

S.P. to hear park use proposals

Plans for land overlooking ocean include dog park, sports fields, other historical, cultural uses.

By Donna Littlejohn, Staff writer

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SAN PEDRO - Seven organizations have lined up to make a pitch today for a piece of Angels Gate Park in San Pedro. And that's just the start.

Leaders of an effort to create a new master plan for the 64-acre park overlooking the ocean at Gaffey Street and Paseo del Mar expect more groups and individuals to come forward as they attempt to get a better idea of what the public wants for general park uses.

The first seven groups to sign up will each give 10-minute presentations from 1 to 3 p.m. today. They include those representing military history, youth sports and Korean-American heritage interests.

A second meeting is tentatively planned for 10 a.m. to noon Sept. 8. At that meeting, organizers expect to hear from San Pedro dog park supporters who are in need of a permanent site and American Indians who see the property as spiritually significant to their heritage.

"We want to hear what people want," said Juliann Wolfgram of San Pedro, an art historian who is coordinating the master plan steering committee process. "This is an opportunity for anybody who has ideas on how they want to use the park to voice their ideas. Ideally, we'd like to have at least one if not two more of these public meetings."

In addition to organized groups, Wolfgram said the master plan steering committee wants to hear from independent park users.

"This is really for anybody," she said. "Someone may want to just say they want 10 picnic tables" in a particular area.

Presentation times must be reserved in advance and today's session is already booked, she said.

'Beautiful opportunities'

Project Manager Laura Loring, a former Angels Gate Cultural Center board member and owner of Alchemy Design and Architecture in Long Beach, said the overall vision is to form a public consensus on how to preserve and create an open space that "embodies nature, art, education and provides for beautiful opportunities for the whole community."

"Basically we are going to enhance the park's beauty," she said, addressing some community concerns that a lot of new buildings might be springing up on the hillside.

Because the park is zoned as open space, she said there will be a stress on preserving the land's natural beauty and views.

"This is for the children and it's for all of the community," she said, adding that the approach will be a cautious one. "We're looking at new fencing, new irrigation, improving the roads, making it all more beautiful."

No single group, she said, will be allowed to "monopolize" the park.

There's also an interest in connecting the park uses, with possibly establishing a hiking trail around the perimeter, she said. Public restrooms and an eating establishment on the cultural center grounds also are possibilities and could help inspire people to spend more time taking in all of the offerings at Angels Gate. If new structures are built, they would be put further back into the park, she said, so as not to distract from any open vistas.

Talks are under way with some school officials about the opportunity to use some separate district space at the park for ball fields near the back of Angels Gate, Loring said.

Uses such as a proposed permanent fenced-in, off-leash dog park, with the lower west section of Angels Gate known as Joan Milke Flores Park being tentatively eyed as a site, would also have to be coordinated with the city to be included in a recommended master plan, Loring said.

Linda Grimes will make a presentation today on behalf of the Golden State Pops Orchestra. She said the group wants to offer music conductor workshops and summer music camps at the park. The goal, she said, is to bring more people to the park.

While Proposition K city parks money is available, other funding will likely have to come through additional grants and private sources.

"The first step is getting ideas out there. The funding comes later," Grimes said.

Master plan

While the park master plan steering committee hopes to come up with recommendations before the end of the year, ultimately it will be the Los Angeles Recreation and Parks Commission that will decide on park uses, Wolfgram said.

A master plan for the park is long overdue.

An earlier effort was never formally approved by the citywide parks commission. It was only after the 2005 signing of a 30-year lease with the Angels Gate Cultural Center that grants and private funding could be secured to conduct the overall review, an expensive undertaking alone.

Plans for the cultural center are being done under a separate but concurrent part of the master plan process.

The former military property was given to the city in 1977, but city fund shortages have prevented many ideas from taking root in the past.

The park is home to the Korean Friendship Bell, the cultural center with artist studios and galleries, the Fort MacArthur (military) Museum, a youth hostel, former military buildings, a Latin-Mass Catholic Church and the Maritime Exchange lookout center.

Meanwhile, the Fort MacArthur Museum Association is conducting a separate effort to have the entire park declared a historic district, which if approved could somewhat restrict master plan ideas.

Making presentations today will be:

Korean Friendship Bell Preservation Committee

Fort MacArthur Museum Association

San Pedro Youth Coalition

South Bay Young Marines

Isaak Walton League

Golden State Pops Orchestra

Korean American Economic Development Center.

Other groups interested in making oral presentations at future meetings should contact Wolfgram by e-mailing her at juliann@angelsgateart.org. Written presentations also must be submitted.

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