

DATE ISSUED: February 14, 2003 REPORT NO. 03-025

ATTENTION: Natural Resources and Culture Committee
Agenda of February 19, 2003

SUBJECT: Standardized designs and Community Review for Comfort Stations

REFERENCE: City Manager Report 01-0253, issued November 20, 2001, and 02-094
issued April 24, 2002

SUMMARY:

Issue - Should a Council Policy for standardized designs and an abbreviated community review process be adopted for Park and Recreation facility comfort stations?

Manager's Recommendation - Recommend approval of Council Policy (see attachment 1) for standardized designs and an abbreviated community review process for Park and Recreation facility comfort stations, and approve the development of detailed floor plans, and architectural treatment for each standard comfort station design.

Other Recommendations - The Park and Recreation Board recommended approval of the proposed Council Policy on January 16, 2003. However, prior to final approval of the standard designs, they required detailed floor plans, and architectural treatment for each standard comfort station design.

Fiscal Impact - A savings of both time and money depending on standardized comfort station built.

BACKGROUND

On June 13, 2001, Councilmember Scott Peters requested Councilmember Byron Wear, Chair of the Land Use and Housing Committee, to have a hearing to determine if it would be possible for the Park and Recreation and the Engineering and Capital Projects Departments to design two or three acceptable comfort stations with acceptable fixtures that various communities could then select. This request was subsequently referred to the Committee on Natural Resources and Culture. On November 28, 2001 the Committee on Natural Resources and Culture passed a motion directing staff to return with:

- A. Minimal number (3-4) of standardized comfort station designs which would become a regular selection menu for the City, taking into account functionality, maintenance, safety, and other issues of concern.
- B. Optional abbreviated and targeted committee review process under which the standardized comfort station selection menu would be reviewed by the affected community prior to construction process.

Managers Report number 02-094 was issued April 24, 2002 to address the NR&C motion. On

May 1, 2002 the Committee on Natural Resources and Culture considered this report and passed a motion directing the City Manager to revise the Report to incorporate items A through D below and forward the report/issue to the City Council for approval.

- A. Full evaluation and response to proposals submitted by Karen Boger, Mary Coakley, and Gail Forbes.
- B. Report on how comfort station costs can be reduced
- C. Cost breakdown and comparison of various comfort stations to include building and maintenance costs
- D. Review and evaluate comfort stations in the City of Huntington Beach for possible inclusion into “off the shelf” comfort station designs

Coordination with Karen Boger, Mary Coakley, and Gail Forbes, a benchmarking effort with other agencies, including Huntington Beach, and design of floor plans and elevations was accomplished last year. The proposed designs were presented to the Design Review Committee of the Park and Recreation Board, but were not approved. The Committee recommendation was to support the concept of standardized designs, but more information about the elevations for each floor plan, the pallet of materials and alternative materials, and siting information was needed prior to their approval. The Park and Recreation Board heard the issue on January 16th, 2003 and recommended approval of the Council Policy (Attachment1).

HISTORY

Currently the Park and Recreation and the Engineering and Capital Projects Departments solicit community input for the unique design of each comfort station being built. The effort is meant to assure that all of the community needs, including safety, aesthetics, and uses are addressed. This process is sequential and generally begins with presenting a conceptual design to a Recreation Council and then progresses through an Area Committee, a Community Planning Group/Town Council, the Subcommittee for the Removal of Architectural Barriers, the Design Review Committee, and the Park and Recreation Board. In addition, for projects along the coast line, the process often includes a Coastal Commission hearing. Any of these committees may approve the project as presented, approve it with changes, or may recommend changes and request a second presentation prior to approval and moving to the next committee. These committees are of an advisory nature, with the exception of the Coastal Commission.

The current process makes use of architectural consultants to propose a conceptual design for the comfort stations. The architects study the proposed location, the neighborhood characteristics surroundings, and predetermine possible impacts of the new building. Based on their professional expertise and findings they design a conceptual plan which harmonizes with the neighborhood and other park amenities. The internal components are standardized to be vandal resistant and reduce maintenance requirements. The architect’s conceptual plan is also coordinated with any art component that may become part of the building.

The current public input process allows suggested changes to the proposed conceptual plan. Many of the suggestions are included in the design. The suggestions that are not, in most

instances, are addressed to the satisfaction of the committees, as demonstrated by their vote in favor of the project. In addition to the public input, the Design Review Committee, which is composed of a number of architects and engineers from private firms, provide input on the usability, ease of construction, and proposed architectural features of the project including color, texture, materials, components, location, landscaping, etc.

DISCUSSION

The proposed Council Policy (attachment 1) is intended to establish standardized designs for park and recreational area comfort stations, as well as a standardized process for selecting, altering, and adopting these designs. Modifications and additions to existing comfort stations will continue to be developed in accordance with the typical park development process. In addition, comfort stations requiring unique designs may be identified in the Capital Improvement Program and will be processed in accordance with the typical park development process.

After initial approval of the standardized designs and “off the shelf” designs by the Park and Recreation Board, significant design modifications or replacement of a standard design will require re-approval by the Park and Recreation Board and its Committees. Once approved, the review process for the standardized design of comfort stations will be conducted as follows: at the neighborhood level, review and approval by that neighborhood’s designated recreational advisory group, such as its Recreational Council, its Citizens’ Advisory Council, or an adjacent Recreational Council in the case of a neighborhood which has not yet formed its own Recreational Council, will be deemed sufficient approval of the design where one of the pre-approved designs are selected. The only modifications that may be made to pre-approved design consists of minor deviations or modifications for operational functionality, maintenance, safety, and to ensure conformance to and compliance with all current Uniform Building Codes, title 24 of the California Code of Regulations, known as the California Building Standards Code [Title 24] requirements, the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) requirements, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) requirements. Any other deviations will require City Council review and approval to waive the standardized comfort station design.

In the event a neighborhood wishes to propose modifications, or a unique design for its comfort station, or that a neighborhood wishes to incorporate works of art into the design, City Council review and approval shall be required. In such a situation, the designated recreational advisory group would approach the Park and Recreation Department staff and /or Councilmember for its district and request that the proposed design variance be docketed for Council review and approval. Requests to implement non-standard designs for comfort stations must be made in conjunction with a modification to the Capital Improvement Program budget that will provide the additional funds necessary for the design, management and construction associated with the new design. In such cases the approval process would follow the typical park development review process.

The City will maintain up to six comfort station designs and allow “off the shelf” comfort station designs that meet the Park and Recreation Department’s design guidelines. These six comfort station designs fall into three separate categories: two passive recreation area designs, two athletic area designs, and two coastal area designs. The selection of comfort station type will be presented by staff with a preference for individual stall (also called unisex) type facilities. The

following designs may be selected by the designated recreational advisory group without seeking Council approval:

- A. Passive recreation area designs are intended for areas that do not have active sports fields, or exterior showers. These designs provide four individual stall / family type stalls and a small storage area for maintenance and cleaning supplies.
- B. Comfort stations at active sports fields provide eight or more stalls, space for various sports leagues, storage for maintenance and cleaning supplies, and a concession area. The standard designs will provide one design for individual stall / family stall comfort stations, and one with the typical sex-segregated area stalls.
- C. The coastal area design provide exterior shower areas for rinsing and interior areas for changing clothes. The standard designs will provide one design for individual stall / family comfort stations, and one with typical sex-segregated areas, and both will include one family stall.

Attachment 3 shows an estimated range of total project costs for comfort stations individually designed by consultants, the standardized designs, and some of the benefits of the two methods. Typical comfort station costs are distributed between construction (65% to 70%) design fees (15% to 20%) and project/construction management(10% to 15%). The greatest savings realized by using a standard design will be found in design fees and the staff costs associated with project management and construction management. Design fees and management costs for comfort stations typically range between 30% and 35% of the total project cost depending on the size and complexity of the proposed facility. The design fees provide professional architectural, civil engineering, structural engineering, mechanical engineering, and electrical engineering services as well as community presentations, development of construction documents, permitting, and construction observation of the work. Management cost are related to coordinating all the design and construction effort and quality control. Implementation of standardized comfort station design is expected to reduce consultant fees and staff costs significantly. The total project budget is expected to be reduced by a range of 5% to 15% depending on the size of the facility being constructed. This savings is due to the reduced scope of work in the conceptual design, community review, and the preparation of construction document phases of the project. Greater cost savings have been realized at other agencies by using pre-fabricated comfort stations. San Jose is using these prefabricated comfort stations and has achieved significant savings in the construction and design portions of the projects.

Furthermore, the individual stall type of facility can be designed to provide equivalent function with less space. This is the result of eliminating circulation space and the relocation of sinks to the exterior of the building. While the cost per square foot is higher, the overall construction cost is lower due to the reduction in building footprint.

Staff has met several times with Karen Boger, Mary Coakley, and Gail Forbes. Attachment 2 address the questions raised about cost and the similarities between comfort stations being constructed throughout the State. Other issues raised included Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, space allocated for storage, and the use of individual stall type facilities. These issues were addressed as follows:

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design is a process by which decisions about the design are made after evaluating the location, type of users, history of problems in the area, and the design's surveillance, access control, territoriality, and maintenance issues. While individual stall comfort stations have many advantages, it cannot be unilaterally supported by CPTED in every location. The City of San Diego's Crime Prevention unit has stated that each comfort station should be evaluated on a case by case basis. Each agency contacted responded with the same concern (designs are evaluated on a case by case basis). Huntington Beach's CPTED practitioner and consultant stated that while individual stall comfort stations are the preferred comfort station type, there are locations within Huntington Beach where individual stall comfort stations would not be recommend.

The storage area placed in the City's standard design is required because of the need to keep comfort station and park maintenance supplies at the park. These areas also function as a work and staging area for the park maintenance staff. Each of the agencies contacted include these functions in their comfort stations (see attachment 2). Maintenance of the two comfort station types is basically the same. One major advantage of the individual stall comfort station is that they are cleaned without closing a major portion of the comfort station. This leaves the public with other facilities, and greatly reduces conflicts.

The use of individual stall comfort stations has been an option used within the City of San Diego for many years. The experience with these facilities has been positive, and the proposed Council Policy would establish individual stall type facilities as the preferred alternative.

ALTERNATIVE(S)

1. Continue using unique designs and the current community input process for all comfort station designs.

Respectfully submitted,

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CONCURRENCE:

APPROVED:

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AO:dg.

Note: Attachment 3 is not available in electronic format. A copy is available for review in the Office of the City Clerk.

Attachments: [1. Proposed Council Policy](#)
[2. Comfort Station Benchmarking](#)
3. Estimated range of project savings