

April 6, 1994

To: Parks and Recreation Commission

From: Halcyon Commons Planning Committee, Halcyon Neighborhood Association (HNA). Bruce Wicinas 848-1797, Nancy Carleton 849-0241, John Thelen Steere 849-1969, Michael Lamb, John Chesnutt, Bob Lyons, Gary Boland, and Susan Hunter

cc: Berkeley City Council Members and Mayor; Vicki Elmer, Public Works Director; Phil Kamlarz, Acting City Manager; Carol Kasparek, Whole Foods; Deborah Pitts, Alta Bates Hospital

Subject: **The Case for Funding Halcyon Commons**

RECOMMENDATION

The park funding criteria recommended to the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) by the Department of Public Works ("Capital Improvement Projects for City Parks", Vicki Elmer, 3/21/94) categorically assigns new park projects a priority 4 -- the lowest priority. The Commons Planning Committee of the Halcyon Neighborhood Association believes this is shortsighted; we recommend revision of this criteria to give added priority to new parks and park improvements that have demonstrated substantial community involvement and commitment. Halcyon Commons is a model project of this type and merits the PRC's recommendation for priority funding.

We urge you to consider the following rationale in funding Halcyon Commons under this revised priority:

1. The uneven distribution of parks in Berkeley raises a serious equity issue: South Berkeley has the greatest deficiency of available open space of any area in the City.
2. Demographic trends toward increasing number of households with children in the vicinity of the proposed Halcyon Commons support the demand for a neighborhood park.
3. In 1976, the City and the Parks and Recreation Commission determined that Halcyon Court was an ideal location for a new park. A share of Measure Y funds was earmarked toward this project.
4. Funding a new neighborhood park helps rectify the City's violation of the intent of measure AA; none of the City's \$3 million share has been spent on the development of new parks, although this was the intention of voters in passing the 1988 bond measure.
5. The Parks and Recreation Commission has already recommended the establishment of the Halcyon Commons. Funding it makes good on that promise.
6. The project leverages government dollars through extensive neighborhood investment and serves as a prototype for a "partnership" approach to park improvements.
7. HNA is in the process of negotiating private sector involvement from Whole Foods and Alta Bates in the creation and ongoing maintenance of the park.
8. The project offers a positive model for future park improvements and for urban greening efforts in general and serves as a complement to the City's General Plan.

DISCUSSION

1. Berkeley's Distribution of Parks Raises a Serious Equity Question.

Berkeley has a wealth of open space and parks. However, because the parks are unevenly distributed throughout the city, Berkeley residents enjoy the benefits of parks in a manner that is far from equitable. Not only is park access inequitably distributed, so are maintenance and capital improvements funds which follow the parks. Many neighborhoods have benefitted for decades from continued park funding, while several neighborhoods receive no City funding, having no parks by which to capture such funds.

Though a neighborhood may enjoy some benefit from a park that is across town, it cannot compare to the advantage of being within a quarter mile of one. Berkeley prides itself on being pedestrian-oriented and City policy discourages car use. A City park that requires vehicular access is in the same category as regional parks, i.e. of occasional, not everyday, usefulness. The Berkeley Park Department acknowledges this by declaring a quarter mile proximity as a planning target for park access.

As part of the 1977 Master Plan, the Parks and Recreation Division examined the relative need for parks by census tract. The level of park allotment was measured as acres of park per 1000 population. The attached table (p. 5) computes park allotment using the most recent available data. As illustrated by this chart, several tracts fall far below the citywide average of 1.3 acres per 1000, which in itself is below the state-recommended standard of 5 acres per 1000.

One of the most open-space deficient neighborhoods of the entire city is tract 4239, that in which Halcyon Commons is being proposed. With the recent closure of Greg Brown Mini-Park it has only .11 acres of parks per 1000 residents, far below the Master Plan policy standard of 2.0 per 1000. The portion bounded by Alcatraz Avenue, Martin Luther King Way, Ashby and Telegraph Avenues, while containing over 2000 people, has no parks at all. All of these residents pay property taxes (either as home owners or indirectly through a portion of their rent) allocated to the landscape/park assessment, none of which is returned to the area in which they live.

2. Demographic Trends in Tract 4239 Indicate the Need for Park Facilities.

Anecdotal evidence suggest that there has been a substantial increase in the child population over the past ten years in this neighborhood. The housing affordability of this neighborhood, combined with its improving conditions, make it one of the more attractive parts of Berkeley for young families. Its greatest deficiency as an environment for children is its lack of parks.

We have not yet compared 1990 and 1980 census data. However, we do have Berkeley Unified School District figures showing that the applications for kindergarten enrollment at Le Conte School, the nearest Berkeley public K-3 neighborhood school, are increasing much more quickly than at any other K-3 school in Berkeley.

In addition, the overwhelming support in the immediate neighborhood for Halcyon Commons further testifies to the need for park facilities in this area.

3. Halcyon Commons Was Recognized by Measure Y as a Worthy Project and Was Then Earmarked for Funding.

Measure Y, passed by Berkeley voters in the fall of 1974, unequivocally endorsed the establishment of new parks, not merely the improvement of existing parks. Its text declared: "...there are severe deficiencies in the park and public open space recreation facilities in the City of Berkeley...The Recreation and Open Space Element of the Master Plan...shall continue to identify neighborhoods which are in special need of recreation and open space facilities, and shall designate such neighborhoods as 'high deficiency' neighborhoods; monies in the Fund may be used for the acquisition and/of development of lands within or contiguous to such neighborhoods for recreational purposes; and/or for the renovation of existing recreational facilities."

This measure created all of the new parks that the city enjoys today. The Measure Y "Project Narratives", dated 1976, lists "Halcyon Court - Use of portion of a wide street for development of Mini-Park." Its allocation was \$25,000 (1976.) This location was never utilized for Measure Y funding. We have been told by Carole Schemmerling (a PRC commissioner at that time) that this was due to a lack of neighborhood involvement supporting the establishment of the proposed park. Now that 94 percent of the residents of Halcyon Court have signed a petition supporting Halcyon Commons, it is time to make good on the City's promise of a park in this location, which, being in the public right-of-way, does not require land acquisition.

4. The City Has Spent \$3 Million Without Honoring the New Parks Intent of Measure AA.

In 1988 voters passed measure AA, a bond issue "...for the purpose of the acquisition and development of regional park, recreation and open space facilities and acquisition and development of local park, recreation and open space facilities..." Of the funds raised by this measure, the City of Berkeley will shortly have received \$3,057,802. The emphasis of the measure, in the minds of voters and by the intent of the measure, was the further development of new parks. To date the City has spent none of this funding upon new parks. The City has therefore violated the purpose for which Measure AA was passed by the voters of Alameda and Contra Costa counties. Halcyon Commons presents an opportunity to fulfill voters' and taxpayers' wishes.

5. The Parks and Recreation Commission Has Recommended the Project.

The Parks and Recreation Commission has acknowledged by unanimous resolution that the Halcyon Commons project deserves support: "The Parks and Recreation Commission supports the establishment of Halcyon Commons as a new City park, and request City staff to work with Halcyon Commons neighbors to develop an Adopt-A-Park agreement for development and on-going maintenance of the Park" (February 28, 1994). For this endorsement to be meaningful, City funding is essential.

6. The Project Leverages Government Dollars Through Partnership.

This project is the first neighborhood-designed park proposed in Berkeley. Halcyon Neighborhood Association has made a vast investment of citizen-hours, including hundreds of donated hours of professional services by an architect, a landscape architect, a planner, an editor, and other professionals. This is equivalent to about \$79,425 investment in equivalent professional planning, public involvement and design services had the City contracted this work out (see p. 7).

The partnership approach that this project represents consists of a participatory process of citizen involvement. Among its primary elements have been a survey, numerous planning meetings and design workshops, regular communications with over 160 households through a quarterly newsletter, informational flyers and canvassing, and working constructively and cooperatively with City staff and with local businesses. Whatever the ultimate combination

of public and private funds used to finance Halcyon Commons, our goal is to keep costs to a minimum by encouraging members of the community to donate their professional expertise as well as their physical labor ("sweat equity").

7. The Project Capitalizes on Private Sector Involvement.

Whole Foods has promised to provide an annual fund of \$3600 to \$4800 to ensure long-term maintenance and further improvements to the park. In fact, this pledge well exceeds the expected maintenance costs. Halcyon Neighborhood Association has signed an Adopt-a-Park agreement and is willing to contract with the City for day-to-day maintenance, becoming a prototype for this citizen partnership agreement. HNA is currently negotiating with Alta Bates to secure their contribution to this project. Further, Whole Foods has committed itself to funding the landscaping of a barrier that serves as an entrance to Halcyon Court, as part of the Halcyon Commons effort.

8. Halcyon Commons Offers a Model for Future Park Improvements.

This is an opportunity for the City to send a signal to citizens that it rewards positive community involvement. Failure to recognize this opportunity would carry a high cost since the City would be demonstrating that it doesn't wish to recognize or to empower its residents when they cooperate with one another, with local businesses, and with City staff to create new amenities and to improve the quality of life in Berkeley. This park serves as a model of how to engage citizens in the future in park maintenance and improvements so that limited City resources can meet actual community needs.

CONCLUSION

The Halcyon Commons project offers a win-win situation for all. It represents an investment in the future of Berkeley by the community in cooperation with the City and with local businesses. For a modest initial investment, the City can help create a new park in an underserved area that richly deserves one. This approach is both practical and visionary.

City of Berkeley Park Acreage and Funding by Census Tract

Trct No.	Description	Acres/ 1000	1990 ¹ Pop.	Park Acres: ²		Prop. Share of ³ Maintenance Funds
				Total	Percent	
11	Hills/North	.0	2034	.0	.0%	\$ 0
14	Hills/North	.0	1696	.0	.0%	\$ 0
25	Campus/Central	.0	3839	.0	.0%	\$ 0
27	Campus/South	.0	4766	.0	.0%	\$ 0
28	Campus/South	.0	6407	.0	.0%	\$ 0
35	South	.0	2956	.0	.0%	\$ 0 (4)
37	Hills/South	.08	3767	.3	.2%	\$ 0
38	Hills/South	.08	3199	.27	.2%	\$ 0
39	South	.11	3388	.37	.3%	\$ 0 (5)
22	Central	.14	3169	.43	.3%	\$ 0
32	West	.39	2499	.97	.7%	\$ 0
40	South	.44	5105	2.27	1.7%	\$ 0
30	Central	.45	3923	1.75	1.3%	\$ 0
36	Campus/South	.54	7483	4.02	3.0%	\$170,000
24	Central	.6	3386	2.0	1.5%	\$ 79,000
34	South	.69	4499	3.09	2.3%	\$150,000
13	Hills/North	.7	3873	2.72	2.0%	\$ 10,000
18	North	.84	2052	1.72	1.3%	\$125,000
31	Central	1.0	3777	3.9	2.9%	\$ 0
29	Central	1.3	2164	2.77	2.1%	\$ 0
19	North	1.4	3619	4.94	3.7%	\$ 10,000
21	West	1.7	2549	4.24	3.2%	\$140,000
17	North	1.9	2890	5.52	4.2%	\$255,000
12	Hills/North	2.3	3655	8.4	6.3%	\$ 16,000
15	Hills/North	2.6	3269	9.13	6.9%	\$ 42,000
23	Central	2.8	2909	8.2	6.2%	\$206,000
33	South	3.9	3324	12.95	9.7%	\$595,000
16	Hills/North	5.5	3735	20.5	15.4%	\$338,000
20	West	17.7	1851	32.76	25.0%	\$338,000 (6)
26	U.C.	n/a	1099	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total		1.3	102,703	133.2 acre	100.0%	\$2,136,000

¹Source is 1990 U.S. Census

²"Total acres" includes the public school joint-use parks such as King Junior High and aquatic park. It excludes the marina parks. Source of this data is City of Berkeley Master Plan Section II-D, pp. 98-99.

³These are the priorities proposed by the Parks and Recreation Division. Source is City of Berkeley Master Plan Section VI-8, Attachment D, "Park and Recreation Capital Improvement & Deferred Maintenance Needs List, Priority No. 1, Existing Park and Recreation Facilities Health and Safety Items", Draft 1990.

⁴Park acreage excludes "Peoples' Park"

⁵Park acreage excludes "Greg Brown Park" which has recently been closed.

⁶Park acreage excludes marina parks.

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Estimate of Value of Citizen Contributions to Halcyon Commons Project to Date

This breakdown is intended to give an idea of the professional expertise and resources that have been donated by neighborhood residents to the planning and design process for Halcyon Commons, including the community input process (note that hourly figures are based on an average multiplier for consulting services).

Landscape Architecture and Design

(preparation of several generations of conceptual site designs and planting schema)

85 hours @ \$85.00 = \$7,225

Public Involvement Coordination and Conceptual Planning

(research and site analysis; alternatives evaluation; public survey development; questionnaire preparation, distribution, and analysis; promotion and facilitation of participatory design workshops and public meetings; preparation of graphic minutes and charts; preparation of summaries, position papers, and detailed announcements)

740 hours @ \$75.00 = \$55,500

Quarterly Newsletter

(design, typesetting, layout, writing, editing, printing)

220 hours @ \$50.00 = \$11,000

Tree Planting

(concrete cutting and removal; soil preparation; purchase and planting of 15-gallon street trees)

19 trees @ \$300.00 each = \$5,700

TOTAL Estimated Value of Citizen Contributions as of 4/6/94: \$79,425.00