

Council gets look at Beachfront Park

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One of the city's biggest projects is moving slowly ahead, with the goal of getting outside funding to help pay for a major transformation.

The city council for Crescent City received an update on the Beachfront Park Master Plan, a document that once approved will have a detailed plan for the city's biggest park. The plan will also help the city qualify for funding through Prop. 68, which California voters approved for recreation and parks.

The city would be eligible for up to \$8.4 million in grant funding, which would pay for a majority of the upgrades shown in the master plan.

"This park isn't just in the city, this park really represents the city," City Manager Eric Wier said.

Beachfront Park runs along Front Street from Highway 101 to the lighthouse. It is the most-used park in the city and could be an increased draw for tourists once updated. Originally, the homeland of the Tolowa People, the park plans intend to embrace that history.

Parks and Recreation Director Holly Wendt told the council the city went to extreme lengths to get community feedback on what residents want to see in the park. Through community outreach, focus groups and interviews with hundreds, the city came up with an idea of what the community hopes to see. Wendt said the top items on the wish list included: a bike park, amphitheater, green space, more amenities in Kids Town, walking and biking paths, year-round food and concessions, volleyball courts and labyrinth.

Working with PGA Design, the city came up with a plan that embraces those elements and more.

Cathy Garrett, the president of PGA Design, said even in COVID, more than 300 surveys were completed from a cross-section of the community.

“Part of this whole process is your community helps design your park based on what your community needs and wants,” Garrett said.

With a March deadline for submitting the grant application, Garrett said the final master plan will go to the planning commission in January and back to city council for final approval in early February.

Garrett then took the council through the plan for the new park. Starting near the visitor center, the park would have a cultural area where all the memorials in the park would be moved to one area. There would also be new signs and information about the Tolowa People.

The existing Kids Town would have new equipment, including a boulder climb for older children.

An amphitheater would be built with seating for hundreds. It could be used to house school plays, concerts and other music. Nearby would be an area for food trucks, farmer’s markets and community events like the Fourth of July celebration.

New sports fields would be built with up to six soccer fields of different sizes as well as courts for volleyball, tennis and pickleball. Walking and jogging paths would wind through the park with some new exercise equipment in place.

The plan also calls for a bike park, with elements for beginner to advanced riders. The park plan also has an area for a dog park. A third bathroom would also be built near the sports fields. There would also be new trees and other landscaping enhancements.

“One of the things that came out of the community input was a tremendous desire for more trees,” Garrett said. “So, we added that to it. There is a lot to this park.”

Answering a question from the council, Wendt said there would be an increased cost for maintenance and upkeep, but she said the city hopes increased tourism and revenue from events would more than cover the cost.

“I’m really encouraged by the path we’re looking to go down,” Mayor Jason Greenough said. “This is very exciting.”

