



CITY OF PACIFIC GROVE

AGENDA REPORT

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council
From: Rudy Fischer, Councilman
Meeting Date: April 18, 2018
Subject: George Washington Park Renovation Proposal
CEQA: Does not constitute a “project” under CEQA Guidelines

RECOMMENDATION

Receive the report and direct staff to work with the Recreation Board and Beautification and Natural Resources Commission to craft a recommendation for a course of action for the renovation of George Washington Park.

DISCUSSION

On Saturday, January 28, 2017 the then new City Council convened a public City Council Planning Session at the Point Pinos Grill at 79 Asilomar Boulevard, Pacific Grove, CA. General public comment was received, and the Council and senior staff deliberated about goals and strategies for the coming years.

As a result of this session the City developed multiple City Council Values, Vision, Mission, Goals & Strategies (to which updates and additions have been made since then). Among the City Council’s Goals are:

3. Placemaking: Support a dynamic and robust local economy through the development and adoption of an economic development strategy centered on the concept of “placemaking”.
- c. Improve appearance, accessibility and integration of Lover’s Point, including the implementation of the proposed Julia Platt Plaza
- d. Upgrade Jewell Park
- e. Create and implement an “adopt a park” program.**

At a recent council meeting the Capital Improvements Staff recommended a reallocation of project funds within the capital improvement budget to support funding for the Recreation Trail Coastal Access Project (RTCAP). The city has several coastal parks projects planned, under way, or completed, and it is appropriate to also consider action on the city’s urban parks

After speaking with members of the PONY League, the Friends of George Washington Park, those residents who use the dog walking trails in the Park, and numerous parents who take their children to the Park, it appears that there is a need and a desire to improve this urban park. Since

this park serves about one fourth of the city's population, this should be brought forward for consideration and action in a timely manner.

The attached Report provides some recommendations on how the city can adopt an urban park that is used by a considerable percent of the city's population, and improve it to make it even more user friendly for both residents and their children. This is an opportunity for the Recreation Board and the Beautification and Natural Resources Commission to hold public hearings and make recommendations on how this project should be undertaken.

FISCAL IMPACT

None by this action, though full renovation would cost approximately \$130,000.

GOAL ALIGNMENT

Placemaking: Create and implement an "adopt a park" program.

ATTACHMENTS

1. The George Washington Park Renovation Plan for Pacific Grove.
2. Chapter 23.43; Initiative Restriction of Use of George Washington Park
3. 2012 report on "Restoration of George Washington Park to a Viable Winter Site", Kingston Leong Ph.D., Emeritus, Cal Poly State University.

Note: Both the "1999 Master Park Plan for George Washington Park" and the 1999 "Proposed Revegetation Plan for Washington Park" by Bruce Cowan, Environmental Landscape Consultant, are available on request as PDF files..

Respectfully submitted,

Reviewed by,



Rudy Fischer
Councilmember

Ben Harvey
City Manager



Pacific Grove

Proposal for Renovation of George Washington Park



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Introduction

Pacific Grove Parks

Pacific Grove currently has 28 parks and several open space areas. Many of them are covered under the Coastal Parks Plan, but this park's renovation proposal is for one of the City's major urban parks. Due to the location and uses of this park (dog walking, sports, playground, picnics, barbeques, and a natural area) George Washington Park is probably the Urban Park that is most diverse and affects the most residents in the city.

Past Park Goals and Policies

The City's Recreation Master Plan was prepared in 1957, and a draft update was prepared in 1977 but was never officially adopted. With the upcoming **Recreation Opportunities survey**, this is now in process of being updated.

The City's municipal code states that this park ***"shall be used only for recreational and pleasure purposes as a park... (and)...shall be maintained for recreational purposes as a park by the city in a cleanly condition."***¹

Future Park Goals and Policies

Adopt a Park – The city does not have the funds to go out and address all parks; nor does the City staff have the time to do so. One of the goals adopted by the City Council in 2017, however was the concept of "Pick a Park/Adopt a Park". By picking one park at a time and focusing efforts on that area, over a reasonable amount of time, we can get our resident serving urban parks cleaned up and in better shape than they are now.

Nor need this be a large and expensive project. Pacific Grove has residents who are dedicated to various causes – and parks are certainly one of them. You and some neighbors can simply commit to going out on a regular basis to clean up and maintain a park or a portion of a park. Or, under city supervision, a group can go out to plant trees, remove dead ones, clear out brush, level ground, or fix up a playground or ball park.

This park has been picked because numerous residents have expressed interest in addressing different parts of the park in order to make it more usable. This would fit in well with a multi-year program to address the city's urban parks.

¹ Pacific Grove Municipal Code, Chapter 23.43.010 and 23.43.020

One way to make an “Adopt a Park” program effective is to:

- Establish goals, policies, and standards for the location, size, and level of development for a proposed park.
- Identify existing parkland deficiencies.
- Establish use and development priorities.
- Develop plans to fix up our parks over time without too much additional costs.
- Plan to annually set aside funds for future, identified park enhancements.
- Seek park grants to improve selected parks as identified in a more formal study.
- Develop and hold fund raising activities to obtain funds for park improvements.

This report is able to apply all of these criteria in order to identify community desires and provide a framework for future action by the City.

History of George Washington Park

Before it became a city, Pacific Grove and the surrounding area was mostly pine forest, sand dunes, and rocky coast. The local Indians had lived in this area for about 7,000 years before the arrival of Europeans in 1542, and occasionally burned off parts of the forest both to clear land and expose animals that could then be hunted for food.

That is considered the Native American and Mission Period (to 1820)². In 1833 much of the Pacific Grove area was given to Jose Armenta as the Rancho Punta de Pinos on the condition that he build a home on the property. His was the first European house in the area.³

In the middle of the 19th century, some forest areas were logged for various uses, while other areas were cleared for cattle grazing until about 1900. The Monterey pines and coast live oaks currently growing in Washington Park were planted after that time.

“The city bought the forested property that became George Washington Park from the Del Monte Properties Company in 1925 for \$10. The portion along Sinex was developed into a playground/picnic area as a federal WPA project in the 1930s, and the rest of the park was left as a natural forest. The housing shortage created by the growth of Fort Ord in World War II resulted in trailers and tents taking over the picnic area. The city considered developing a larger and more permanent trailer park there after the war, prompting residents to put an initiative on the ballot in 1948 and vote to keep George Washington Park a park.”⁴

At 20 acres in size, other than the golf course, George Washington Park is the largest of Pacific Grove's city parks. It is six blocks long from Short Street to Sinex Avenue and is located primarily between Melrose and Alder Streets. Most of the park is natural appearing, unimproved forest land that offers important wildlife habitat.

² City of Pacific Grove Historic Context Statement, Page and Turnbull, October 2011.

³ Images of America, Pacific Grove, Kent Seavey and the Heritage Society of Pacific Grove, 2005.

⁴ Plan for the Park, Thom Akeman. February 2015

It “consists of a natural forested area of 20 acres located in the west central portion of Pacific Grove on the Monterey Peninsula (36° 30 latitude, 121° 50’ longitude). It is six blocks long, roughly north and south, and has varying widths which average close to two city blocks. It is bounded on the north by Short Street, on the east by Alder Street, on the south by Sinex, and on the west by Melrose Street in places and in other places by private property which fronts Melrose Street. Only one road, Pine Avenue, crosses through the park. It is located approximately one-third the distance south of the north boundary.”⁵

Along with Lynn “Rip” Van Winkle Open Space Regional and State Park, George Washington Park is listed in the General Plan under **Community Parks—Natural Areas and Open Space**.⁶

The 1999 “**Master Park Plan for George Washington Park**” called on the city to, among other things “Achieve a balance between maximizing the protection of valuable park resources and maximizing public enjoyment of the park.” This report also called for “the enhancement of park resources to a healthy state”, “retain natural land forms”, and “restore and enhance environmentally sensitive habitat areas”.⁷

This document will attempt to address all of these though, in the 19 intervening years between the adoption of the old Master Park Plan and today, many changes have occurred at the park. This means that a great deal of review and planning will have to go into the restoration and upkeep of the park’s natural areas in particular.

Thus, the majority of the suggestions in this report for specific actions will deal with the recreational and public uses of the park. This is partly because evaluating a natural area in an urban environment is problematic at best. But it is important to take action to maintain a public park system and recreation facilities suited to the needs of all of Pacific Grove’s residents.

Also, though it is all one park, it is actually comprised of three parcels in the County Assessors maps; which is what will be used in the remainder of this report. **Parcel One** is bordered by Short Street to the north, Alder Street to the east, Pine Avenue to the south and Melrose Street - as well as a few houses that front on Melrose Street to the west. **Parcel Two** is bordered by Pine Avenue, Alder Street, a line extending from Junipero Avenue through the park to Melrose, and Melrose Street; as well as six houses that back onto the park and front on Melrose. **Parcel Three** is south of the line running from Junipero to Melrose at the north end, Sinex Avenue at the south, Alder Street to the east, and Melrose Street and a handful of houses that back up to the park and front on 17 Mile Drive to the west.

⁵ Master Park Plan for George Washington Park, 1999.

⁶ Pacific Grove General Plan, 1994

⁷ Master Park Plan for George Washington Park, 1999.

Parcel one – Natural and Dog Friendly Area

Parcel one is a mostly natural area, and may require the least work of any of the sections (at least initially). Deer, squirrels, birds and other wildlife are often seen in this area, and it is characterized by forest, shrubs, and a complex set of trails. These trails are used by dog walkers and recreational hikers; and dogs are allowed off leash in this section of George Washington Park between sunrise to 9:00 A.M. and from 4:00 P.M. to sunset.



Picture of some of the dog walkers at one of the trail openings.

Although this area became somewhat controversial in 2017 because of a city staff recommendation to eliminate off leash dogs in the park, the City Council decided to continue to allow the practice. Domestic animals are not generally allowed to roam free within the city's borders, but exceptions have long been made for off leash dogs in two of the city's parks; George Washington Park and the Rip" Van Winkle open space.

The City's Municipal Code states:

(c) Off-Leash Exceptions. As further exceptions to the general prohibition of subsection (a) of this section, dogs are permitted to run freely, without leash or any other physical restraint, between sunrise and 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. and sunset in the following areas; provided, that at no time in such areas shall a dog be further than 50 yards from the person accompanying the dog in the area:

- (1) In that portion of George Washington Park bounded by Short Street, Melrose Avenue, Alder Street and Pine Avenue;
- (2) In Lynn "Rip" Van Winkle open space.

Dog walkers have shown a remarkable level of responsibility for their pets, and clean up after those animals quite well. Nevertheless, several improvements would make this a better area. Among those is:

- Two to three more waste receptacles at the entrances to the dog walking trails by:
 - The west entrance at Short Street.
 - Both entrances to the trails just off of Pine Avenue.
- Adding dog waste mitt dispensers



X

Two examples of animal waste mitt dispensers on mounting poles.

There is a lot of debris along sections of the trail, though some of the fallen trees and stumps have been creatively carved into seating areas. There are, however, a few areas that could use a pick up run of fallen logs and dead branches simply to clean the park up and reduced the fire load.



Wood sections stacked along the dog walking trail. Fallen log carved into a bench for dog watching.

SUMMARY:

This section of the park needs very little work, and some garbage cans are already slated for placement here. Relatively minor clean-up of the forest floor is desirable, and some of those who walk their dogs have indicated they would pitch in under the direction of the City's Public Works Department to assist in any clean-up efforts.

Parcel Two – Natural Forested Area

This parcel is an all-natural area and will probably require the most study and work of any of the three parcels. One of the local Cub Scout troops sometimes brings their boys into this part of the park to introduce them to trees, trails, and how to collect firewood (**NOTE: no fires or removal of wood are actually involved**). Other than for strolls in the forest by a few residents, this part of the Park remains unused for most other activities and remains a primarily natural area.

Over the years many people have referred to a master plan that had been developed for the park. That Plan called for changes back in 1999, many of which have not occurred. This is because, although the final, mitigated, 23-page master plan was adopted in September of 2000, no funding was provided for implementation of any of the recommendations, and any work performed in the park in ensuing years was left to the city's Public Works Department, city committees, or volunteers.

Indeed, the Master Park Plan almost disappeared from the city's history. Thom Akeman reports that "the plan surfaced at least briefly in 2007, after a resident attended a City Council meeting and questioned a new city arborist's intention to remove 200 dead or dying Monterey pine trees in the park that was supposed to be a natural preserve." This action resulted in the removal being limited to only 40 or so of the worst trees, while the others were allowed to die.⁸ A review of what happened to those other 160 trees may be in order.

A PDF copy of this document was recently located by the Public Works Department. Though apparently not acted upon in total, the City's Public Works Department has done some work in the park over the years.

This document will attempt to address the needs of this section of the park in general terms since, in the 19 intervening years between the old report and today, many additional changes have occurred at the park. That means that a great deal of review and planning will have to go into the restoration and upkeep of the park's natural areas.

The Natural areas

For a variety of reasons – including drought, disease, and neglect - the park's natural areas have become somewhat degraded. It is important, therefore, that efforts be made to preserve – and even restore – parts of this area. Though there are many seemingly healthy trees in the park, many have suffered from pitch canker. In the past, in order to keep the park as natural as possible, many downed trees were left as they fell. By leaving them that way, however, the City may be exposing other trees to Pitch Canker because the spores may be able to live in soil.

Pitch canker is a disease that affects many pine species, and is caused by the fungus *Fusarium circinatum*. Most pines native to California are susceptible to this disease, but

⁸ Plan for the Park, Thom Akeman February 2015

Monterey pine, *Pinus radiata*, seems to be the most widely affected host. The most recent severe outbreak of this disease in California was in populations of native bishop pine (*P. muricata*) at the Point Reyes National Seashore in 2007.⁹

This disease was first observed in Santa Cruz County in 1986 and, since then, has spread rapidly and now occurs in at least 18 coastal counties. This disease is a serious threat to pine forests because of the high rate of tree mortality and reduced growth; as well as the degradation of timber quality which it causes. Multiple branch infection can cause severe crown dieback and may eventually lead to the death of the whole tree. This aggressive fungus can also infect pine seeds and cause damping-off of young seedlings (death because of the fungal infection being encouraged by damp conditions).

This fungus can also infect Douglas-fir, but symptoms are usually limited to tip dieback in that species. Although the U.S. Forest Service and others are working to develop strategies for disease containment, there is no effective known treatment for trees infested with this disease at this time. The spread of the disease is being monitored in many areas, but visitors should be notified that they need to be careful not to take any material with them as this may further spread the disease.¹⁰



Dead and dying trees in George Washington Park.

⁹ National Park Service White Paper, 2007.

¹⁰ University of California Agricultural and Natural Resources Integrated Pest Management Program

This condition exists throughout the United States, and not just in this forest, however. “Unfortunately, our National Forests are a threatened legacy. Disease, insects, and massive wildfires have taken a devastating toll. A million acres of our National Forests are in need of replanting.”¹¹ *The disease also seems more severe in urban forests.*

Because of diseased trees and debris, it may be important to clear the natural forest area of some debris in order to maintain the health of the remaining forest. Also, while some natural debris may serve to replenish a forest, too much may also serve as “fuel” in case of a fire. Those who want to keep the forest “natural” must also realize that when a forest is in the middle of a city, the safety and protection of residents and neighborhoods from fire in a nearby forest must also be considered.

Indeed, even the **1999 Master Plan** called for measures to reduce the risk of a catastrophic fire within the park by removing fallen logs. That plan also noted that “All wood from downed trees or hazard trees felled in the park should be considered to harbor the pitch canker fungus. In order to slow the spread of the disease, Pacific Grove citizens should be discouraged from gathering wood and storing it next to living pine trees or transporting it to uninfected areas.”¹² No such cautions have been posted.

Insects may also be a secondary factor in the death of trees, and must be monitored. In addition, trees planted before the drought may not have survived, and a plan to determine how much planting could be done in those parts of the park would be helpful.

Several residents have also complained about weeds - such as poison oak – in this forest, so a weed survey and follow on abatement program may be in order also.

There have been reports that, because nothing is being done by the city, one or more residents are themselves planting trees in the park. Any work there should be part of an organized long-term plan controlled by the city and supervised closely by the City Arborist working with the Beautification and Natural Resources Committee. Also, in order to maximize their chance for survival, trees and seedlings need to be of the right type, flagged for location, and watered on a regular for at least the first few years. This does not appear to have been done.

Dead trees left standing in the center mostly hit other standing trees in the forest, though the clean-up of some of these trees has not been complete. There is also a concern that some trees should be removed around the perimeter; including dead pines that could fall across power lines, on passing cars, or that could even hit houses across the street.

Many have now fallen down themselves now, decomposing, creating soil. Others have fallen onto trails within the park,



¹¹ National Arbor Day Foundation publication, 2018.

¹² Master Park Plan for George Washington Park, 1999.



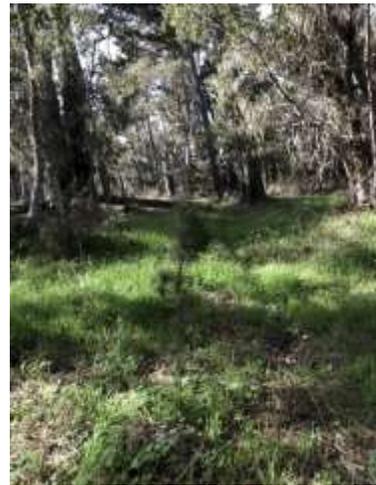
Dead tree debris in Parcel Two

creating a measure of hazard to people walking there. Even others are leaning precariously and should be removed for safety. The leaning trees on the previous page are resting on other trees only two feet from a well-used walking trail.

When it comes to new tree growth; though some work may be city managed and directed, seeds that drop & establish themselves without human assistance are generally preferred. Indeed, there is some evidence of this happening now also. The city should determine what balance of natural to managed planting it wishes to pursue.



Tree planted in a protective enclosure.



Tree that appears to have sprouted naturally.



Dead tree laying across a walking trail in Parcel Two.

The open space area – from Pine Street to the ball field to the south - has hiking trails and nature viewing areas. Trees can be left as safe wildlife snags where appropriate, but a more naturalistic removal process should be considered in many cases simply because a standing trunk keeps new forest growth from occurring. Removal of some dead standing trees is recommended. Dead trees that may fall across trails should be evaluated, and those that have already fallen should be removed for safety reasons

Some reduction of accumulated deadfall is recommended, as several large piles of downed tree debris were noted. Extra care should be taken to not injure small established trees while removing debris.



This appears to be a tree that fell. The ends were removed, but the center trunk is suspended between two other trees.

The forest should also be reviewed to evaluate how it was affected by the recent drought. That event may have caused an increased loss of leaves, needles, and branches – and even the mortality of entire trees. Any damage so noted should be addressed by the city; in addition to which we may wish to retain the services of Cal Fire to mitigate any potential problems in this area.

The Davey tree report of 2015 found that the “centroid” of the changing canopy in Pacific Grove is around George Washington Park. This is where the greatest fluctuation between tree canopy and other land cover classes occurred from 2005 to 2014. This variability highlights the fact that management for urban forest canopy must anticipate both gains and losses in order to ultimately promote strategies that result in net canopy growth. The study also found that George Washington Park area and surrounding areas will continue to provide the most conducive environment for Tree Canopy gain and to be the hotbed for most land cover changes.¹³

Indeed, the March 7, 2018 Agenda Report from Caleb Schneider, the Public Works Department’s Management Analyst, noted that “Due to the multi-year drought and increased disease pressure, specifically on the City’s Monterey Pine species, the City Public Works Department and Forestry Division has seen a significant increase in needed maintenance on public trees.”¹⁴

SUMMARY:

In summary, forest management in Zone 2 of George Washington Park is needed, and the first steps should be the removal of some dead standing trees and clean-up of forest floor debris.” This was stated in the **George Washington Park Master Plan** in 1999, and is even truer today. Such action could set the stage for managed plantings and/or the natural restoration of the forest. The park plan should be updated, but immediate

¹³ Davey Tree Report of 2015.

¹⁴ Amended Agreement with Tope’s Tree Service, Inc. for Professional Services, Caleb Schneider, Item 9A of City Council Regular Agenda

work should also be commenced to reduce fuel, some dead or dangerous trees, fire fuel load, remove garbage and dead Christmas trees that have been dumped in the park, and remove some of the old roots that pose tripping hazards for older people.

There is enough interest in GW Park by city residents that it may be possible to put together volunteer groups to work with city staff to get more work done.



The Butterfly Grove

At the corner of Pine and Alder is a stone marker placed there in 1974, with a plaque dedicated to the Elmarie Hulbert Dyke Hubbard Butterfly Tree Gove. The plaque is still there, though the butterflies seldom congregate in this park any more.

In his 2012 report on the grove, Dr. Kingston Leong reported that “According to long-time residents of Pacific Grove, winter aggregations of monarch butterflies were commonly observed during the 1980’s at George Washington Park.¹⁵ Their presence have been irregularly observed since Xerces documented the monarch’s winter aggregation sites and populations throughout California”...

Sizeable numbers were recorded in 2003 (2,750), 2004 (4,325) and 2006 (11,795), though no winter aggregations have been observed in other years. According to the Report, the spotty seasonal occurrences of winter aggregations at GWP indicate that conditions for winter aggregations have degraded to a winter habitat that borders between a non-winter site and a transitional site. A transitional site has suitable conditions for winter aggregations early in the season, but will degrade to one that can no longer support overwintering butterflies as conditions become wintrier.“

Dr. Leong’s studies determined that the monarch butterflies were attracted to the conditions created by the grove at George Washington Park in the past and not to any specific species of trees. He concluded back in 1999 that since the Monterey Pines had become tall and lacked much of their lower branches, while the Oak trees had “minimal foliage and many dead branches” they had degraded to the point where they no longer provided conditions suitable to the Monarchs.

He did feel, however, that the restoration of the Park for overwintering butterflies is worthwhile, doable and a realistic goal. He concluded that a targeted restoration of forested areas – if implemented properly – would have a high probability of success; though this would have to be a sustained 15 to 20 year effort. There is a lot that would have to go into such an effort, but it may be worthwhile to restore the old grove that supported large winter aggregations in the past.

¹⁵ 2012 report on “Restoration of George Washington Park to a Viable Winter Site”, Kingston Leong Ph.D., Emeritus, Cal Poly State University.

Parcel Three – Recreational Area

This is the section of George Washington Park that is bordered by the line running from Junipero at the north edge, and by Alder Street on the east, Melrose Street and a handful of houses that back up to the park and front on 17 Mile Drive on the west, as well as Sinex Avenue to the south. There is ample curbside parking along Alder Street for residents and visitors who wish to use the park for play, barbeques, adult or child birthday parties, or other social gatherings.

This recreation portion of the park is used mostly by residents within an eight block radius of the park. Because of the size of the park, however, that comprises over 100 blocks with approximately 3,500 residents.*

This portion of the park contains picnic tables, a large area with multiple barbecue grills, restrooms, a playground with a large play structure, and a baseball/softball field. This portion of the park also has a children's swing set surrounded by tree stumps which have been strategically placed so as to afford parents a chance to sit while watching their kids and conversing among themselves. Next to that is a large play box with a multi-modal play area.



This play set, however, is designed for children in the five to twelve year old range (and is appropriately signed as such). This leaves out children in the two to five year old range, which limits its use as an “all purpose” play area. These younger kids often try to play on the older age range equipment, but are not yet equipped to handle the size and complexity of the rock wall, Hula Climbers, or the swings in this park.

Several parents have also complained about the yellow “hyper loop” bridge between the stairs to the main platform and the corkscrew slide on the right side of the picture above. The easiest fix for this is the replacement of the hyper loop with a “bear with stairs” module (these are all of the same size and interchangeable) which has hand swing loops on the bottom as an additional exercise feature.

The park does have space for the designing and equipping of a two to five year old play set in a play box next to the existing one. The area next to the swing and multi-modal play area was measured, and could easily accommodate another off-set play box with

* Based on 12 homes per block and using the California average of 2.9 residents per home.

equipment for children in the two to five year age range. The area meets the minimum size requirements of ASTM (the American Section of the International Association for Testing Materials) standards and would allow for selection of the appropriate type of play structures and equipment.



Some of the wood siding of the older play box have become somewhat deteriorated and are ready for replacement anyway.

Both of the existing play areas mentioned above are ADA compliant and wheelchair accessible, though the Spalding in these play boxes should be “topped up” with the appropriate engineered wood material. This is material that is “tumbled” so as to remove the sharp edges off of the wood to make sure kids don’t injure themselves when jumping or falling into it. The level in the boxes does get compressed over time and needs occasional “topping up” to ensure safety. This may be something to also review at Caledonia Park and other city parks with play areas that are used by children.

The two areas could also easily accommodate specialized play equipment that is ADA compliant, such as a sand table or sensory stimulation panels. Both play areas could also easily accommodate “touch panels” installed on the sides in a way that would still allow parents to keep an eye on their children playing. These touch panels also provide intellectual stimulation to both younger children and those with disabilities. Adding simple play equipment such as play panels would make this an all-inclusive park which can be used by children with downs syndrome and those in wheelchairs. After all, as one of the parent said very well “All children should get a chance to play”. The city of Salinas has such a place, called Tatum’s Garden, and I would welcome Council Members to visit that site.

There is also a two bay swing set with two swings in each bay (and different types of swings in each). There is room on both sides to extend the play box for the addition of two more swings - preferably for disable children. This new area should be of the same clearance dimensions of 16 feet in front and back of the swings and nine feet on the side. Such dimensions are required to meet ASTM standards.



Tammy Ward, the local sales representative for Miracle Recreation Equipment, estimated that such a basic set would cost in the range of \$1,800 for a single bay swing to \$3,300 for a double bay arrangement from Miracle Recreation Equipment. This company is the play equipment manufacturer the city has bought from in the past (started by a young man who grew up in Pacific Grove as a child).

Caledonia Park has such equipment but is in a totally separate part of the city and not easily walkable for parents who live in this area to with children in tow.

Barbeque Areas

Near the play areas are several barbeque areas for public use. There is one barbeque structure set on a large developed pad with tables for a group event. Though there are three tables at this pad now, there is room for an additional two to three more tables, which would make this area usable by even larger groups. There are also two smaller barbeque areas; one with one table and one with two tables.

The smaller barbecue/picnic table area can accommodate smaller families or groups. The tables next to the pad for the large group picnic area can accommodate significant size groups for birthday parties or large social events. One of the nice things about this area is the natural shade provided throughout the day by the mature trees nearby. Most of these tables are serviceable, though they could use some refurbishment of table tops and seats.

Several of the tables, however, have deteriorated to the extent that they should be replaced. Because this is an open area subject to fog, wind, rain, and sun, we may wish to consider more durable materials for any new tables put in the park.



Note the middle of this table has decayed to the point where sharing condiments in the middle would be problematic.



The ends of this table have suffered serious decay, as have the benches. In addition, the top easily lifts off on one side.

Materials used in such equipment today can make it look like wood but, because it is concrete or plastic, they are much more durable. Also, no trees would have to be cut down to make them, which is better for our forests. This could also be an opportunity for the city to install – and charge for – more memorial benches near the play areas. There seems to be a continuing desire for them in our city and this could help beautify the park, bring the city revenue, and satisfy a pent up desire for memorial benches where residents can honor a loved one.

The Ball Field

The city has three ball fields; one each in Arnett Park, George Washington Park, and at the Municipal Ball Park at the corner of 17 Mile Drive, Pico Avenue, and Short Street. These fields are both used by the city's PONY (Protect Our Nation's Youth) League. The only one that is regulation size for Bronco level PONY League play (field dimensions of 175 feet from home plate to the outfield fence), however, is the Municipal Ball Field. This field is adjacent to the Pacific Grove Unified School District Adult School site and has been upgraded the City's Public Works Department, parents, and the local Boy Scouts. There is ample on-street parking by this field – as there is near the ball field near Sinex Avenue.

The ball field in George Washington Park (like the one in Arnett Park which is used for softball) is regulation size field for Mustang League play. The PONY League parents would like to change it to Bronco play level play (225 feet from home plate to outfield fence).



A view of the ball field in George Washington Park near Sinex Avenue.

The field itself is well set up and has bleachers on both sides, though there is also room for more bleachers to be installed. On each side of the field are dugouts for both the home and visiting teams, as well as a very well built snack shack behind the home plate area. It currently measures about 200 feet from home plate to the outfield fence.

As mentioned, to make the current field regulation for Mustang league play would require extending the outfield by approximately 23 feet, addressing some drainage issues that have plagued the ball field for years, and adding a back retaining wall (and perhaps a fence). The extension of the outfield will require the removal of approximately 14 trees, though many of them look close to the end of their lives, and

the PONY League Parents have indicated a willingness to assist with planting replacement trees at other locations in the park as a mitigating measure.

Started in 1951, PONY organizes youth baseball and softball leagues and tournaments, as over 500,000 players annually play PONY in over 4,000 leagues in the US and around the world.

The local PONY league website is at <http://www.pgpony.org/>), and the local Pacific Grove based league is made up of 31 teams with a total of almost 400 players for 2018.

Behind the outfield of the ball field is an area with a large barbecue pit with two side tables on which food and condiments can be loaded for use. There are also five very large picnic tables and an open area that can accommodate 50 to 80 people.



Barbeque and picnic tables behind the George Washington Park ball field.

This whole area of the park is managed by the City's Recreation Department. No reservations are needed for individual picnic areas, though a fee of \$50-\$100 (depending on size of group) and a use permit is required to use the large group picnic area, the large barbecue pit, and the ballfield.

Any work around the ball field could also help with restoration of the old overwintering area of the Park to the north of the ball field. Bruce Cowan, for instance, pointed out that while non-native nectar sources for Monarchs are not appropriate for most of the park, putting them in the recreation area may be "very appropriate". A "Butterfly Garden" near the ball field or the nearby neighborhoods could be more easily watered, maintained, and monitored.¹⁶ This could serve as a nectar sources for the overwintering butterflies.

¹⁶ Proposed Revegetation Plan for Washington Park (1992), Bruce Cowan; Environmental Landscape Consultant.

Easy to fix items in George Washington Park:

In May of 2015, Public Works refurbished the public restrooms at George Washington Park. Work was done both inside and outside the facility, and included new partitions, fresh paint and a new roof – and looks quite good. In 2017 Public Works also installed some new playground equipment. Additional equipment, age appropriate for two to five year olds children, should be added here however.

Among the general complaints that visitors have about the park are:

- It is too dark and gloomy because of all of the old trees.
- The use of too much wood chip material on some trails makes it difficult for some people to walk on it.
- A lot of now dead trees are allowed to stand, giving the park a derelict look.
- Poles that used to support trees – and where the trees have died - are either just sticking out of the ground or just laying around unused and unneeded.
- The picnic areas are not very attractive to use, and some tables have deteriorated to the point they can be used only with difficulty.
- Some of the play-ground equipment is not age appropriate for many families (i.e., while the older kids can use it their younger kids can't).
- The Butterfly clustering areas have been allowed to deteriorate and die out.
- No trees have been planted in the areas that might restore the butterfly clustering areas that used to exist in the Park.

The **Friends of George Washington Park** have asked for a few additional simple to implement items including:

- Put motion detecting light bulbs inside the restrooms; as well as at the entrances.
- Install a drinking fountain near or adjacent to the restroom.
- Place two to three more trash receptacles in this part of the park.
 - One near the barbeque area.
 - One or two by the picnic tables.
- Consider installing bicycle “Pump Track” for kids to practice jumps.
- Install additional play equipment for smaller and disabled children.
- Change and/or add to some play equipment to make it more usable for children of all ages and abilities.

Summary:

Cleaning up and modernizing the recreation area of the park would go a long way toward making it more useful to Pacific Grove residents with children. A great deal of tree monitoring, removal, and replanting in the natural areas could lead to the restoration of this park to a healthy state over a period of time. It would also achieve the balance our residents – especially our children – deserve between maximizing the protection of valuable natural park resources while maximizing public enjoyment of the park. Also, the picnic tables that are severely deteriorated could easily be replaced at minimal cost.

Identified Probable Costs:

Item	Total Cost
Dog Bag Dispensers (2 at \$180.00 each)	\$ 360.00
Tree and Debris Removal	\$ 35,000.00
Lights for Restroom	\$ 65.00
Purchase and Installation of Water Fountain	\$ 6,000.00
Evaluation of trees at back on ball field	\$ 1,200.00
Expansion of Ball Field to Mustang Standard	\$ 50,000.00
Two Picnic tables (\$800-\$1,500)	\$ 2,500.00
Tots Play Set (\$10,000-\$20,000)	\$ 15,000.00
Two Bay ADA swing set	\$ 3,295.00
Two stationary child's Bouncers (\$800-\$1,300)	\$ 2,000.00
Two Spring Riders	\$ 2,000.00
Two touch panels	\$ 3,000.00
Installation Costs (\$6,500 - \$13,000 based on items)	<u>\$ 10,000.00</u>
Total	\$130,470.00

NOTE: Although the total cost for all of the work currently identified for George Washington Park would be close to \$130,000, it is probable that the City would need to take the central part of the park – the natural area – out of the calculations. This area may need more study, evaluation, and cost estimating. Doing this would reduce the cost of fixing up the two other, major use, parts of the park to about \$ 95,000.00.

In fact, the work may cost even less than this. Mr. Dan Gho, the city's Director of Public Works, reports that California Department of Forestry (CDF) personnel come in on an annual basis to conduct work for several weeks at a time. If specific clean up, removal, or planting work is identified beforehand, those costs could be kept down. The city's Arborist, BNRC, and/or a consultant could assist with developing such a plan; which could go a long way to bringing back this deteriorating city asset.

Similarly, because it is such a big project, taking the ball field expansion out the costs at least in the short term - would bring the cost for making significant improvements to the park to less than \$45,000. While the ball field is serviceable for limited purposes, however, the suggested improvement and expansion could make it make it of much more use.

Potential Funding Sources:

The Friends of George Washington Park and the PONY League Parents may be willing to fund-raise and do some of the work needed to improve the park, but other monetary resources will also be needed for an adopted Park Plan. These funds could come from:

- Grants from:
 - Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (Mr. Gho has previously applied for and received one such grant in the past).
 - City services groups such as Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions Clubs.
- Fund raising events.
- Donations from individuals.
- City funds in the Public Works Buildings and Grounds Fund.
- Money in City held Trusts.
 - The Bertha Strong annual trust distribution of \$42,000. The City receives an annual distribution from the Bertha Strong Trust in an amount equal to 5% of the average fair market value (FMV) of the rest of the trust. The trust restricts the use of the distributed funds to specific purposes which – at one time - included the acquisition of a new City Hall. The City utilized the distributed funds to pay the debt service on the Civic Center improvements until that debt was retired in 2014. The distribution of \$42,000 for FY 2015-16 was recommended to fund beautification, recreation, and educational capital improvements as specified in the Capital Improvement Budget Summary. For FY 17/18 \$30,000 from the Strong trust was also committed; but funds can be used for other purposes in future years.
 - The Reiko Koo fund: Over the last few years \$275,000 of the Reiko Koo donation has been allocated for the trail at the Great Tide Pool site, coastal access project, and improvements at Lovers Point. But even after all of this work is completed, the Reiko Koo fund is estimated to have a balance of \$79,000 which may be available for some of this work.
 - The Lawrence and Millie Yount Trust was established in 1992, in the amount of approximately \$900,000 including the Younts' residence. The income from this Trust may be expended for the beautification of the City and for minor improvements on the educational and/or recreational facilities maintained by the City.

NOTE: Use of the Koo, Strong, and Yount trusts would allow the city to use less money from its Buildings and Grounds Fund for any work in the parks.

Chapter 23.43 INITIATIVE RESTRICTION OF USE OF GEORGE WASHINGTON PARK

Sections:

[23.43.010 Use restrictions.](#)

[23.43.020 Maintenance.](#)

[23.43.030 Unlawful expenditures.](#)

[23.43.040 Conflicting provisions – Severability.](#)

[23.43.050 Effective date.](#)

[23.43.060 Violation – Penalty.](#)

23.43.010 Use restrictions.

The Municipal Park (also called Forest Park and George Washington Park), located in the area bounded by Sinex, Alder, Short, Melrose, and a portion of Seventeen Mile Drive Streets in the city of Pacific Grove, shall be used only for recreational and pleasure purposes as a park, and no trailer camps or campgrounds, or public or private businesses, shall be maintained thereon. [Ord. 1235 N.S. § 2, 1980].

23.43.020 Maintenance.

The Municipal Park shall be maintained for recreational purposes as a park by the city in a cleanly condition. [Ord. 1235 N.S. § 2, 1980].

23.43.030 Unlawful expenditures.

Any expenditures of public funds of the city of Pacific Grove for purposes inconsistent with the provisions of this chapter shall be unlawful and any such expenditure or threatened expenditure may be enjoined by the city or by any city taxpayer. [Ord. 1235 N.S. § 2, 1980].

23.43.040 Conflicting provisions – Severability.

All ordinances and parts of ordinances in conflict herewith, including Ordinance No. 211 (adopted November 10, 1924) and Section 8-220 of the Pacific Grove Municipal Code (dated December 4, 1940), both of which provide for city campgrounds, are repealed. If any part of this chapter should be held invalid the remaining parts shall continue in full legal effect. [Ord. 1235 N.S. § 2, 1980].

23.43.050 Effective date.

This chapter shall take effect and be enforced 10 days after the canvassing board canvassing the results of the election concerning the initiative ordinance codified in this chapter has declared that the majority of voters voting have voted for its passage, which declaration shall be promptly made. [Ord. 1235 N.S. § 2, 1980].

23.43.060 Violation – Penalty.

Any person (including a city official, city agent, or city employee), or any business organization violating the terms hereof shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and punishable by a fine of not more than \$250.00 or imprisonment for not more than three months in the city or county jail, or by both such fine and imprisonment. [Ord. 1235 N.S. § 2, 1980].

Restoration of George Washington Park to a Viable Winter Site

According to long-time residents of Pacific Grove, winter aggregations of monarch butterflies were commonly observed during the 1980's at George Washington Park (GWP). Their presence have been irregularly observed since Xerces documented the monarch's winter aggregation sites and populations throughout California from 1997 to present. Sizeable numbers have been recorded in 2003 (2,750), 2004 (4,325) and 2006 (11,795), while no winter aggregations were observed in all other years. The spotty seasonal occurrences of winter aggregations at GWP indicate that conditions for winter aggregations have degraded to a winter habitat that borders between a non-winter site and a transitional site. A transitional site has suitable conditions for winter aggregations early in the season, but will degrade to one that can no longer support overwintering butterflies as conditions become wintrier.

My studies have found that monarch butterflies are attracted to the conditions created by the grove and surrounding topography rather than to any particular tree species. The conditions that currently exist at GWP are, at best, one of a transitional site and reflect a forested area consisting mainly of mature Monterey Pine and Oak trees. The Monterey Pines are tall trees that lack much of their lower branches, and the Oak trees have minimal foliage and many dead branches. Trees in this state of growth are usually unable to maintain conditions suitable for winter aggregations during the entire overwintering season.

I feel that the restoration of GWP for overwintering butterflies is worthwhile, doable and a realistic goal for the City of Pacific Grove. If implemented properly, the targeted restoration of forested areas of GWP has a high probability of being successful. This 15- to 20-year adventure will involve:

- 1) Identifying the best forested area within GWP that has supported large winter aggregations in past years and defining the dimensions that will constitute the winter site;
- 2) Obtaining a complete seasonal environmental and biological data of the winter site that currently exists and prior to any grove enhancement activities;

- 3) Evaluating the grove's seasonal wind profile of gusty and storm winds and the amount of filtered sunlight entering the cluster arena so that new grove trees can be strategically planted in areas that will effectively buffer future disruptive winds and planting trees within the cluster arena that will have the best exposure to filtered sunlight;
- 4) Continuing the monitoring and grove enhancement activities until the winter site is utilized by the butterflies as a climax site;
- 5) Having a joint venture among the personnel (City of Pacific Grove, volunteers and donors) associated with the management and welfare of the winter habitat; and
- 6) Securing an endowment to finance and maintain the long-term management of the winter site.

K.L.H. Leong, Ph.D.
Emeritus, Cal Poly State University

Sources and Contacts for this Report:

City of Pacific Grove General Plan, 1994.

Pacific Grove Municipal Code, Chapter 23.43.010 and 23.43.020.

City of Pacific Grove Historic Context Statement, Page and Turnbull, October 2011.

Images of America, Pacific Grove, Kent Seavey and the Heritage Society of Pacific Grove, 2005.

1999 Master Park Plan for George Washington Park.

Article; Pine Pitch Canker Confirmed in Bishop Pine Forests - National Park Service White Paper, January 3, 2007.

University of California Agricultural and Natural Resources Integrated Pest Management Program – Information Notice of May of 2013.

National Arbor Day Foundation publication for spring of 2018.

Web Site of the International Association for Testing Materials, ASTM standards for playground surface materials.

Thom Akeman Plan for the park. Feb. 17, 2015.

City Council Policy; Municipal Softball Park Master Plan, March 2, 2011, pages 1-6.

Davey Tree Report of 2015.

Amended Agreement with Tope's Tree Service, Inc. for Professional Services, Caleb Schneider, Item 9A of the City Council Regular Agenda for March 7, 2018.

Members of the BNRC.

City Council Members.

Robert Pacelli – local Monarch Sanctuary preservation and restoration activist.

Bruce Cowan – Retired Environmental Landscape Consultant

Members of the Pacific Grove City Staff.

Steve Thomas, President of the PONY League for Pacific Grove.

Tammy Ward, the local sales representative for Miracle Recreation Equipment.

Members of The Friends of George Washington Park.

AND Friends of George Washington Park Committee Members , PONY League members, and 47 people walking dogs in the park, playing with their children at the playground, or hiking in the natural areas of the park; as well as Cub Scout leaders and residents of the blocks near the Park.