

CITY OF SANTA ROSA  
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL  
FROM: DAN HENNESSEY, DIRECTOR, TRANSPORTATION AND  
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT  
CHRISTA SIEGENTHALER, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF  
ENGINEERING SERVICES, TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC  
WORKS DEPARTMENT  
SUBJECT: ADOPTION OF MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT FOR MARTIN  
LUTHER KING JR. PARK & TRAIL (CEQA EXEMPT)

AGENDA ACTION: PUBLIC HEARING

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RECOMMENDATION

The Transportation and Public Works Department recommends that the Council conduct a public hearing, and thereafter by resolution, adopt the Master Plan Amendment for Martin Luther King Jr. Neighborhood Park and the multi-use trail connecting Hendley Street to Petaluma Hill Road.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the proposed Martin Luther King Jr. Neighborhood Park and Trail Master Plan Amendment is to provide an updated park master plan that includes the community's desired park amenities and improvements and to design and construct new park amenities and improvements.

GOAL

This item relates to Council Goal #2 - Invest in the Development and Maintenance of the City's Infrastructure by rehabilitating a heavily used park to better serve the current and future needs of the neighborhood and Council Goal #4 – Foster a Safe, Healthy, and Inclusive Community by providing a newly renovated park designed with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, amenities that encourage multigenerational use, and equitable access to green space for the community's physical and mental well-being.

BACKGROUND/PRIOR COUNCIL REVIEW

Martin Luther King Jr. Park (MLK Jr. Park) is a designated 5.38-acre neighborhood park located at 1208 Hendley Street in the South Park Neighborhood in Southeast Santa

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Rosa. It is adjacent to the Sonoma County Fairgrounds and connects to Petaluma Hill Road via an existing quarter-mile pedestrian and bike trail known as Newhall Trail. The park was created in 1887 and deeded to the City in 1965. Newhall Trail was acquired by the city prior to 1887 and was originally intended as a public street.

Currently, MLK Jr. Park consists of lit basketball courts, a natural turf soccer field, restroom building, playground, picnic areas, lighting, and standard park amenities including paved paths, benches, and waste receptacles. A Park and Trail Master Plan was completed in 1973, and a Park Master Plan Amendment was adopted in 2004. There are two buildings and an enclosed playground on-site that are utilized by Sonoma Community Action Network (SonomaCAN) to operate a Head Start preschool and Early Head Start program (existing preschool campus).

The park sees heavy use as a place of civic activity, engagement, and community pride, and as a venue for neighborhood gatherings, youth education and play, and organized sports activities. The park amenities need replacement or significant renovation to bring the park up to good condition and to comply with current building codes related to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Throughout 2021, the city applied for but was not awarded various grants to help fund reinvestment in MLK Jr. Park including Caltrans' Clean California grant, the National Park Service's Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program, and Senator Feinstein's FY2022 Non-Defense Congressionally Directed Spending Request.

Park improvements and infrastructure projects for several housing developments were included in a California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) Infill Infrastructure Grant (IIG). In February 2023, Santa Rosa was awarded \$20.7M in IIG funding. That amount has since decreased twice to \$17,575,200 based on the density of housing to be built, with an estimated \$6.5 to \$7.1M available for park construction. The IIG funding is dependent on the construction of the market rate and affordable housing associated with the grant.

On December 12, 2023, the City Council, by Resolution RES-2023-198, approved a professional services agreement with Callander Associates Landscape Architecture, Inc. to provide landscape architectural design and engineering services to facilitate community outreach and prepare a master plan amendment and construction documents for the park and trail.

## ANALYSIS

A Park Master Plan Amendment sought to engage the neighborhood to bring the park amenities up to current standards. Design consultant Callander Associates worked in conjunction with City staff to prepare graphics and provide research regarding opportunities and constraints to update MLK Jr. Neighborhood Park and Trail.

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The following meetings, surveys, and community events were held to solicit feedback from the community regarding their desired park amenities and to keep the community abreast of the unfolding project. (Attachment 3 contains outreach summaries from community and stakeholder meetings.):

- January 15, 2024 – MLK Day of Service and paper survey
- March 20, 2024 – Virtual Stakeholder Meeting #1 with Local Soccer Groups
- March 20, 2024 – Stakeholder Meeting #1 with Local Community Organizations at Finley Community Center
- April 20, 2024 – Santa Rosa’s Earth Day OnStage Festival at Courthouse Square
- May 11, 2024 – Community Meeting #1 at Kawana Springs Elementary and survey (online and paper)
- May 22, 2024 – Santa Rosa City Works Festival at the Wednesday Night Market
- August 7, 2024 – Virtual Stakeholder Meeting #2 with Local Soccer Groups
- August 7, 2024 – Stakeholder Meeting #2 with Local Community Organizations at Finley Community Center
- August 24, 2024 –Community Meeting #2 at Lighthouse Christian Church and survey (online and paper)
- September 14, 2024 – Vince Harper’s South Park Day and Night Festival at MLK Jr. Park
- October 8, 2024 – Meeting with SonomaCAN at MLK Jr. Park
- December 3, 2024 – Community Meeting #3 at Lighthouse Christian Church and survey (online and paper)
- January 20, 2025 – MLK Day of Service
- January 29, 2025 – Meeting with SonomaCAN at SonomaCAN’s office
- August 20, 2025 – South Park Coalition Meeting
- August 27, 2025 – Board of Parks and Recreation meeting
- September 17, 2025 – South Park Coalition Meeting
- October 25, 2025 – Vince Harper’s South Park Day and Night Festival at the Santa Rosa Veterans Memorial Building
- January 19, 2026 – MLK Day of Service

Community members were asked to provide input on project goals, park amenities and activities, public art, and play equipment styles and elements. Three design alternatives were presented with two ranked nearly equally by the community. Callander Associates created a preferred master plan that combined these two design concepts.

The Master Plan Amendment reflects the community’s desire to make the park a safe, welcoming, accessible, multigenerational green space that meets the daily recreational needs of the neighborhood while providing flexible gathering space for community events and celebrations. More specifically, the Master Plan Amendment provides basketball and futsal courts with lighting, fitness equipment, picnic areas with barbeques, play areas for youth ages 2-5 and 5-12-years-old, a prefabricated restroom, an open lawn area, a central shade structure, a central promenade with picnic tables and front porch swings, a synthetic turf soccer field with lighting, spectator and player seating, and equipment storage, a re-built, paved, multi-use trail connecting Hendley St

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to Petaluma Hill Rd that includes pathway lighting and landscaping, a renovated Class I shared use path along Henley St, raised crosswalks at Milton St and Frazier Ave, park monument signs, security lighting, shade trees, site furnishings, public art, and fencing and landscaping around the existing preschool campus. All new amenities and improvements will be compliant with building codes related to the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The following outreach was conducted over the course of the project:

- Direct mail postcard to 2,128 residents and property owners in a half mile radius of the park (Community Meeting #1)
- City website updates on main calendar and Park Projects webpage
- City Connections articles and meeting links
- Onsite postings with A-frame signs near the restroom, the playground, the roundabout on Temple Ave, and the crossroads of Newhall Trail and Petaluma Hill Rd
- Direct emails to interested stakeholders
- Posters in the park and around the neighborhood
- Emails and Facebook posts by the South Park Coalition to their distribution list
- Electronic communications by the South Park Futbol Club to their participants

The overall construction cost is \$9.1M. Including additional anticipated administrative and permitting costs, the current development cost estimated to build all amenities and improvements shown in the master plan is \$12M. Current funding available includes approximately \$980,000 of Park Development Impact (PDI) fees as well as the IIG amount.

Additional funding will be allocated to close this gap in future CIP cycles. Staff also proposes to construct the park amenities and improvements shown in the master plan in two phases. The northern half of the park, with a preliminary estimate of \$6.6M, would be constructed first, and the southern half of the park and the trail connecting the park to Petaluma Hill Road, estimated at \$5.4M, would follow. A design-build approach will allow the project to proceed as though it is one project, allow the soccer field to remain open while the northern section is re-built, and move the project forward as quickly as possible while waiting for funds to become available on July 1, 2026.

### FISCAL IMPACT

Approval of this action does not have a fiscal impact on the General Fund. PDI fees collected in Zone 4 (Southeast Quadrant) deposited to JL Key 09785 – Infill Grant MLK Park make up current appropriations for the project as previously approved by Council. In addition, the final funding amount from the California Department of Housing and Community Development Infill Infrastructure Grant will be used for design and construction of park improvements. Additional allocation will be recommended as part of the FY26-27 CIP budget. Once the improvements are constructed, ongoing maintenance and operation costs will be included in future budget adoptions.

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The recommended action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the following categorical exemptions:

- Section 15301 – Existing Facilities (Class 1) because the project involves improvements, rehabilitation, and renovation of existing park facilities, including recreational amenities, pathways, lighting, landscaping, and site furnishings, with no expansion of use beyond the existing park footprint;
- Section 15302 – Replacement or Reconstruction (Class 2) because the project includes replacement and reconstruction of existing sidewalks, internal park pathways, security lighting, and the Class I shared-use path along the park's eastern and southern boundaries, including the multi-use trail connection between Hendley Street and Petaluma Hill Road, all with substantially the same purpose and capacity as existing facilities;
- Section 15303 – New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures (Class 3) because the project includes construction and replacement of small-scale park facilities and structures, such as play equipment, picnic facilities, a prefabricated restroom, shade structures, sport courts, fitness equipment, lighting, signage, and similar minor structures;
- Section 15304 – Minor Alterations to Land (Class 4) because the project consists of minor grading, landscaping, and related site improvements within an existing developed park and does not involve removal of mature, scenic, or sensitive vegetation beyond what is typical for park redevelopment; and
- Section 15311 – Accessory Structures (Class 11) because the project includes construction of accessory structures such as a field equipment storage facility and related appurtenant improvements.

The project site is an existing, developed neighborhood park, and the Master Plan Amendment reflects improvements intended to bring park amenities up to current standards, improve accessibility, safety, and recreational opportunities, and enhance connectivity through the proposed multi-use trail.

None of the exceptions to the exemptions under CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 apply because the site is currently developed as a park, there are no successive projects of the same type proposed in the vicinity, there are no significant effects on the environment, there are no highways officially designated as a State Scenic Highway within or in the vicinity, there are no hazardous waste sites within or adjacent to the project, and there are no structures or objects older than 50 years in the park. Attachment 1 is a Categorical Exemption Memorandum containing an environmental analysis and detailed explanation of each categorical exemption and related exceptions.

Attachment 1 is a Categorical Exemption Memorandum that provides additional environmental analysis and a detailed explanation supporting the applicability of each categorical exemption and the absence of exceptions.

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Accordingly, the proposed action is exempt from CEQA, and no further environmental review is required.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On August 27, 2025, the Board of Parks and Recreation (BPR) received a presentation on the Master Plan Amendment process from City staff and the design consultant, Callander Associates, along with a detailed overview of the public engagement process and resulting draft Master Plan. The BPR received public comments from eight community members (Attachment 2), discussed the draft Master Plan Amendment, voted unanimously in favor of it, and recommended that Council do the same.

The Board further recommended that the available project funding be used to construct the north side of the park as the first phase of improvements.

NOTIFICATION

The proposed Master Plan Amendment was noticed for Public Hearing. Notification was provided by posting four signs on site, publishing notice in a newspaper of general circulation (Press Democrat), electronic notice to parties that have expressed interest in the project, bulletin board postings at City Hall, City Connections, and on the Recreation and Parks Department website.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – CEQA Categorical Exemption Memorandum
- Attachment 2 – Board of Parks and Recreation August 27, 2025 Meeting Minutes
- Attachment 3 – Outreach Summaries from Community and Stakeholder Meetings
- Resolution/Exhibit A – Martin Luther King Jr. Park & Trail Master Plan Amendment

PRESENTER(S)

Emily Ander, Assistant Parks Planner  
Dave Rubin, Principal, Callander Associates Landscape Architecture