

December 10, 2024

Honorable Mayor and City Council  
City of Long Beach  
California

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Recommendation to receive the supporting documentation into the record, conclude the public hearing, review and determine that the proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15307 (Actions by Regulatory Agencies for the Protection of Natural Resources) and Section 15061 (b) (3) (the 'Common Sense' Exemption) of the CEQA Guidelines and accept Categorical Exemption (CE-24-022);

Declare an Ordinance setting aside and dedicating in perpetuity Parcel A in Willow Springs Park, located at 2745 Orange Avenue, for public park purposes and uses, read the first time and laid over to the next regular meeting of the City Council for final reading;

Declare an Ordinance amending Table 35-2 (Park Dedication/Designations) of the Long Beach Municipal Code (ZCA20-016), to include the entirety of Parcel A of Willow Springs Park, thereby approving its dedication, read the first time and laid over to the next regular meeting of the City Council for final reading;

Declare an Ordinance amending the Use District Map (Zoning Map) to change the zoning district (ZCHG20-008) for that portion of Parcel A in Willow Springs Park that is zoned Medium Industrial (IM) to Park (P) zone, read the first time and laid over to the next regular meeting of the City Council for final reading; and,

Adopt a Resolution setting forth the City Council's recommendation for the future dedication of Parcel B, located at 1040 Spring Street, as Willow Springs Park, and related General Plan Land use Placetype change from Community Commercial (CC) Placetype to Open Space (OS) Placetype, I upon the establishment of a land bank for park replacement purposes. (Districts 1 and 5)

**DISCUSSION**

The Community Development Department (Department) (formerly Development Services), and Parks, Recreation and Marine Department have been working collaboratively for more than five years towards ensuring that land records, zoning, dedications, and General Plan references of all parks within the City of Long Beach (City) are accurate and up to date across all relevant regulatory instruments and documents. This is an important effort toward updating and modernizing appropriate protections for all the City's parks. This action before the City Council relates to updating land use and zoning to ensure that Willow Springs Park is appropriately

dedicated and designated as public park space in order to ensure protection of the park as park space in perpetuity, and to ensure that land use regulations allow for appropriate development and improvements to the park.

Dedication is the process that applies to City-owned parkland, to protect it in perpetuity for public open space use. The City Charter states that the Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) shall have exclusive authority over all leisure activities in public parks and recreational facilities, controlled or operated by the City; and shall recommend to the City Manager and the City the dedication of public land for public parks. On June 20, 2019, the Commission recommended the dedication or designation of Willow Springs Park, including any other land use actions needed, such as General Plan Amendments, Zoning Code Amendments, and Zone Changes (Attachment A).

Subsequent to that 2019 action, the Planning Commission on July 15, 2021, made and approved a motion that recommended the City Council approve dedication and land use cleanup actions for several parks, including a recommendation related to Willow Springs Park comprised of dedication, changing the General Plan PlaceType for an area of the park currently designated as Community Commercial (CC) to Open Space (OS) and rezoning a portion of the park area from Medium Industrial (IM) to Park (P) (Attachment B). Ultimately in 2022, the City Council took action on several parks but, at the request of City staff, delayed action on Willow Springs Park in order to conduct additional research and background work.

After completing the additional research and background work related to Willow Springs Park, on August 13, 2024, the Department brought forward a request that the City Council direct the City Attorney's Office to prepare the ordinances needed to finalize the changes necessary for Parcel A of Willow Springs Park to be appropriately zoned as park space and have a consistent Zoning designation. Also requested were ordinances that would add Willow Springs Park to Table 35-2 in the City's Zoning Code which would designate and dedicate it in perpetuity as park space. As a result of that request, the City Council directed the City Attorney to prepare the necessary documents and bring them back for consideration. The Council also requested that the City Attorney explore how to establish a land banking mechanism for when new park space is dedicated and to draft a resolution memorializing the City Council's direction that Parcel B should be dedicated as park space once the land banking mechanism is established.

Willow Springs Park has a long history dating back to 1882 when it served as the City's water source. A variety of public and private uses have occurred on the site over time and it was not until 2013 when park uses began to be developed and opened to the public. The ability to establish and maintain park uses was partially offset by commercial activities on the larger site, including a lease for the area at the corner of Spring Street at California Avenue, mapped as Parcel 'B' in this proposed action (Attachment C). The full remediation, planting and programming of the full Willow Springs Park has been and remains a financial and logistical challenge for the City.

During the larger 2019 and 2022 discussions around park dedication, the public expressed their desire to preserve all of the larger Willow Springs parcel, including Parcel B, and extinguish commercial uses at the site. While this is not immediately possible from a fiscal nor logistical standpoint, there is an opportunity and path forward to achieve this goal. City staff proposes to

change the zone on that portion of Parcel A from IM to P, add Willow Springs Park Parcel A to Table 35-2, *Park Designations / Dedications*, in the City's Zoning Code and immediately dedicate the park portion of Willow Springs (Parcel 'A'). Although the much smaller Parcel B will not be dedicated at this time, a resolution has been prepared to memorialize the Council's direction to dedicate Parcel B once the land banking mechanism is established at which time the General Plan Land Use Element PlaceType for Parcel B would be changed to be consistent with the P zoning designation, as further described below.

### **Zone Change**

The proposed zone change for Parcel A has also been reviewed and recommended by the Planning Commission to the City Council for final approval subject to the Findings contained in the City's Code (Attachment D). The proposed Zone Change for Parcel A from IM to P will provide for consistency with the Open Space PlaceType. No physical construction or change is proposed in this action; rather the Planning Commission requested the City Council approve their recommendation on the Zone Change from IM to P to reflect that portion of Parcel A as park space (Attachment E).

### **Dedication**

The City Charter and the Open Space and Recreation Element (OSRE) provide guidance on dedication and parkland replacement requirements that preserve and protect parks in perpetuity, for public open space uses. The City Charter outlines that those areas that have been dedicated or designated as public park or recreation areas of the City shall not be sold or otherwise alienated unless ratified by an affirmative vote at a municipal election for such purpose; or after a recommendation by the Commission to the City Council and a public hearing whereby the City Council determines that said park or recreation areas will be replaced by other dedicated or designated park or recreation areas on substantially an amenity for amenity basis and at a ratio of at least two to one (2:1), with an approximately equal portion of the replacement land located in the park service area where the land was converted; and an approximately equal portion of the replacement land located in a park service area needing parkland as determined by the Commission (Long Beach Municipal Code (LBMC) Sec. 950). The OSRE calls for formal dedication of all City-owned parks (Policies 4.2, 4.4, 4.5 and 4.8) and requires that any conversion of parkland be replaced amenity for amenity and acre for acre at a 2:1 ratio, with one acre of replacement land located in the park service area where the land was converted, and an additional acre of replacement land located in a park service area needing parkland (Policy 4.5).

Consistent with the OSRE and the City Charter, the proposed project includes an action to dedicate Parcel A of Willow Springs Park and protect it in perpetuity for public open space use. The action includes a Zoning Text amendment with supportive findings (Attachment F) to list Parcel A of Willow Springs Park as a dedicated park in the Zoning Code in Table 35-2 (Attachment G). The project also includes a proposed resolution setting forth the City Council's recommendation for the future dedication of Parcel B as Willow Springs Park located at 1040 Springs Street in connection with park replacements for three Downtown Projects. The dedication would take place once a land banking mechanism for banking new park space is established for the purpose of allowing for the dedication of park space to later be counted towards future park replacement needs, as described below.

## **Land Banking Mechanism**

In August 2024, the City Council requested of the City Attorney's Office and staff to explore how to establish a formal land banking mechanism that would enable new park space to be banked for the purposes of future park space replacement in order to allow the banking of Parcel B as park space to offset anticipated loss of park space due to realignment of the Shoemaker Bridge and other related efforts (Attachment H). Section 905 of the City Charter calls for the replacement of parkland at a 2:1 ratio or greater. It also specifies that half of the replacement parkland must be located in the same park service area, and that the other half be in a park service area needing parkland as determined by the Commission. Therefore, before the land banking mechanism can be realized, the underlying definitions, including but not limited to, "service area" and park need must be developed and approved. The City has just begun the process of updating its OSRE of the General Plan, so that process would be most appropriate for the development and adoption of such definitions. Given all the moving parts involved with establishing a land banking mechanism, it will take additional research and time to ensure that the final product meets the City's needs and legal requirements.

## **General Plan Land Use PlaceType Change**

A General Plan Land Use PlaceType would be appropriate for Parcel B at such time that the parcel becomes dedicated as future park space, once the land banking mechanism is created. A PlaceType change from CC to OS would provide for consistency with the existing P zoning designation on the site. The proposed resolution memorializes the City Council intention and commitment to that future dedication of Parcel B.

## **PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE**

In accordance with public hearing notification requirements in the LBMC Section 21.21.302, notice of this public hearing was posted at Willow Springs Park and published in the Long Beach Press-Telegram. On November 20, 2024, notices were also mailed out to property owners and tenants within 1,000 feet of the subject property. Additionally, notices were mailed to an interested parties list. As of the date of this report, no written comments have been received.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) this project is eligible for a Categorical Exemption per Section 15307 (Actions by Regulatory Agencies for the Protection of Natural Resources and Section 15061 (b) (3) the 'Common Sense' Exemption of the CEQA Guidelines (CE-24-022).

This matter was reviewed by Principal Deputy City Attorney, Erin Weesner-McKinley on November 20, 2024, and by Revenue Management Officer Geraldine Alejo on November 12, 2024.

### TIMING CONSIDERATIONS

Section 21.25.103 of the Zoning Regulations requires that, for Zone Changes and Zoning Code Amendments, within 60 days following positive Planning Commission action, the Commission's recommendation shall be transmitted by the Department to the City Clerk for presentation to the City Council. The Planning Commission acted on July 7, 2022. Per this Code Section, City Council action was taken back in 2022; however, actions impacting Willow Springs Park were removed from consideration at that time. On August 13, 2024, the City Council directed the City Attorney to prepare the necessary ordinance and resolution to finalize the actions needed for Willow Springs Park. December 10, 2024, was the first available once City staff completed the necessary work product for these items.

### FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal or local job impact associated with this recommendation. This recommendation has no staffing impact beyond the normal budgeted scope of duties and is consistent with City Council priorities.

### SUGGESTED ACTION:

Approve recommendation.

Respectfully submitted,



Christopher Koontz  
Director  
Community Development

APPROVED:



THOMAS B. MODICA  
CITY MANAGER

ATTACHMENTS: ORDINANCES  
RESOLUTION  
A - PARKS, RECREATION AND MARINE COMMISSION STAFF REPORT DATED JUNE 20, 2019  
B - PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT DATED JULY 15, 2021  
C - WILLOW SPRINGS PLAT MAP  
D - WILLOW SPRINGS PROPOSED ZONE CHANGE FINDING  
E - WILLOW SPRINGS PROPOSED ZONE CHANGE MAP  
F - ZONING CODE AMENDMENT FINDINGS  
G - DEDICATION MAP  
H - CITY COUNCIL LETTER DATED AUGUST 13, 2024