

Griffith Park Master Plan – Working Group

Summary of Eighth Meeting held February 6, 2006

The Griffith Park Master Plan Working Group convened their eighth meeting on Monday, February 6, 2006, at 6:30 p.m. at the Griffith Park Ranger Station Auditorium.

Present: Working Group – Bernadette Soter, Clare Darden, Craig Kessler, George Grace, Gerry Hans, Jeff Gardner, Jose Sigala, Louis Alvarado, Lynn Brown, Richard Bogy, and Valerie Vanaman
Rory Fitzpatrick, Council District 4
Steve Davis, Bureau of Engineering
Mark Mariscal, Recreation and Parks
Teresa Prosewicz for Vicki Israel, Recreation and Parks
Mike Shull, Recreation and Parks

Absent: Susan Swan

Facilitator: Kevin Regan, Assistant General Manager, Department of Recreation and Parks

Mr. Regan opened the meeting and called the role of Working Group members, ex officio members, and Department personnel. Mr. Regan then provided maps of Griffith Park that had been created by the Department of Public Works, Bureau of Engineering (BOE). Mr. Regan informed the Working Group that the map was about 95% accurate, however, some boundaries may be questionable but that the map provided a good overview of Griffith Park and showed the common names of various locations in the park. Mr. Regan also stated that he had asked BOE to work on the map to make it completely accurate.

Ms. Soter then provided a review of the subcommittee's work on the Human Dimension Chapter. She said that the Master Plan lacked definitions of the major user groups in Griffith Park and that before recommendations could be made, there was a need to understand who uses Griffith Park, why, and when. This chapter was compiled using the CSUN study, workshop materials, comments from various users, and general studies, such as the State of California Study entitled "Park and Recreation Trends in California – 2005." Ms. Soter then summarized the various user groups and visitors to Griffith Park. The major user groups listed in the Human Dimension Chapter are: hikers, picnickers (which includes family and permit picnicking), equestrians, runners, bicyclists, active sports participants (golf, soccer, baseball, tennis, volleyball, basketball), swimmers, campers, and visitors to museums and attractions.

Ms. Vanaman reiterated that this chapter is not a "needs" study, but an additional chapter to assist in overall planning for Griffith Park.

Ms. Soter also explained that it was difficult to quantify exactly how many people come to Griffith Park and how they use the park. Mr. Mariscal provided some background information as to how the Department tried to capture data on the number of visitors to Griffith Park. He also

shared some of the events that are held in the park on an annual basis involving thousands of participants.

Mr. Sigala commended the subcommittee's work but inquired about the absence of recommendations in the new Human Dimension chapter. Ms. Soter explained that recommendations would be made in other chapters as they relate to user groups. Since the issues go hand in hand with the specific user group, it was decided that this was simpler, more orderly, and would avoid redundancy and confusion. Mr. Sigala asserted that he desired the same attention to recommendations in this chapter as was made in previous chapters. Ms. Soter assured everyone that recommendations would be made in later chapters and that this was a purely descriptive chapter.

The conversation shifted slightly to space for sports fields. Mr. Gardner then inquired if it would be possible to tour the Department's Central Service Yard. He opined that it was a large, flat parcel of land next to the river that would be ideal for the development of sports fields and as long as we are looking at master planning, this option should be examined. Mr. Gardner asked if CSY was part of Griffith Park.

Mr. Mariscal explained that the Central Service Yard is on approximately 12 acres of land and he thinks that it was probably a part of a settlement with the State when the freeway was built. He further explained that the Department does not have many service yards and that this is the largest, Recreation and Parks service yard, centrally located, and housing approximately 600 maintenance and recreation employees who work Citywide.

Mr. Sigala also asked if there was any testimony provided to the Working Group from participants in the various user groups. Ms. Soter agreed that this was a good idea and something that would be most welcome.

Mr. Kessler asked if the Department had an opinion on the methodology used in the CSUN study. Mr. Regan replied that results could be skewed for any study, depending on how the research is conducted. In his opinion, this was not a comprehensive study and the Department has no official position.

Mr. Kessler opined that the CSUN study is skewed in the direction of less intense uses. There was an under reporting of some activities and an over reporting of others. Those individuals who stopped and provided interviews were "hanging out" and those individuals participating in activities would not likely stop what they were doing for an interview.

Mr. Alvarado shared that although Mr. Mariscal mentioned a single event held in Griffith Park, he knows of 12 events that involve over 1,000 participants. Ms. Soter replied that large group activities are mentioned but are too numerous to list.

Ms. Vanaman then provided a summary of the second part of the report which lists the topics yet to be studied and prepared. She informed the Working Group that the subcommittee would attempt to complete the sections on "built facilities" and "support infrastructure" by next month. In order to do this, there is a list of questions the subcommittee would like the Department to

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answer. Mr. Regan said the Department would do its best to provide the requested information. Ms. Vanaman then provided several pages of questions that the Working Group requested to have answered.

Ms. Vanaman then moved that the Human Dimension chapter be adopted and Ms. Brown seconded. The chapter was adopted with a majority show of hands.

Ms. Soter asked if there was an inventory of features and facilities in Griffith Park. Mr. Mariscal replied that there is not a comprehensive list but that the information exists in several places and several documents. Mr. Regan explained that over the years, the Department has not received funding to computerize data. Therefore, there are drawers full of maps, statistics, and other data in various locations that need to be compiled. Mr. Shull stated that the Department has started creating a physical inventory of facilities in Griffith Park.

Mr. Grace shared that he received responses to his questions to the consultants (Melendrez) and that he had further questions regarding the documentation of wildlife in Griffith Park. Mr. Mariscal explained that documentation is kept on an informal basis. Mr. Grace then volunteered to provide a database with an on-line wildlife survey. Mr. Regan said that information would be very helpful.

Mr. Gardner asked Council District 4 representatives to elaborate on the possibility of the State directing the freeway on/off-ramps to deliver vehicles directly to specific parking lots in the park to avoid congesting City streets. Mr. Fitzpatrick replied that this was not a new idea but had to details. He suggested that the audience write to their state representatives.

Discussion the followed about the next meeting and it was agreed that the next Working Group meeting would be held Monday, March 6, 2006, at 6:30 p.m. at the Ranger Station. At that time, the agenda concluded and the following public comments were taken:

- A question was asked on whether or not the upper level roads would be repaired and reopened. Mr. Regan responded that there is currently no funding available to fix the roads and the Department has received numerous comments requesting the roads not be re-opened.
- A member of the Tree People organization shared that there is collaboration with Griffith Park and the Tree People through the ongoing planting of trees in Griffith Park and that the Tree People have a vested interest in the urban wilderness designation. She also stated she would not want the upper roads reopened as there is currently no conflict with runners and vehicles, and she cited the lack of restrooms in the upper areas and the need for them.

- A resident, shared that there are two historical landmarks in Griffith Park that were built by William Mullholland and Ezra Scattergood to provide water and electricity to the Los Angeles Area. He also shared there are three on going studies related to the watershed of the Los Angeles River.
- An audience member stated the Working Group is doing exactly what Tom LaBonge had in mind, and that when this process is complete Tom LaBonge will be very proud.
- An audience member stated he has been “hanging out” in Griffith Park for 25 years and is a regular visitor. The main problem developing in the park over the years is commuters who speed through the park during morning and evening rush hours and this problem needs to be addressed.
- It was asked if the subcommittee meeting schedule would be posted and open to the public. Mr. Regan responded that the Working Group is not subject to the Brown Act and therefore not required to post subcommittee meeting schedules.
- An avid hiker stated he liked the Working Group’s idea of addressing erosion and unauthorized trail use as an educational issue rather than a criminal one.
- It was asked if there was any truth to the idea of a train running through Griffith Park as called for in the original plan. Ms. Brown responded that years ago, there was a plan to have a train route from Travel Town to the Zoo, but there were too many problems, such as having to blast through a hillside, associated with the project.
- An audience member stated he is a birdwatcher and doesn’t know if they were included in the list of User Groups. Ms. Soter replied that this particular group was included in a larger user group, such as hikers.

The meeting was then concluded.