

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: **REQUEST FOR NEIGHBORHOOD PARK IN SUNSET RIDGE
SUBDIVISION**

BACKGROUND:

Sunset Ridge is a growing development that will include nearly 300 homes when finished. In 2015, a representative for the Sunset Ridge Property Owners Association (POA) asked the Parks and Recreation Commission to consider developing a neighborhood park. The POA expressed interest in deeding a two-acre parcel [Attachment A] located at 397 Wilder Avenue to the City for the purpose of developing a neighborhood park. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan identifies neighborhood park service areas to cover a ¼- to ½-mile radius. Using the ½-mile radius, a portion of Sunset Ridge is covered by Daley Park; however, to access Daley Park, Sunset Ridge residents would need to cross Lincoln Way without a controlled intersection.

Although the Parks Master Plan does not call for a new neighborhood park being located in west Ames, the Parks and Recreation Commission agreed with the POA's argument that it is unsafe for children and families to cross Lincoln Way to get to Daley Park. In January 2016, the Commission recommended City Council approve the 2016-2021 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), which included \$80,000 in FY 2017-18 for developing a park in Sunset Ridge. The funding would come from the Park Development Fund. City Council approved the CIP with the Park included and then allocated funds for this purpose in March 2017.

Staff has met with the POA several times to discuss what the neighbors would like to see in this park. Standard amenities in neighborhood parks include: basketball pad with goals, a small shelter, a play structure and swings, benches, grill, drinking fountain, and utilities. The POA already has a basketball pad on another parcel, so this will not be included in this development. Through this feedback, a draft plan [Attachment B] was developed along with a cost estimate (\$118,570) that exceeds the \$80,000 allocated.

DEEDING VERSUS LEASING:

Because this park will be in an area currently governed by a POA, initial conversations included potential partnering with the POA to share responsibilities such as mowing and/or snow removal. It was also discussed as to whether the POA should deed or lease the land to the City. A summary of both options follows:

Deeding – The POA would deed the land to the City in exchange for a park being developed on this parcel. The parcel has a drainage ditch on the west and north sides that would not be included in the deeded land. The POA would raise the additional funds beyond the City's \$80,000 allocation needed for the development and would have no additional responsibilities for the park once construction is complete.

Leasing – The City would lease the land, excluding the drainage ditch, for a term of 30 or more years, and develop a park on the parcel. Under the lease option, it was discussed that the POA would be responsible for mowing and snow removal. Since this park is being requested by the POA and is not included in the Park Master Plan, this method of sharing maintenance responsibilities of a City park was given serious consideration and would be a first for the City. A lease agreement spelling out each party's responsibilities would provide both parties some recourse if the other party neglected its responsibilities. This option would require the POA to have liability insurance and incur the costs for mowing and snow removal. The POA would raise the additional funds beyond the City's \$80,000 allocation needed for the development.

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

The Parks and Recreation Commission discussed at its August meeting the option of accepting land versus leasing land from the POA. Commissioners favored accepting the land at a future date as there is always some uncertainty with a lease. Once a park is developed, residents come to expect the park and the Commission feels a lease option may jeopardize the longevity of the park. A recent example cited was Franklin Park which was leased property. Had the City not purchased the land to keep it as a park, that neighborhood may have lost a park that was there for many years. The Commission voted unanimously to recommend City Council agree to accept the land from the POA as described in Alternative #1 below.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Direct Staff to pursue the deeding of a portion of the land located at 397 Wilder Avenue for use as a City Park if the following conditions are met:
 - a. The site provided to the City by the Sunset Ridge Property Owners Association is "clean and green";
 - b. The site is given to the City by the Sunset Ridge Property Owners Association at no cost;

- c. The land that is donated at no cost to the City by the Sunset Ridge Property Owners Association does not include the drainage ditch on the west and north sides of the property as depicted in Attachment A ; and
 - d. The Sunset Ridge Property Owners Association contributes the additional funds in excess of the City's \$80,000 needed to develop the park.
- 2. Direct Staff to pursue the leasing of a portion of the land located at 397 Wilder Avenue at a future date for use as a City Park if the following conditions are met:
 - a. The site leased to the City by the Sunset Ridge Property Owners Association is "clean and green";
 - b. The site is leased to the City by the Sunset Ridge Property Owners Association at no cost;
 - c. The land that is leased at no cost to the City by the Sunset Ridge Property Owners Association does not include the drainage ditch on the west and north sides of the property as depicted in Attachment A;
 - d. The Sunset Ridge Property Owners Association is responsible for and incur associated costs in mowing the park and removing snow; and
 - e. The Sunset Ridge Property Owners Association contributes the additional funds in excess of the City's \$80,000 needed to develop the park.
- 3. Allow this green space to remain privately owned and managed by the Sunset Ridge Property Owners Association.
- 4. Refer back to staff.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION:

The FY 2017/18 Capital Improvement Plan includes the development of a park in the Sunset Ridge subdivision. **Although the Park Master Plan standards do not justify the addition of a new park in this area, safety concerns with the need to cross Lincoln Way with no controlled intersection has influenced the Staff's recommendation to proceed with the development of a new park in this subdivision.**

Staff was exploring having the POA be responsible for mowing and removing snow so the lease option was discussed. Since this will be a City park, staff is concerned about public perception if the mowing and snow removal is not done in a timely manner. Residents have come to expect well-maintained City parks and that branding needs to be continued with this park. Staff is already in the area mowing and removing snow so adding this park to the routes will not add a significant burden.

In addition, the POA is willing to raise funds needed in excess of the \$80,000 provided by the City. They have already secured in-kind donations of approximately \$15,000 for grading, seeding, and tree planting. The Association is donating \$6,148 to the project and they have additional donations of \$9,140. A Neighborhood Improvement Grant for \$5,000 has also been applied for. The residents of Sunset Ridge are excited for a new park and are doing what they can to make it happen. **Therefore, it is City Manager's recommendation to approve Alternative #1 as stated above.**

Attachment A

397 Wilder Avenue



