

"We are a welcoming, active and business-friendly rural foothill community built on California's rich gold rush history."



September 21, 2022, Recreation and Parks Commission

Prepared by: Terry Zeller, Community Services Director

Subject: Lions Park Maintenance, Conditions & Turf Program Update

Lions Park has been the main park property for the City since the 1950's, when it was built through the efforts of the Lion's Club and other volunteers and donated to the City. Being over 70 years old, many of the infrastructure and amenities are at or past a point of failure. The Maintenance division has done a very good job at dealing with the multitude of problems that continue to crop up, but all their effort is lost to the major issues that need to be tackled in the near future or are being worked on currently.

There have been many concerns voiced by park users and league participants over the condition of the park and especially the ballfields, and so I wanted to provide the Commission and the public accurate information on what efforts have already been undertaken to maintain and improve conditions at Lions Park, and what the priority list is for the future considering the age of many parts of the system. This memo is intended to provide that information, to generate discussion and bring the Commission up to speed on current issues so that everyone is on the same page and working together to improve the park. We are working on an overall plan to address the major infrastructure and maintenance deficiencies, and I will be bringing this to the Commission in a future public meeting for review and approval to include some initial projects in the 2023-24 fiscal year budget.

Ball field soil conditions and turf management:

The turf on both the upper and lower fields was renovated around 7 years ago. It is my understanding that the existing outfield growth was killed off with herbicide, and new soil and seed was spread in an effort to 'start over'. The lack of adequate irrigation coverage did not provide an ideal situation for germinating and growing new turf, and this has contributed to very uneven coverage, lots of weeds and invasives, and an overall poor soil profile. I started as Director in 2019, and began that fall to address the soils, turf, and irrigation issues with the fields. We did soil testing and contracted with Site One Landscape Supply to provide soil amendments that would improve the soil to provide an optimum state for the turf grass to spread and out-compete the weeds. We are on our 3rd year of this program, and have just completed another soil analysis and are in discussions with Ewing Irrigation on further improvements to the soil, turf, and our failing irrigation system.

Another major issue with the outfields is the rampant gopher population on both the upper and lower fields. Gophers tunneling creates eruptions that are soft and natural trip hazards, and disrupt the turf roots and rhizome activity, leading to large bare patches of ground when combined with our poor irrigation coverage. We contracted in July with Hangtown Pest Control to attack this specific gopher problem with an initial large scale extermination project, followed up by monthly inspections and spot treatment. This has started to pay off and some areas are starting to see new turf growth. It also allows our staff to focus on mowing, fertilizing and amending the soil instead of filling hundreds of gopher holes each week.

Irrigation System:

The park acreage under irrigation includes all grass areas, drip zones for some planters along the playground, entrance and restroom. It is believed this system's main lines, which are galvanized pipe, are nearly as old as the park, circa 1950's. There have been an escalating number of leaks in this system, which this year we are counting nearly a dozen, happening almost everywhere irrigation lines run. Leaks aside, the overall layout of the sprinkler system is highly inefficient and does not provide even basic head-to-head coverage that is needed to grow and maintain a healthy turf situation. I am working on a cost estimate for the design and installation of all new irrigation lines and a properly designed head layout that will both save water and give the park the turf that it should have as the flagship park for the City. This will also include new drip zones for the planting areas and road frontage, and a relandscaped frontage to Cedar Ravine to replace the overgrown mess that is there now.

Sports Field Lighting:

I am working with a company called Eco Green on a project to replace all the lighting, including sports lighting, with LED technology. This will drastically cut the amount of energy used at the park, and also give the leagues and tournament goers a safe and professional night game experience. This, along with the irrigation and turf management is hoped to attract the leagues that have left Placerville for better venues in the County.

Paths, Playground and other Amenities:

The main path for the park that connects the parking lot with the shelter, tennis court, playground and upper restrooms has always served a dual use as also a maintenance road. Improving this through repaving is in the plans for the future, which will eliminate the dust and mud that is now the user experience most days. The other secondary existing path starts behind the shelter and loops up to the disc golf course, ending at the upper restrooms. This decomposed granite path has been impacted by runoff erosion, and is also being planned to be re-bordered and graded to provide a proper connection to its amenities. The upper restrooms serve as the maintenance shed, and this building needs to be updated for ADA compliance.

Pickleball, Tennis Courts and Disc Golf:

There is an existing grant that has been awarded through the State that funds the repair of the tennis courts, and the construction of separate pickleball courts that will be lighted if the funding is adequate after bidding. The current plan is to locate the pickleball courts above the tennis courts, which will keep the shade tree and lawn area north of the tennis courts which was the original layout. This will impact the disc golf course and require some hole adjusting for that amenity, but will be the best location overall to keep as many of the mature shade trees intact.

Landscaping, Parking Lots and overall Landscape Conditions:

All of the existing landscaping needs to be overhauled, and the irrigation project will be the perfect time to do this. The entrance to the park is especially important for the initial experience of the overall space, and work will be done to the roadside, dry creek, gazebo, playground and picnic area landscape beds. The parking lot and its interface with the park, including the railings need to be redesigned to maximize parking and improve safety.

Overall Master Plan for Lions Park:

All of these improvements are part of an emerging master plan that I am undertaking personally. The design goal is to add the pickleball courts, and improve the parking and internal circulation, ballfields, park furniture, lighting, disc golf, tennis courts and the quality level of turf and landscaping.

This concludes the update of projects and initiatives underway for Lions Park. I hope it provides a good base of information for Commissioners to refer to when taking questions on Lions Park from the community, and for those in attendance today.