



DATE: October 25, 2016

CATEGORY: New Business

DEPT.: Community Services

TITLE: **Park Restroom Guidelines Review**

RECOMMENDATION

The Parks and Recreation Commission recommends:

1. Modify slightly the existing guidelines for permanent traditional/standard restroom buildings in City parks as follows:
 - The park is a neighborhood or community park a minimum of three (3) acres in size.
 - The park provides extended-stay activities such as large barbecue areas, swimming, tennis, or athletic league play.
 - If a park is jointly owned and/or operated, both parties must agree on the restroom(s).
 - Restrooms meet design standards supportive of activity levels of the park (new).
2. Request staff to explore developing guidelines for single-stall restrooms such as "Portland Loo" restrooms in City facilities.

BACKGROUND

The current park restroom guidelines were adopted in 1994 and, at the request of the City Council, recently reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) on September 14, 2016 (Attachment 1). The guidelines established criteria for restroom facilities in parks with extended-stay activities. These include athletic league play, large barbecue areas, tennis, and swimming. These activities are generally found in

neighborhood parks (3 to 15 acres) and community parks (the definition of neighborhood park was reduced from 5 acres to 3 acres in 2014).

Mini-parks (up to 3 acres) generally cannot facilitate extended-stay activities and are usually located within a specific neighborhood with park users in close proximity to their homes. Larger parks with extended-stay amenities require restrooms to accommodate users who must travel farther and are not close to their homes.

Currently, only three neighborhood/school parks, Castro, Huff, and Landels, do not have restrooms (Attachment 2). The City has worked with the Mountain View Whisman School District on the new Castro/Mistral campus and has provided funding for a joint-use restroom to be located in the new facility facing the sports field. The new restrooms will be used by the school during the day and by park users after school and weekends. Construction is slated to be completed in late 2017. The City and school district have also agreed to add joint-use restrooms with remodel projects for Huff and Landels. Construction is scheduled to begin summer 2017 and be completed at both sites in 2018.

ANALYSIS

The PRC discussed three different issues during their September 14, 2016 review of the restroom guidelines. These were park size criteria, the definition of extended stay, and restroom building size.

Park Size Criteria:

There was a concern that park size may no longer be an adequate measure for extended-stay activities. Commissioners noted land values have significantly increased over time, limiting the availability of large parcels of land. Competition with developers for land was also noted. Staff confirmed most new parks being constructed are mini-parks less than three acres in size.

Many new mini-parks are smaller than one acre and would not be able to accommodate a restroom. A Commissioner noted use of mini-parks between one and three acres might include features that would encourage extended-stay activities necessitating a restroom.

Extended Stay:

As the nature and use of smaller parks changes, the PRC felt it may require expanding the definition of extended-stay activities. Commissioners pointed out that families will

set up play dates at different neighborhood mini-parks that may last several hours. Often the parks are not close to commercial centers where public restrooms might be available, creating a challenge when children need a restroom.

The PRC also discussed the design of mini-parks larger than one acre. Future parks may include special features unique to the park that would draw residents from further away than the immediate neighborhood. The example of 1.2-acre Heritage Park on Rengstorff Avenue was used. The park features the Immigrant House and a Community Garden. The potential need for a restroom was discussed at the neighborhood design meetings. In the end, the neighborhood decided the garden did not meet the definition of an extended stay and opted not to include a restroom at the park.

Restroom Building Size:

The PRC also talked about how valuable the limited amount of open space in a mini-park is and the large amount of space required for a standard park restroom building. A restroom building with separate men's and women's facilities requires 280 to 400 square feet and costs \$350,000 or more to install. The concern was it would not make sense to construct standard restroom buildings in mini-parks because of their large footprint.

Staff researched smaller restroom options that might be practical for use in larger mini-parks and other public spaces. The "Portland Loo" is a single-user restroom designed for outdoor applications. The unit only requires 70 square feet of space and is designed for urban applications. The cost is about \$150,000 per unit installed. The PRC requested staff explore developing guidelines for single-stall restrooms such as "Portland Loo" for City facilities.

Discussion also occurred around the City's garden sites and proposed new garden site at Shoreline Boulevard and Latham Street, scheduled for next year. The current sites do not have restrooms nor have users requested them, but it may come up in the design for the new area. The single-user restroom may be a good alternative.

The PRC noted mini-parks are often in close proximity to residential dwellings and the location of any restroom recommended for a mini-park would need to take this into account and have buy-in from the neighborhood.

CONCLUSION

The PRC believes the current guidelines for park restrooms generally work well. The PRC wanted to be sure the guidelines take into account that use patterns are changing. The guidelines are flexible enough to allow for installation of smaller restrooms in future mini-park designs should they warrant it and the neighborhood desire it.

Staff notes the guidelines are for the PRC and do not exclude the inclusion of restrooms in mini-parks; their inclusion could be a part of any public design meeting discussion and ultimately, Council could provide direction to include a restroom as part of the conceptual design approval process.

FISCAL IMPACT

None; however, there would be a fiscal impact of \$150,000 to \$450,000 per additional restroom unit installed. The Fiscal Year 2016-17 budget for ongoing contract operation of park restrooms is approximately \$80,000, and would likely increase if additional restrooms are built.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Propose alternative standards for restroom guidelines.
2. Do not investigate restroom alternatives for City facilities.

PUBLIC NOTICING

Agenda posting, copy of the report to the PRC, and posting to Next Door neighborhood groups.

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- Attachments: 1. [September 14, 2016 PRC Report \(including guidelines\)](#)
2. Listing of Parks with and without Restrooms