



CHAPTER 4

DESIGN AND CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

4.1 OVERVIEW

An overriding theme gleaned from the public workshops was a community desire for a design that would create a historically significant park to honor the site's history of water bottling through interpretive features. Consideration for potential revenue generating enhancements was also expressed to help ensure continuing optimum maintenance of the park.

The following are specific elements that emerged from the workshops:

- Improving accessibility, walkways, lighting, recreational opportunities, and divided parking would strengthen the feeling of park safety.
- A variety of open space and outdoor facilities for individual and groups

should be incorporated into a new park design.

- The topography of the site should be modified to improve park drainage and limit the amount of water that leaves the site.
- Emphasize the use of native, low maintenance, and xeriscape landscaping.
- The existing spring water flow (estimated at approximately one gallon per minute) should be used for irrigation or a water feature if feasible.
- The eastern terraced portion of the park should be developed with various forms of native plant and xeriscape gardens, accessible paths, and allow for a community gathering spot.
- Options for the future of the Spring House should be explored that would acknowledge the historical significance of that structure and the entire park site. Consider the inclusion of educational activities and interpretive installations, alternative recreational uses, and possible revenue generation. The Spring House history as the site of an early water bottling facility was identified as a unique opportunity to educate the public and promote water conservation.
- Retrofit Pasadena Avenue for traffic calming to reduce vehicle speeds and cut through traffic.
- Residents preferred expanding the green space in the northern portion of the park rather than adding a potential development.



Upon direction from the La Mesa City Council, the services of Gary F. Hoyt Landscape Architecture, Inc. were retained to design improvements for the first anticipated phase of park renovation in the southern and western Panhandle area of the park utilizing recommendations that evolved from the various public input methods utilized. While the design for the Panhandle area was being

developed, the services of Keyser Marston Associates were retained to evaluate the potential for revenue-generating land uses that would be compatible with the park; and explore options for restoration, reconstruction, or replacement of the Spring House.

4.2 PANHANDLE PHASE 1 DESIGN

The Panhandle area, situated in the southern and western portions of the park, has been primarily developed for recreational use with existing facilities such as a tennis court, playground, restrooms, picnic area, and parking lot. Suggested improvements in the Panhandle area made during the public input process were: relocation and reconstruction of the drinking fountain structure; relocation and replacement of the playground; an updated accessible restroom facility; replacement of the tennis court; additional parking; and installation of walking paths, landscaping, improved drainage, and additional security features.

The improvements proposed for the Panhandle area in the Phase 1 design documents seek to redevelop the existing Panhandle area with similar recreational amenities and changes the topography to enhance safety and mitigate drainage and vandalism issues. It includes more accessibility to various elements within the park and greater visibility throughout the park site to allow for better proactive enforcement by public safety personnel as well as increase the feeling of security for park users. The design elements are described below in further detail.



Drinking Fountain. The existing reconstructed drinking fountain structure would be relocated to the entrance of the park at the intersection of Palm Avenue and Pasadena Avenue to serve as an enhanced entry feature focal point to the park. Preserving as much of the original roof as possible, the drinking fountain structure would be reconstructed at the new location.

Playgrounds. The existing playground area would be replaced with three separate, age-specific playgrounds for 2-5 years old, 5-9 years old, and 9-12 years old, respectively. The new playgrounds would be located in the central portion of the Panhandle area of the park, easily visible from the parking area. A larger, passive turf area would be constructed east of the new playgrounds. Two

shade structures would be constructed adjacent to the new playgrounds and would provide shaded tables for use during special events or group picnics.

Plaza and Restroom. Improvements to the Panhandle area include the construction of a main plaza area adjacent to the new playgrounds. The plaza area would be equipped with a new accessible and secure restroom and storage facility. The plaza would be raised and would allow for a separation of active and passive activities while also serving as a buffer area to keep children safely away from the main parking area. The restroom building would be oriented to be highly visible from all areas of the park including parking areas and surrounding roadways. This orientation would make it easier for people entering the park to view current activities and for parents to monitor children's restroom use while keeping an eye on children at play.



Walking Paths. Three pedestrian entrances would be constructed along Palm Avenue, replacing two existing steeply sloped stair/ramp paths. At least one entrance from Upland Street would be added to encourage pedestrian use by residents in the neighborhood to the east. Another walking path would be constructed from the park's main entrance at the corner of Palm Avenue and Pasadena Avenue, extending southeast to the new playgrounds. This walking path would also extend to the Navy housing project adjacent to the south side of the park. To the extent possible, all walking paths within the park would be handicap accessible and appropriate for all abilities, and would create internal park connections for pedestrian circulation throughout the park as well as connections to surrounding streets.

Tennis Court. The existing tennis court would be removed and replaced with a new tennis court to the west of the current location closer to Palm Avenue. This new location allows for greater visibility from the street.



Parking. The existing 25 space parking lot would be removed and replaced with 21 on-site parking spaces distributed throughout the park. The east side of Palm Avenue adjacent to the park has capacity for an additional 32 on-street parking spaces. The intent of spreading out the parking spaces throughout the park is to encourage recreational activity in all areas of the park and improve park security.

Landscaping and Other Enhancements. Excluding turf areas, the Panhandle area would be landscaped with native vegetation using low water demand techniques consistent with the City's Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (La Mesa Municipal Code Chapter 14.29). Invasive non-native shrubs, trees, and other vegetation, as well as dead and dying landscape materials, would be removed. New plants would require low water and minimal maintenance. Turf areas within the Panhandle area would be located in the northwestern portion of the park, along Palm Avenue, and east of the new playgrounds.

Drainage. A large portion of the park would be regraded and replanted to better manage site drainage and limit the amount of water that leaves the site. Drainage improvements would include the installation of grass swales and cobble drainage swales, as well as the replacement of the existing concrete-lined channel with a proposed bioswale and biofiltration basin. A bioswale is a type of natural storm water filtration system. There are many types of storm water filtration and management systems that can be applied to urban environments to remove storm water pollutants, generally referred to as a "best management practice," or BMP. The adoption of BMP, the use of the spring water for park irrigation, and use of xeriscape landscaping provide opportunities to include educational and

interpretive displays in the park, and correlates with the public's desire for sustainable design elements. Regrading of the Panhandle area would result in removal of all the trees currently in the park with the exception of one large ficus as noted in Chapter 2, Section 2.4.

Security Features. The project proposes to enhance park security by creating activity areas throughout the park, installing plantings that do not block views of the park from public rights-of-way, installing lighting throughout the park, and installing new fencing along the southern and eastern boundaries of the park. Project grading would recontour the natural bowl located in the Panhandle area of the park to allow for better visibility from Palm Avenue and Pasadena Avenue.



4.3 HISTORY HILL

The area designated as History Hill, situated in the southeastern portion of the park, currently consists of mostly undeveloped parkland. Proposed improvements to the History Hill area, which are conceptual in nature and subject to change, include conversion of undeveloped parkland into a grassy amphitheater built into the hillside. The natural elevation would be utilized for “stadium-style” seating, composed of pavers and decomposed granite or other natural materials, fronted by a flat area for recreation or performances. The amphitheater would offer casual seating capacity for approximately 50 park visitors and would be suitable for intimate performances, educational opportunities, and social gatherings. A small portion of the History Hill area would be designated as rental space for weddings or similar events. The amphitheater would be located adjacent to the Spring House, creating an option for the two features to be used together as a single special events venue.

The entire History Hill area would be terraced and planted with new landscaping to provide natural spaces for informal gatherings along the unpaved paths meandering through the amphitheater area. Project grading would lower the

existing topography of the History Hill area. Three walkways would be constructed within the amphitheater area. These paths would be composed of decomposed granite and terraced to accommodate the topography. The decomposed granite walkways would be interspersed with grass and sandstone steps. The southern portion of the History Hill area would include a walkway providing access to the southern portion of the Panhandle area.

4.4 COLLIER CLUB HOUSE

The Collier Club House area, situated in the northern portion of the park, currently consists of mostly undeveloped parkland. Improvements in this area, which are conceptual in nature, could include construction of a club house building, an outdoor event area, a plaza area, and parking, as well as the installation of walking paths, landscaping, and security features. The Collier Club House concept addresses the desire to create an ongoing source of revenue to assist with maintenance of park amenities as well as increased presence of positive activities in the park that would serve to discourage illicit activities.

Club House. The Collier Club House area could be developed to contain a new club house building for public use. West of the proposed club house building, an outdoor event area (including two outdoor seating areas and a ceremony stage) could be constructed. A plaza area could be located east of the club house building that would contain benches, an unpaved pathway, and green space. A water feature, fire pit, and outdoor cooking and dining area would be located



north of the building. Optional passive exercise areas, such as an oversized chess game and bocce ball courts or similar types of activities, could also be located south of the club house building.

Walking Paths. Two pedestrian crossings are proposed across Pasadena Avenue. One crossing would provide access between the Collier Club House and History Hill areas near the intersection of Upland Street and Pasadena Avenue. The other would provide access between the Collier Club House area and the Spring House area in the central portion of the park. A concrete sidewalk would be constructed along the western side of Upland Street for the length of the park boundary along this roadway. A connected sidewalk

would extend from Upland Street into the center of the park along the northern side of Pasadena Avenue, terminating at the pedestrian crossing in the Collier Club House area. The portion of the sidewalk within the park boundary would

include a handicap ramp and landing system. A separate, unpaved path would be constructed between the plaza area, near the intersection of Upland Street and Pasadena Avenue, and the club house building. Benches would provide respite spots throughout the Collier Club House area. To the extent possible, all walking paths would be handicap accessible and appropriate for all abilities, and would provide connectivity within the park as well as to surrounding streets. Walking paths would be placed to encourage physical activity and pedestrian circulation.

Traffic Circulation. A new driveway could be constructed along the northern portion of the park boundary to provide access from Pasadena Avenue to the outdoor event area west of the new club house building.

Parking. A parking lot with 34 spaces could be constructed within the northeastern portion of the Collier Club House area.

Landscaping. Excluding turf areas, the Collier Club House area would be landscaped with native vegetation using low water demand techniques consistent with the City's Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (La Mesa Municipal Code Chapter 14.29). One turf area would be located in the western portion of the Collier Club House area, adjacent to Pasadena Avenue. Another turf area would be located immediately west of the plaza within the Collier Club House area.

Security Features. Park security would be enhanced by creating activity areas throughout the park, installing plantings that do not block views of the park from public rights-of-way, creating more access points to encourage pedestrian entry into the park, and installing additional lighting throughout the park.

4.5 SPRING HOUSE

The Spring House is situated adjacent to the Panhandle area of the park with its back in close proximity to Pasadena Avenue. Over the years the building has been structurally damaged and deteriorated from a series of events, including fires, being hit by cars, water damage, vandalism, and arson. It was determined to be uninhabitable and closed to the public in 1981. Resolution No. 15191, adopted by the City Council on October 22, 1985, designated Collier Park and the La Mesa Spring House as a local historical landmark. On February 27, 2007 the City Council requested the Spring House to be referred to the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). The HPC discussed the potential options and concepts for recognizing the historic value of



the Spring House that could be incorporated into any future designs for improvements to Collier Park. The HPC acknowledged the serious physical deterioration of the structure and the economic feasibility of a complete restoration. It was the recommendation of the HPC, if funds were not available for complete restoration, that City Council direct that the stone walls around the base of the building, the cistern, and related accoutrements be maintained and preserved to serve as an interpretive center with a professionally designed display chronicling the significance of the springs in the early settlement and development of La Mesa.

It should be noted that the Draft EIR completed in January 2013 addresses a worst-case scenario alternative, as required in an environmental review, in order to evaluate the maximum adverse impact to existing conditions that could occur in a final design. A number of scenarios are contemplated and discussed here. The following scenarios do not represent any decision or recommendation made or pending on the disposition of the Spring House at this time. In addition, the phasing of the proposed park development could allow the park to be upgraded around the Spring House until such time as funding and/or a determination on the Spring House can be made.

Alternative #1 – Spring House Restoration

The Spring House would be restored to accurately depict the form, features, and character of the structure as it appeared during the early 1900s, the period of time in which it was used as a bottling works (“restoration period”).

Alternative #2 – Spring House Rehabilitation

This alternative would rehabilitate the Spring House for use as an indoor (enclosed) interpretive center. Rehabilitation could involve repairs, alterations, and additions to the building to allow for an efficient contemporary use while preserving the structural features that represent its historical value to the site.

Alternative #3 – Spring House Partial Deconstruction/Adaptive Reuse

Under this alternative the existing Spring House would be partially deconstructed down to the existing stone rubble wall base and cistern, and then repaired to create an adaptive reuse of the structure as an outdoor interpretive center chronicling the history of the park, consistent with the recommendations of the HPC. The creation of the outdoor interpretive center would include the stabilization of the remaining concrete and stone wall structure, addition of a new concrete floor finish, water-proofing of the cistern, and installation of interpretive exhibits.

The La Mesa General Plan (City of La Mesa 2012) defines adaptive reuse as follows: “The reuse of a building or structure, usually for a purpose different from

the original. The term implies that certain structural or design changes have been made to the building in order for it to function in its new use.” Selection of this alternative would require adherence to the “Procedure for Permit to Demolish a Historic Landmark or Contributing Structure within a Historic District” described in La Mesa Municipal Code Section 25.03.060. Prior to demolition, historical documentation of the Spring House would be completed.

At the time of drafting of this master plan, no funding for which this phase of the project might qualify has been identified. Should funding become available in the future, the City will draft specific plans for the Spring House. City staff will continue to explore various options with regard to the existing structure that may include restoration, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse or a repurposing for alternative use as either an indoor facility or partial demolition and replacement with an outdoor interpretive facility.

4.6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

The consulting services of Atkins were retained to draft an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed improvements to Collier Park. Preparation of the EIR included community input as well as input from a variety of public agencies as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

A draft EIR (SCH # 2011101051, City File # CR-09-04) was completed January 24, 2013 at which time City staff published a public Notice of Availability providing a 45-day public review and comment period for the document. Atkins also prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) required to evaluate potential impacts on the environment for improvements funded by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The purpose of the EA is to facilitate interagency coordination and consultation, and to support a Finding of No Significant Impact for proposed improvements in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

