

DATE ISSUED: December 1, 2004 REPORT NO. 04-256 Rev.
(Docket date corrected)

ATTENTION: Honorable Mayor and City Council
Docket of December 7, 2004

SUBJECT: SUNSET CLIFFS MASTER PLAN AND MEIR – APPROVAL
AND AMENDMENT TO THE LCP

REFERENCE: Planning Commission Report No PC-04-056, dated September 21,
2004

APPLICANT: City of San Diego Park and Recreation Department.

SUMMARY

Issue(s) - Should the City Council:

- Certify the Master Environmental Impact Report and
- Adopt the Mitigation, Monitoring and Reporting Program
- Approve the Sunset Cliffs Natural Park Master Plan for the 68-acre resource-based regional park and the amendment to the Local Coastal Program

Manager's Recommendation:

- CERTIFY Master Environmental Impact Report No. 91-0644 and
- ADOPT Mitigation, Monitoring and Reporting Program; and
- ADOPT the Sunset Cliffs Natural Park Master Plan and the amendment to the Local Coastal Program

Planning Commission Recommendation:

On September 30, 2004, the Planning Commission recommended certification of the Master Environmental Impact Report for Sunset Cliffs Natural Park, adoption of the Mitigation, Monitoring and Reporting Program and approval of the Sunset Cliffs Natural Park Master Plan. (See Exhibit A)

Vote: Unanimous

Park and Recreation Board:

On June 17, 2004, the Park and Recreation Board approved the Sunset Cliffs Natural Park Master Plan with one additional recommendation: (See Exhibit A)

Vote: Unanimous

Design Review Committee:

On December 10, 2003, the Design Review Committee recommended approval of the proposed Sunset Cliffs Natural Park Master Plan with eight additional recommendations that have been incorporated into the current Master Plan: (See Exhibit A)

Vote: Unanimous

Coastal Area Committee:

On February 5, 2002, the Coastal Area Committee recommended approval of the proposed Sunset Cliffs Natural Park Master Plan with two additional recommendations: (See Exhibit A)

Vote: Unanimous

Recreation Council:

On October 1, 2001, the Sunset Cliffs Recreation Council considered the project at their meeting and voted to approve the Sunset Cliffs Natural Park Master Plan with three additional recommendations: (See Exhibit A)

Vote 29-16

Environmental Impact – A Master Environmental Impact Report (MEIR) was prepared for the project as finalized May 18, 2004 in accordance with the State of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines. A Mitigation, Monitoring, and Reporting Program (MMRP) will be implemented which will reduce, to below a level of significance, the potential environmental impacts identified from the environmental review process for the following resource areas: land use, geology, hydrology, water quality, biology, visual quality/landform alteration, public safety, paleontological resources, historical resources (archaeology), historical resources (architectural), and cumulative impacts. All identified impacts would be mitigated to below a level of significance; no significant unmitigated impacts would remain. Therefore, no Findings or Statement of Overriding Considerations are necessary.

Fiscal Impact – None with the action.

BACKGROUND

Dedicated in 1983, Sunset Cliffs Natural Park is a 68-acre resource-based regional park stretching along the Pacific Ocean bordering the western edge of Point Loma. A 50 acre portion of the park is a designated Multi-Habitat Planning Area, and links the 640-acre Point Loma Ecological Reserve beginning at the Navy property to the south.

The planning process for this park began in the early 1980s. The Coastal Area Committee appointed the Sunset Cliffs Natural Park (SCNP) Advisory Committee in 1987. The committee was formalized as the SCNP Recreation Council in 1988. The first Draft Master Plan was prepared in 1991 with subsequent attempts following in 1997 and 2001. Unfortunately, there has never been an adopted Master Plan for the park.

The current Master Plan, dated June 2004 addresses long-term needs to fulfill the goal of returning the area to a natural park. Implementation of improvements would occur in multiple phases based on funding availability. Additional environmental review and permits may be required for implementation of individual projects identified in the Master Plan. Approval of this Master Plan is an implementing action that constitutes an amendment to the Local Coastal Program.

The Draft Master Environmental Impact Report was prepared and submitted for a 45-day public review period from October 1, 2003 through November 14, 2003 in accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines 15087. At the request of the Sunset Cliffs Natural Park Recreation Council, the public comment period was extended 14 days to conclude on Tuesday, December 2, 2003 allowing additional time for the Recreation Council and community to meet and finalize their comments. The document was finalized on May 18, 2004.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Sunset Cliffs Natural Park is located approximately five miles west of downtown San Diego along the western shoreline of the Point Loma Peninsula. The Park is bordered to the north by the Adair Street/Sunset Cliffs Boulevard intersection. The site is bordered to the west by the Pacific Ocean and to the east by Sunset Cliffs Boulevard, single-family residential uses, and the Point Loma Nazarene University (PLNU). The site is bordered to the south by the Naval Base Point Loma (historically known as Fort Rosecrans Military Reservation). See Attachment 1

The Master Plan is divided into two sections, the Linear Park and the Hillside Park. The 18-acre Linear Park section includes the natural cliff and street parking areas that extend approximately 1.25 miles south to the Sunset Cliffs Boulevard / Ladera Street intersection. The 50-acre Hillside Park includes the natural cliff and hillside area that extends from the Sunset Cliffs Boulevard / Ladera Street intersection approximately 0.5 miles south to the

northern border of the military reservation. The location is illustrated on the Aerial Photo, see Attachment 2.

Current elements within the Linear Park consist of parking areas and pedestrian trails with recreational uses generally consisting of jogging, surfing, fishing, tide pooling, and bicycling. The Hillside Park currently consists of upper and lower parking lots, informal trails, an athletic field, and seven structures. The Hillside Park is primarily used for passive recreation such as surfing hiking, and jogging. However, the 1.4 acre athletic field, in Hillside Park, is used for active recreation such as softball practice, intramural sports, and unorganized neighborhood Park use.

DISCUSSION:

The Sunset Cliffs Natural Park Master Plan provides recommendations and guidelines for land uses proposed within the Park with a primary goal to:

“Create a park where people can enjoy San Diego’s natural coastal environment as it once was, free from the effects of man and intended to inspire the user to reflect on the grandeur of the sea, and beauty of the cliffs that are Point Loma,”
Sunset Cliffs Natural Park Recreation Council.

During the CEQA public review period, sixteen comment letters containing 314 comments were received on the draft MEIR. In accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines 15088, the City of San Diego evaluated and responded to all written comments received. Many of the comments resulted in clarifying changes as reflected in the Final MEIR. Disposition of all comments is found in the Response to Comment document which is part of the final MEIR.

The following reflects the primary issues raised during public review and throughout the planning process:

- 1) Parking adequacy – Several comments noted discrepancy between the actual parking availability and the numbers identified in the Draft. As a result, additional review was conducted and the EIR was corrected to reflect the actual number of parking spaces.
- 2) Traffic/pedestrian safety – Several comments requested further evaluation of parking.
- 3) Lot redesign and the potential safety impacts resulting there from. As the Master EIR does not propose project-specific parking lot reconfiguration, a detailed analysis has been deferred until a project is proposed.
- 4) Drainage and runoff – A primary, underlying theme in the comments is the on-going erosion and drainage issues in the Park and the disagreement among the stakeholders regarding the source and solution. As disclosed in the Draft EIR, a separate drainage study would be conducted, subject to available funding and

additional environmental review, to more fully analyze and propose solutions to the erosion which is currently degrading the Park.

- 5) Athletic field removal – Perhaps the most controversial of the issues is the current use of the athletic field for active recreation in a passive park and Multiple Habitat Planning Area (MHPA). During the process of preparing the Master Plan, it was decided to eliminate active recreational use of the field and return it to a naturalized state in accordance with the MEIR Revegetation Plan. The Park and Recreation Board recommended working with the community to find alternate ball field sites with a time limit of two years from approval of the Master Plan. The Planning Commission discussed eliminating the ball field within 90 days of approval of the Master Plan but did not take action on this specific matter.
- 6) Future environmental review – The MEIR has identified need for future environmental review to more fully analyze the potential for impacts from future projects. These future environmental studies include:
 - Drainage Study
 - Erosion Control Study
 - Traffic/Parking Study
 - Biological Studies (e.g., Springtime survey, tidepool study, revegetation program)
 - Archaeological Study

CONCLUSION:

After considerable time and effort, the community and stake holders have reached a compromise regarding the primary issues associated with the Sunset Cliffs Natural Park Master Plan. The Park and Recreation Department recommends:

- Certify the Master Environmental Impact Report No. 91-0644 and
- Adopt the Mitigation, Monitoring and Reporting Program; and
- Adopt the Sunset Cliffs Natural Park Master Plan and the amendment to the Local Coastal Program

ALTERNATIVE(S):

- 1) Do not adopt any or all of the Manager's recommendations.
- 2) Amend any or all of the Manager's recommendations.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Oppenheim
Park and Recreation Director

Approved: Bruce Herring
Deputy City Manager

PENERA/JEJ

Note: Attachments are not available electronically. A copy for review is available in the Office of the City Clerk.

Exhibit A: Summary of Recommendations

Attachments:

1. Regional Map
2. Aerial Photograph
3. Community Plan Land Use Map
4. Planning Commission Resolutions
5. Agreements: Point Loma Nazarene University
6. Master Plan
7. Master Environmental Impact Report