

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
September 3, 2020

CHUMASH AMBASSADOR PARK CONCEPTUAL PLAN

Project No. 18-012-01
Project Manager: Hilary Walecka & Rachel Couch

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$50,000 to the City of Santa Barbara to conduct community outreach and prepare conceptual designs to redevelop Ambassador Park into a park that celebrates the cultural heritage of the Chumash native people in Santa Barbara County.

LOCATION: City of Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara County

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Public Access

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location](#)

Exhibit 2: [Site Photos](#)

Exhibit 3: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31400-31410 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) to City of Santa Barbara (“the grantee”) to conduct community outreach and prepare conceptual designs to redevelop Ambassador Park into a park that celebrates the cultural heritage of the Chumash native people in Santa Barbara County.

Prior to commencement of the project, the grantee shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy (Executive Officer) the following:

1. A detailed work program, schedule, and budget.
2. Names and qualifications of any contractors to be retained in carrying out the project.
3. A plan for acknowledgement of Conservancy funding.

4. In addition, to the extent appropriate, the City of Santa Barbara shall incorporate the guidelines of the Conservancy's 'Standards and Recommendations for Accessway Location and Development'."

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

"Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed authorization is consistent with Chapter 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding public access.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines."

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends a disbursement of up to \$50,000 to the City of Santa Barbara to conduct community outreach and prepare conceptual designs to redevelop Ambassador Park into a park that celebrates the cultural heritage of the Chumash native people in Santa Barbara County.

Ambassador Park is located along the City of Santa Barbara's waterfront at what was once the largest Chumash settlement along the coast, Syuxtun Village. Consistent with the tragic history of California Indians, including state-sanctioned genocide, the Chumash lost people, access to ancestral land, and freedom to conduct cultural practices. Despite this history, descendants of the Chumash people persist in Santa Barbara County today and have been rebuilding their culture and community and regaining recognition.

The Chumash community proposed this project to redevelop Ambassador Park into a welcoming park that celebrates Chumash heritage and their presence in the Santa Barbara community today. Ambassador Park is currently a grassy lawn bordered by palm trees with no amenities and is used primarily as a pass-through to the waterfront. The envisioned park improvements include features that recognize and support Chumash culture and heritage, such as: native vegetation that can be sustainably harvested for traditional cultural practices including basket weaving; winding walking paths; a gathering area for Chumash ceremonies, storytelling and education events; and multi-lingual interpretive signage to educate visitors on the significance of the site for the Chumash and the living heritage of the Chumash people. Lastly, the Chumash have proposed renaming the park from Ambassador Park (named after a former hotel) to Syuxtun Village Park.

With Conservancy funding, the City of Santa Barbara will work closely with the Chumash to undertake conceptual planning and community engagement needed to develop the project concept and obtain necessary approvals to move the project forward. The City will conduct meetings to develop consensus among residents, neighbors, Chumash representatives and key community stakeholders, for a comprehensive conceptual design. The design components will be developed based on the location, environmental and cultural factors and will serve not only

to recognize Chumash cultural heritage but also improve access to and use of this passive park. Approvals of conceptual design will be sought from the City of Santa Barbara's Parks and Recreation Commission, Historic Landmark Commission, and City Council.

Site Description: Ambassador Park is located along the Santa Barbara waterfront adjacent to West Beach. The 0.53 acre park is currently an open grassy lawn with palm trees and no amenities, and used primarily to pass-through to the waterfront. The small park is bordered by two public roads (W Cabrillo Blvd and W Mason St), a hotel, and an apartment building.

This site was once part of the largest Chumash villages on the coast, Syuxtun Village. The village was recorded in 1542 by the Cabrillo expedition and again in 1769 by the Portolá expedition, which noted over 600 people living there. The Santa Barbara Mission was founded in 1786 and by the early 1830s the village had disappeared. The site has yielded some of the most important archeological evidence found in California—over 2,500 objects were uncovered in 1923 by archaeologist JP Harrington on behalf of the Smithsonian Institute.

The Burton's Mound, California Historical Landmark No. 306 is located at the park today and named after Don Luis Burton, who acquired the property in 1860. Subsequent to Burton's ownership, before it was gifted to the City in 1924, the site was the pedestrian paseo for the famous Potter/Ambassador Hotel built in 1903. The palm trees bordering the park were planted when the hotel was constructed in 1903. The hotel burned in 1921 and was never rebuilt.

The Syuxtun Story Circle, a large 20-foot wide Chumash mosaic, is embedded in the sidewalk directly across from Ambassador Park on the oceanfront walkway of West Beach. The mosaic was installed in 2009 in collaboration with Chumash groups and the City of Santa Barbara to tell the story of the Chumash people.

Grantee Qualifications: The City of Santa Barbara's Parks and Recreation Department has extensive experience developing and renovating parks, as well as managing projects and grants. Successful recent park improvement projects include renovation of the Cabrillo Pavilion, MacKenzie Off-leash Dog Park, Kids World playground, Cabrillo Ball Park, and the construction of the new playground at the Municipal Tennis Center. Over the last two decades, the Conservancy has funded the City's Parks and Recreation Department on the Arroyo Burro Estuary Restoration, Arroyo Burro Open Space and Palermo Open Space acquisition, Mesa Lane Beach Access Steps, Andrée Clark Bird Refuge, and most recently the acquisition of new Beach Wheelchairs for the Cabrillo Pavilion.

Project History: The Conservancy became involved in this project during its work to identify a project appropriate for use of settlement funds from a nearby Coastal Permit Violation which involved impacts to cultural resources. The Conservancy invited Chumash representatives from the Barbareño Band of Chumash Indians, Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation, Chumash Maritime Association, the Barbareño/Ventureño Band of Mission Indians, and Chumash Most Likely Descendants to identify suitable priority projects for use of the settlement funds. The proposed project was brought forth by several Chumash representatives in 2017 and after several collective meetings was identified as having the most interest and consensus from Chumash representatives. The City of Santa Barbara's Park and

Recreation Department has committed to working with the Conservancy to develop the project at Ambassador Park. This is the first phase of the envisioned park development as conceptual designs, community engagement, and approvals are needed to determine the scope, design and feasibility of the park improvements.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$50,000
Project Total	\$50,000

The anticipated source of Conservancy funds is the Violation Remediation Account, in particular, funds paid pursuant to the Coastal Commission’s Consent Cease and Desist Order No. CCC-13-CD-03 and Consent Restoration Order No. CCC-13-RO-03, which address a coastal development permit violation (“Bacara Settlement”). The Coastal Act establishes the Violation Remediation Account within the State Coastal Conservancy Fund to hold penalties paid as a result of violations of the Coastal Act. (See Public Resources Code section 30823.) Violation Remediation Account funds must be expended for purposes of the Coastal Act. The proposed project addresses the types of damages that occurred from the permit violation which affected cultural, habitat, and public access resources, and the proposed project is located within coastal Santa Barbara county approximately 14 miles from where the violation occurred. Consistent with the Memorandum of Understanding between the Coastal Commission and Conservancy regarding the Violation Remediation Account, this proposal has been discussed and agreed upon by Coastal Commission Enforcement Staff as an appropriate project for use of the Bacara Settlement funds. The City of Santa Barbara Parks and Recreation Department are contributing an estimated \$15,000 in-kind for staff oversight and management of the project.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project is undertaken pursuant to Chapter 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31400 - 31410). Section 31400 states that it is the intent of the Legislature that the Conservancy have a principal role in the implementation of a system of public accessways to and along the state’s coastline. In order to carry out that mandate, the Conservancy is authorized by Section 31400.1 to provide grants to public entities or non-profits organizations to develop, operate and manage lands for access to and along the coast. Section 31400.1 restricts the Conservancy to providing grants to local agencies only for accessways that serve more than local public needs. This project is consistent with this section as the grant to the City of Santa Barbara would improve visibility and public access to this small park on the popular Santa Barbara waterfront visited by local, regional, and global visitors, and would enable the enjoyment of coastal resources, including cultural resources. Section 31400.3 authorizes the Conservancy to assist public agencies in developing and implementing a system of public accessways to and along the state's coastline. The proposed project will further these goals by improving and enhancing public access in a heavily visited coastal region.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ACCESS PROGRAM STANDARDS:

Standard No. 1, Protect Public and Coastal Resources: Consistent with this standard, the project location can safely accommodate public use and will protect coastal resources including cultural resources.

Standard No. 4, Privacy: Consistent with this standard, the project will consider privacy of the adjacent residences and hotel in development of the conceptual designs.

Standard No. 8, Trails: Consistent with this standard, the project will create conceptual designs for walkways that would improve access from this recreational facility to the shoreline walkway along West Beach and W Cabrillo Blvd.

Standard No. 13, Barrier-Free Access: Consistent with this standard, the project design will be consistent with all applicable federal and state statutes, regulations and guidelines governing barrier-free access for persons with disabilities.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S [2018-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN](#) GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):

Consistent with **Goal 2, Objective C** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will redevelop a coastal park to enable people to learn about natural, cultural, and historical resources significant to Chumash native peoples past and present and enhance public access to the area.

Consistent with **Goal 3, Objective A** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will provide a redevelopment plan for Ambassador Park on the Santa Barbara waterfront that will enhance public access and cultural resources.

Consistent with **Goal 16, Objective C** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will increase coastal access for all Californians including underserved populations by providing a coastal space for Chumash people to connect with their culture and gather for ceremonies, storytelling and education events

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated on October 2, 2014, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes:** See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" section above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
3. **Promotion and implementation of state plans and policies:** This project is consistent with the California Natural Resources Agency's initiative "Access for All" to support the right of all Californians to enjoy the state's cultural, historic, and natural resources. This project

improves access for Chumash to celebrate their cultural heritage and visitors to learn about the living culture of the Chumash.

4. **Support of the public:** The project is supported by State Assemblymember Monique Limon, State Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson, and Barbareño Band of Chumash Indians (Exhibit 3).
5. **Location:** The proposed project would be located within the coastal zone of the City of Santa Barbara.
6. **Need:** If Conservancy funds were not available, this project would not move forward. The proposed work is necessary in order to develop the project concept and garner the approvals needed to move the park redevelopment forward.
7. **Greater-than-local interest:** This project has regional significance by creating a free public gathering area that provides educational and cultural experiences of Chumash native peoples. The Santa Barbara waterfront is a popular regional and global tourist destination, and as such, the project will serve a greater than local need.
8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The coastal park is located across from West Beach in Santa Barbara and based on the City of Santa Barbara's Sea-Level Rise Adaptation Plan, the location is estimated to be exposed to storm flooding by 2060. The project design will address potential impacts from sea level rise, including periodic inundation.

Additional Criteria

9. **Resolution of more than one issue:** This project would increase the visibility of Chumash cultural heritage while also increasing usage of this underutilized park.
10. **Readiness:** The City of Santa Barbara is ready to commence the project in fall of 2020 if this funding is approved.
11. **Cooperation:** This project originated from a collaboration with Chumash groups including Barbareño Band of Chumash Indians, Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation, Chumash Maritime Association, the Barbareño/Ventureño Band of Mission Indians, and Chumash Most Likely Descendants.
12. **Minimization of greenhouse gas emissions:** The design plan will include landscaping with native drought tolerant plants, which would reduce water usage and sequester carbon. By reducing the turf area from the existing square footage, greenhouse gas emissions will be further reduced by eliminating mowing and limited watering.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The proposed project is statutorily exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to the Title 14 California Code of Regulations, Section 15262, as it involves only feasibility and planning studies for future actions which have not yet been approved, adopted, or funded. As required by Section 15262, planning for this project will include consideration of environmental factors.

Upon approval of the project, Conservancy staff will file a Notice of Exemption.