects will pictorially show and discuss each of these options with City Council. Staff discussed this issue with Sergeant Gregg Mader from the Police Department, Risk Manager Karl Kirkman, Traffic Engineer Bijan Vaziri and the Traffic and Parking Commission (TPC) and all favor at least the option to direct pedestrians to intersection crossings.

A presentation was made to the TPC at their regular scheduled meeting of July 11. The Commissioners were unanimous in their interests to see the current orientation remain but were not opposed to a supplemental connection to the north/south street intersections where they don't exist at present. The TPC wished to record their interest in making sure that any option would take into consideration the possible introduction of a designated bike lane adjacent to the westbound lanes of the boulevard. The Commission also suggested the retention of a professional traffic consultant to further assess all options and impacts should it be the interest of City Council to do so.

The Parks and Recreation Commission also expressed support for a street intersection crossing option but took no official action to that effect, preferring to defer to City Council's interests.

Staff also wants to take this opportunity to seek Council direction regarding the possibility of introducing low voltage security lighting for the pathway and select landscape areas for aesthetics. Staff and the architects would assure a design that would not introduce excessive lighting and would avoid spill or intrusion into adjacent residences. Pathway lighting is envisioned as fixtures of approximately waist height with all illumination projected downward. Proposed landscape uplighting would be minimal

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and occur where special landscaping treatments exist, most of which would be mid width of the parkway and not adjacent to bordering residences.

Field Operations Police Sergeant Gregg Mader supports the concept of security or ambient lighting as a general deterrent to criminal activity and providing for an overall safer environment. Risk Manager Karl Kirkman likewise supports the concept. The City has not experienced historical safety problems or concerns within the parkway so these proposed options are not responsive to or recommended as a result of any safety concerns. Rather, security lighting is a suggested opportunity and is consistent with actions taken in other City park improvement projects and when designing new facilities. Hours of operation of any installed lighting could of course be controlled as appropriate.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

All costs associated with the restoration project are to be privately funded through independent fundraising efforts. The City will be committing Prop A funds available to it for continued improvements to the park's irrigation systems and ancillary support such as staff time and expertise. Additionally, complementary benefit to the project would occur through the planned City funded Santa Monica Boulevard improvements set to occur at a later date. Direction given by City Council will have fiscal implications to overall project costs but will be accounted for through the fundraising efforts.

Council will be provided with a range of anticipated project costs. The range is due, in part, to the variation of options associated with project elements. Pending Council's direction, Mia Lehrer and Associates will further refine their cost estimates and provide Mr. Gordon with the sum necessary to be raised to complete the project as designed in final form. Inclusive within these cost projections are endowment funds necessary to sustain resulting higher levels of maintenance and plant material replacement costs associated with the project. City costs to maintain the park will be supplemented through this effort with the historical funding obligation on the part of the City remaining unchanged.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

City Council previously endorsed this project and private fundraising effort at its January 24, 2012 Study Session meeting. At this time staff, the architectural team and Mr. Gordon seek specific direction from the entire Council as relates to the three identified design elements and an affirmation that other design work is progressing to the satisfaction of City Council.

Steven Zoet  
Approved By

