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Council Allows Small Playground at Leigh Creekside Park

By Cathy Tyson

When it came to the future of Leigh Creekside Park, the Lafayette City Council decided middle ground is best.

Although many residents came forward to urge city council members to reconsider changing the designation of the park, city leaders ultimately decided on a compromise position that creates a small active zone and much larger passive zones to accommodate differing desires for the small neighborhood park on Moraga Boulevard.

Project plans call for a \$488,000 playground area on 8 percent of the park. The plans still need to be reviewed by the Planning Commission. The playground equipment is designed to be high-quality and blend in with the surrounding natural elements of the park and are slated to include a large climbing rock, a spinning cup and more.

Many opponents came forward to urge the council to keep the park passive, arguing that the original intention when neighborhood residents contributed over \$30,000 to help establish the park in 2000 was to keep it as natural as possible.

Ultimately, after much public testimony, city leaders unanimously voted to support improvements to the park, and create active and passive zones. They seemed pleased to have a very clear delineation of the active portion of the park, leaving the majority of area as it is, a shady oasis with a majestic heritage oak tree. A bark pathway and a bench were eliminated from the passive north end of the park.

Council member Don Tatzin asked a key question to a passive park proponent: how would your enjoyment of the park be affected if we adopt this plan?

More young families are moving into the neighborhood since the park was established well over a decade ago, said council member Brandt Andersson.

After reviewing the matter, the city attorney sent a memo to the city council clarifying the terms of the original grant application and use of the park. "The city may add play equipment to Leigh Creekside Park without violating the terms of the state grant" it was determined.

Longtime resident and Parks, Trails and Recreation Commissioner Geoff Bellenger commented that the biggest reason the park was originally formed was to keep the parcel from being subdivided by a developer. He concluded that with the addition of a small amount of play equipment in one corner of the property that the fundamental character of the space won't change.

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