

WEST HOLLYWOOD PARK MASTER PLAN 2004

City of West Hollywood



*Landscape Plan
Appendix III*

WEST HOLLYWOOD PARK MASTER PLAN 2002

City of West Hollywood

Developed by:

The People of the City of West Hollywood

The City of West Hollywood City Council 2002-2003

The City of West Hollywood Parks Master Plans Steering Committee

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The Park and Landscape Guidelines

These landscape and park guidelines are intended as a framework for future park improvements and expansion. The framework identifies critical strategies for improving current park conditions and responds to issues raised in various meetings throughout the project. The plan originates in documenting the existing qualities of the park and strives to hold on to the things that the park community values. The proposed park changes are forward looking to a time when the city has grown more populous and the number of families with children using the park has increased as current demographic trends suggest. The plan acknowledges that the residents of the city lack nationally recommended amounts of public open space and recreation facilities, and that improvements to this park can improve but not solve these deficiencies.

The consultants retained to prepare this Plan utilized information gathered by needs assessments conducted in 1993, participated in meetings with the City of West Hollywood, conducted site visits, prepared site analysis documents, compared this park to other local parks and participated in a series of public forums held at the park. The consultants studied the park's resources within the context of the larger system of parks, open spaces, schools and recreation facilities to understand the distribution and quantity of existing facilities. Even though some facilities within this park can be found nearby some residents, especially those who walk will prefer to visit their neighborhood park.

Five park zones accommodate the different types of uses desired by the community and organize the general sloping nature of the site. The plan illustrates expanses of public garden along the street edges. These gardens surround the more active multipurpose meadows and help to maintain the desired layering of multiple spaces within the larger park. The strategy of framing active uses with gardens also achieves the primary objective of transforming the San Vicente perimeter into a green, parklike edge. This is seen as a substantial improvement to the existing condition with buildings and parking along the boulevard. Green space is in very short supply in this city and a primary objective within the design of the park.

As distinct projects are identified and consultants are retained to design particular projects this document will act as guiding principles to produce a coherent whole.



This manual is organized in four sections as follows:

Introduction. This section introduces and briefly describes the reasons for preparing landscape and park master plan guidelines. It also describes in diagram the context of West Hollywood Park within the larger open space resources of the area. A review of nearby park precedents and facilities is provided and we have included a description of the park as it exists and its purposes as currently expressed in its existing condition and by those who use it.

Observations and Analysis. This section analyzes the existing conditions of the park, how it is used and the challenges currently faced.

Goals, Principles and a Landscape Vision for the Park. This section describes goals for the Park and Landscape Guidelines that emerged out of discussions with the parties to the process and as a result of the analysis stated above.

The Park Elements and Landscape Guidelines. This section describes in greater detail the individual components of the park with attention to principles.

Tree Preservation/Relocation Feasibility Report. This is the result of a survey of the health and age of trees within the park and makes recommendations on their preservation, removal or relocation.



Aerial photograph of West Hollywood Park and environs. The park is bordered by Santa Monica Boulevard on the north, San Vicente Boulevard on the east; the Ron Stone Clinic, the El Tovar maintenance yard and retail uses on Melrose Avenue on the south; and San Vicente Boulevard on the east.

The City Park in America

When approaching the development of guidelines for the future of West Hollywood Park it is useful to review the historic role of parks in America, to look at various models and explore how they have survived and evolved into the 21st Century. Today's urban parks are close relatives of their ancestors the town square and later the restorative park. The town square or green, once a livestock pasture in the center of the town evolved into a civic space used for oratory, gatherings and relaxation. The space typically occupied a central location opposite the town hall or city hall. It acted as a forecourt to important civic buildings providing space for public gatherings and an opportunity to take in the view of important buildings from a distance. Most large U.S. cities have parks or plazas on at least one side of their city halls. Boston, Philadelphia, New York and Los Angeles all have similar public spaces.

In the middle of the 19th Century parks were institutionalized as places for active recreation, social gatherings and spiritual restoration. New York's Central Park is one of the best documented examples of parks from this era. The park was designed as the 'lungs of the city' providing much needed open space and fresh air in a crowded and congested urban environment. Central park was also a social experiment providing a place intended for the mixing of social classes. The original design of the park included programmed spaces such as ball fields and parade grounds as well as man made picturesque landscapes like the Rambles as well as highly structured formal gardens like those at the Conservatory. Promenades and plazas in the park were designed with durability and beauty in mind. Natural stone and cast iron elements have weathered over 100 years of use. In the 21st century, although the park has evolved to suit modern uses it retains a great visual similarity to the designers' original intent. A great variety of museums and public institutions have been developed within the park. It is still a grand social meeting place attracting visitors of all backgrounds and interests. The investment in excellent design and permanent construction has enabled the park to succeed and thrive for more than a century.

In the 20th century a modernist movement viewed the urban park as a place for the specific purpose of fitness and play. Nature in the parks was viewed as human serving and neglected the opportunity to attract and serve wildlife. The picturesque landscape that included attention to site elements such as walls, balustrades, plazas, follies and water features was replaced by a utilitarian collection of courts and playfields. Cheap available land in the suburbs created a sprawl version of park design where lawn, a few trees and some picnic tables



Central Park *New York, New York.*

composed the park. Investment in high quality permanent materials was lost. Few parks were designed with any relationship to the specific characteristics of their sites, their cultural history or as dignified civic spaces.

In Los Angeles parks and facilities for active recreation evolved separately. In the late 19th Century the City established a Department of Parks and identified several sites with natural and cultural resources. Parks were envisioned as natural or historical sites for physical and spiritual refreshment without active recreation.

In 1904 the city created the nation's first Playground Department for the specific purpose of providing wholesome activities for juveniles who were playing in the streets. The first playground was built in 1905. The next major development was the passage of a bond measure in 1947 that funded the construction of parks and playgrounds all over the city. Over the last quarter century a number of notable movements in park design have emerged from deconstructivism to the re-use of industrial and polluted landscapes as parks. Parks once again commemorate and celebrate their history and context in the city. They are sculpture gardens and performance spaces. Parks are multi-generational recreation venues. Sustainable design practices are providing alternatives to infrastructure investment and creating healthier places for humans and wildlife. Parks are being designed to excite the imagination, provide public education and inspire communities to come together.



Existing Park Landscape and Open Space. The existing park contains a variety of facilities and uses for all age groups including children's playgrounds, outdoor basketball courts, a ball field, tennis courts, an outdoor pool, auditorium building, County library and surface parking. The eastern and southern sides of the park are dominated by parking and buildings diminishing the presence of green space in the city.

Existing Park Analysis

South Parking Lot The existing parking lot is almost completely devoid of trees causing a heat island effect with elevated temperatures around the Ron Stone Clinic and the tennis courts. Two spaces for electric vehicles are currently available.

Tennis Courts Two tennis courts are located in the south west corner of the park. They are surrounded by chain link fence with mesh screening fabric. The courts are located across the parking lot and are isolated from the rest of the park. There is no shade or seating outside the courts for people waiting to use them.

The South Lawn A sloping grass field shaded by numerous trees is located between the parking lot and the children's play area. The slope of the field and the presence of the trees makes it difficult to use for informal ball games and other activities. It is mainly used as a picnic grove or group gathering location. Utility lines stretching from a wood pole to the auditorium give the appearance of a dangerous situation.

Pool Terrace The swimming pool is surrounded by a concrete paved area used for sunning and those waiting to swim. The area for viewing for events within the terrace is limited. Viewing from the north and south is compromised by a planting area above the terrace on the north side and a downhill slope on the south.

The Heart of the Park

The heart of the park where families gather for birthday parties and children play on play equipment has wonderful sense of enclosure created by mature trees and buildings on the edges of the park. The space is well scaled for the children that play within it. At the older children's area there is ample seating around the play equipment allowing observation. Restrooms are located close by the play areas so that children do not have to leave the immediate area when they need to use the facilities. Although this area is not visible from the street and is a distance from the parking lot it has a strong sense of safety created by the regular passage of people walking from San Vicente and Melrose to Robertson Boulevard through the park.



The practically treeless parking lot lacks shade and isolates the tennis courts from the rest of the park.



The pool breaks the park up in to small fragments of green space. The mature ficus trees provide substantial shade, but are a maintenance problem requiring frequent trimming and dropping fruit on the pool terrace.

There are three separate play structures and a swing set in the older children's area. The equipment appears to be relatively new and in good condition. The woodchip surface under the equipment meets the current codes for play area safety but has its critics. The chips stick to clothing and can be uncomfortable on bare feet.

Picnic tables constructed from recycled plastic are scattered around the play area. The tables and benches appear to be in good condition. They are installed over concrete paving for ease of cleaning the surface below them. On the east side of the space, against the pool fence is a garden space planted with perennials and native species. The garden is small and not in a highly visible location. A garden of this type would be well suited as a focal point within the park. The space above the pool could be used for pool viewing.

Basketball Courts Two full courts and one half court are located in the central area of the park. The courts are in good condition and a popular destination. A children's height basket is also provided expanding the age group that uses this park element. There is a generous amount of paving around the courts providing space for waiting players or other activities. A long low wall between the courts and the softball field above provides ample seating for spectators. The neighboring restroom building provides an immediate source of water for thirsty players.

Tiny Tots The Tiny Tots facilities include a small classroom, a grassy yard shaded by a mature canopy tree, a paved area for games and toys shaded by a mature Chinese Elm tree and a play structure and swings in a sand area covered with a fabric shade canopy. The area between the restrooms and the Tiny Tots building is very small for the number of children that participate in programs.

The play equipment is separated from the rest of the park by decorative metal fencing and gates. The surface below the play structures is a combination of sand and resilient rubber surfacing, two common and acceptable play surfaces. Sand is specified less often as a play equipment surface due to problems with animals and potentially harmful objects. The tiny tots area lacks seating for observation within the fenced play area.



The Heart of the Park with its lawns, play areas, mature trees, tables and benches hosts a variety of uses and is considered the area most 'parklike'.



Basketball Courts divide the 'heart of the park' from the ballfield. The asphalt paving is a large impermeable area that lacks seating and shade.

The Robertson Green An open lawn area between the tiny tots play area and Robertson Boulevard is known as the Robertson Green. A collection of well worn metal exercise pieces is located on the north side of the space adjacent to the tiny tots paved play yard. These pieces are intended for use by adults or older children who are not an ideal neighbors for the youngest children in the park. They appear to have limited use compared to other facilities in the park. The relatively level green lawn with trees and concrete walkways serves as an unstructured open area for sunbathing and seating.

The Ball field The north end of the park is occupied by a substandard ball field surrounded by tall chainlink fences and gates. The field has a clay infield, backstop and somewhat lumpy outfield. Bleachers are located on the east side obscuring the view of the field from San Vicente Boulevard. The outfield is used for soccer creating additional wear and tear. Adjacent buildings are protected from stray balls by high fences.

The fenced ball field has limited use and requires substantial special maintenance, especially on the clay infield area. This sizable part of the park is essentially off limits to most park users. The tall fences that protect adjacent buildings and San Vicente Boulevard from stray balls create an unappealing park edge.

The San Vicente Perimeter The majority of the park perimeter along San Vicente Boulevard is composed of fences or walls cutting off views into the park interior. The most 'parklike' area along the perimeter is in front of the aquatic center where a wide lawn and mature trees create a green shaded green edge. A sizeable lawn area east of the parking lot is limited by its isolation and slope to its decorative qualities. San Vicente Boulevard is a wide paved street with a narrow planted median that limits visual and physical connections between the park and the PDC Courtyard on the opposite side.



Robertson Green, one of the few green edges to the park is an informal lawn area used for sunbathing and picnics.



The Existing Ball Field as very limited use with the Tiny Tots building and restrooms beyond.

General Elements

Topography/Drainage

The north end of the park is approximately 26 feet higher than the south end. This change is accommodated by sloping lawns, paving and retaining walls built of various materials. The predominant site slope provides more than adequate surface drainage for stormwater. Irrigation water was observed to collect in low points creating soggy areas after watering..

Tree Preservation

There are a number of healthy specimen quality trees in the park. During the drafting of this plan the consultants met with the City's Tree Preservation Group. The most important objective expressed by the group was the preservation or replacement of mature canopy trees. The replacement of tree canopy should be factored into early projects or phases of the master plan. Altering the park's existing terrain, removing buildings and moving park functions will mean the loss of existing trees.

As future projects are determined existing trees must be evaluated on the basis of their potential to remain in place, their potential success in relocation or their suitability for replacement. A tree survey was conducted as part of this project. General opinions about the probable success of moving the existing trees and an estimate of costs was developed. Trees with deep roots, that are surrounded by pavement or are next to buildings are more difficult to move. It is important to consider that relocated trees will need storage locations and regular care while in temporary locations. The success rate for relocating trees is generally about a 50 percent chance of survival at best. These qualifications suggest that as attractive as it may sound to move trees, care and consideration should be given to their probable success and the costs of storage and replanting.

Future projects should carefully evaluate the feasibility of maintaining existing trees in their current locations.



A dense grove of trees in the south lawn provides significant tree canopy. Some trees have been harmed by overcrowding.



While mature Ficus trees provide dense shade they also lift pavements and drop messy fruit.

Park Edges

The south, west and north edges of the park feel neglected and untreated. The park could be surrounded by walls of vegetation or properties bordering the park could turn to face the park with related uses or access.

Lighting

Park lighting is provided by post top fixtures illuminating pathways and general areas. The basketball courts and ballfields are lit with tall, high intensity fixtures for nighttime use. More energy efficient lighting fixtures are available for these uses.

Isolated areas and uses

The central green space feels confined and isolated from surrounding streets rendering it practically invisible. When events are held in the park and along San Vicente Boulevard it is difficult to connect park activities to the street unless it is closed to vehicular use. The tennis courts, surrounded by the parking lot are completely isolated from the other park activities. There is no shade in the court waiting areas.

Obsolete Equipment

The exercise equipment on the north side of the Robertson Green appears to be obsolete. In repeated site visits this area had little or no use compared to the other play equipment. The equipment is geared to adults and is not the most compatible use next to the Tiny Tots play area.



The park is surrounded by the bleak walls of adjacent structures on the west side. This edge could be augmented with trees and hedges to create a solid green edge.



Existing basketball courts are lit with tall high intensity fixtures which is generally acceptable when adjacent to commercial properties.



Post top fixtures provide general area and pathway lighting. More energy efficient fixtures are now available.



Tennis Courts on the South End of the Park are isolated from the green space of the park.



The lawn area on the east side of the aquatic center has no direct connection to the park interior and is under-utilized.



Obsolete equipment on the north edge of the park next to the Tiny Tots play area.