

February 16, 2021

To: San Francisco Recreation and Park Commission
Mark Buell, President

Cc: Shamann Walton, San Francisco Board of Supervisors President, District 10
Supervisor

Abe Evans, Administrative Aide, Office of Supervisor Shamann Walton
Natalie Gee, Legislative Aide, Office of Supervisor Shamann Walton
Percy Burch, Legislative Aide, Office of Supervisor Shamann Walton


Re: Continued Support for Esprit Park Renovation

Dear Commissioners:

Friends of Esprit Park (FoEP) strongly endorses the Recreation and Parks Department Capital Projects Team (RecPark) Esprit Park Renovation Plan Option X as presented. No chain link fence. No artificial turf. Plan X provides the most comprehensive coverage of our community's needs: 1) A meadow for people across a range of ages (6 months through 80+) to enjoy green space away from off-leash dogs and 2) A meadow for people to enjoy off-leash activities with their pets. FoEP's 315 members were polled both in our February 2, 2021 meeting and online. The 70 members who responded prefer Plan X by an overwhelming margin.

Plan X also best fits the testimony shared by Sarah Madland, Rec & Park Director of Policy and Public Affairs, in January 2020. She advised against the idea of not allowing dogs in half of Esprit Park, noting that in addition to having no backing in the park code: "It will be no dogs in name only. We do not have the resources to consistently enforce [this rule]"--and "with no community buy-in on this, it will not be self-enforced." One year later, FoEP polling mirrors that of RecPark; that is, there is no overwhelming community support for a meadow that accommodates the smallest possible number of users. People who own dogs are much more likely to self-enforce on-leash and off-leash area policy, just as they currently self enforce staying off meadows during reseeding.

FoEP has played an integral role in Park renovation discussions since July 2016. We alone alerted SF Planning that their Dogpatch Public Realm community outreach was ignoring a rather large and significant cross-section of Esprit stakeholders; namely, pre-school instructors, HOA's, exercise groups and all other park users lacking specific group affiliations. SF Planning immediately expanded its community engagement scope, and FoEP's active support ranged from handing out flyers to requesting rooftop access for usage study camera placement. Consequently, a milestone for Dogpatch Public Realm data gathering was moved from late summer 2016 to early February 2017.



IRMA LEWIS, PRESIDENT
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In late February 2017, UCSF specifically requested research data from SF Planning and FoEP to assess the level of community interest and consensus as input into their Dogpatch investment decisions. UCSF's eventual investment of \$5 million (their largest single grant) into Esprit was to support the community's top two priorities:

1. Rehabilitation of Esprit Park for the future (addressing sprinklers, drainage, ground cover, including replacing the out-of-spec cemetery dirt now in place), while retaining an open meadow, urban oasis footprint. Chain link containment fencing and artificial turf are in direct conflict with the community vision upon which the UCSF grant was decided.
2. Establishing a DPA, thus allowing more neighbors a greater opportunity to enjoy the Park.

Plan X is the most thoroughly, publicly-vetted, multi-stakeholder supported plan of all the options available. That implementation details for Plans V and W were less publicly, thoroughly vetted is not surprising as those plan options were much newer, and for months, RecPark stopped showing Plan X as an existing, alternative option.

For example, only now are many RecPark survey respondents learning that under Plans V and W, a sizable, broad section of the community--including families and seniors--would not have access to grass areas in the Park for three months of every year. This means that their neighborhood gathering spot for friends chatting, toddlers petting on-leash dogs, and seniors walking small dogs on a leash disappears.


FoEP respectfully requests that you approve Plan X. We believe Plan X has the support and meets the needs of the broadest, most diverse group of our community's stakeholders. It's also the best possible compromise for our community in sharing our precious green space.

The Esprit Renovation Project's three-year, nine-month journey to reach your vote has been filled with insights and lessons learned. FoEP remains excited to see Esprit rehabilitated so Park users are not sinking into spongy mud patches in July nor slipping on black ice in April because of sprinkler/drainage/ground cover issues, and the Park programmed to inclusively expand and enhance the community's enjoyment of the space.

Sincerely,



Irma Lewis
President

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