



September 12, 2018

Honorable Mayor Tornek
Honorable Members of the City Council
City of Pasadena
100 N. Garfield Ave.
Pasadena, CA 91101

Dear Mayor Tornek and Councilmembers:

RE: New construction of public toilet and play facility
10 N. Arroyo Blvd., Desiderio Neighborhood Park

The West Pasadena Residents' Association (WPRA) supports efforts to call for Council review the Desiderio Park design, restroom and funding issues.

We have previously voiced concerns with the size and style of the proposed restroom, and its proximity to both the Arroyo Bungalows and the Habitat Homes.

However, there are much more important issues of whether the park and public restroom as currently envisioned by the City would constitute an attractive nuisance, an avoidable danger to adults and children, and a questionable use of public resources in an area where there is little or no support, and considerable opposition and concern, for either an active park or public toilets, when there are other areas in critical need of properly maintained and expanded park facilities,

It has been a point of contention for years whether public restroom facilities are advisable or needed in Desiderio Park, as noted in the attached timeline of "now-you-see-it, now-you-don't" City actions. At the inception of discussions the area was envisioned as a passive "natural" public green space extending the look and feel of the Arroyo Seco, which is literally just across the street. Then the vision for the park morphed to its current iteration: with restrooms, tot lot, parking, lighting and equipment--the antithesis of what was initially envisioned.

As you will recall, deliberations for the establishment of this park have been quite lengthy, and at one time neighbors' concerns were considered. However, more recently neighborhood feedback and concerns have not been heeded.

The potential emotional and possibly physical harm to nearby residents and users of the park space, especially children, is a real concern, and we would think it should be a priority to resolve the Colorado Street Bridge suicide situation before moving ahead with the Desiderio Park construction. Even with the temporary barriers in place, bridge suicides have not abated. Very

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sadly, yet another body was discovered beneath the Colorado Street Bridge as recently as August 28, and thankfully earlier this month, our first responders were able to discourage yet another potential suicide after a 13-hour intervention.

Finally, restroom construction is not fully funded, and we question why more urgent needs for park maintenance and repair are not given priority.

WPRA appreciates your consideration of and response to these comments and looks forward to finding a successful outcome for this controversial issue.

Respectfully,



Dan Beal
President

cc: Steve Mermell, City Manager
Ara Maloyan, Director of Public Works
Taka Suzuki, Deputy to Councilmember Madison, District 6
Charles Loveman, Board Chair, Vista del Arroyo Bungalows HOA
Marcelline Solway, Vista del Arroyo Bungalows HOA

The WPRA is an all-volunteer organization dedicated to maintaining and enhancing the quality of life in southwest Pasadena. We represent 7,000 households, including 1,000 paid members.

Key Actions in the Desiderio Restroom Consideration

- The 2014 Draft and Final Environmental Impact Reports for reuse of the Desiderio Army Reserve Center included amenities “consistent with the minimum standard set of amenities for neighborhood parks,” did not include a restroom, and specifically stated that a restroom was not envisioned. Numerous individuals and organizations, including WPRA, opposed a restroom.
- On October 27, 2014, Council certified the FEIR and took related actions for DARC reuse "with the addition of restrooms to the park".
- The August 3, 2017 environmental notice for the reuse of DARC specified that "Desiderio Park is proposed as a neighborhood park and would include the minimum standard set of amenities as proposed by the City's Green Space, Recreation and Parks Master Plan. These include an open turf area, trees, security lighting, walkways, picnic tables, benches, play equipment, drinking fountains, and waste and recycling facilities." A restroom is not included in the minimum amenities, and the Master Plan acknowledges that not all Neighborhood Parks may need restrooms.
- The contract for construction of the park, without a restroom (which is a separate CIP item), was approved by Council on January 8, 2018, and the staff report states that the restroom is "unfunded".
- Notwithstanding, an application to construct an 875 square foot restroom was submitted to Consolidated Design Review on January 14, 2018 and approved by the Planning Director on March 13. On May 8 the Design Commission revised the design to 623 square feet and modified materials and details.
- At its June 4, 2018 meeting, Council called the revised design for review.
- At its July 23, 2018 meeting Council approved the staff recommendation to uphold the Design Commission's decision, subject to moving the restroom immediately north of the tot lot and to close the park and restroom at sundown.
- At their August 27 meetings, the Finance Committee approved and Council considered "loaning" funds for Robinson Park improvements and the unfunded Desiderio restroom construction from the Central to the West park districts, contingent on repayment from the Lincoln Properties assessment. The agenda descriptions for both provided no detail about what funds were being shifted or why. The discussion did not favor such an action and Council decided to wait until Lincoln Properties park assessment funds are actually available.