

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Howard P. Schesser, Community Development Director

SUBJECT: REPORT ON ALL-AMERICA CITY SQUARE PLANNING PROJECT

DATE: June 20, 2016

Background

All-America City Square is a small public plaza in the heart of Cottage Grove's Downtown Historic District. It centers around a beautiful mural of Opal Whiteley painted on the western facade of the adjacent building. It includes a replica of the original (c. 1890) hose tower used by the Cottage Grove Fire Department, a publicly accessible restroom building, and stone garden beds featuring a beautiful native shrub and wildflower garden planted and maintained by the Cottage Grove Garden Club. The Square was originally designed by architect Marston Morgan for the Economic & Business Improvement District (EBID) in 2005 as a community gathering space in and enhancement to the downtown commercial area. Most of the original design was constructed in 2007 by EBID. The square was given to the City of Cottage Grove by EBID in 2009. It has become a recognized icon in the historic district, and is visited, photographed, and loved by many.

The park, which is now 10 years old, is showing some wear, particularly the flagstone paving and retaining walls, and the vegetation has become dense. Some elements of the park design were never completed, such as the hose tower's interior, signage, lighting, and seating. Uses in and around the park have continued to change over the last decade. Complaints have been made that the design of the park limits some of these uses. With the development of the Armory across the street as a community center and the expansion of street/park activities in the historic downtown like Art Walk and the Farmer's Market, among other programming, it is clear that the park use will continue to grow and evolve.

It was appropriate at this time to "check in" with the users and stakeholders of the park, to strengthen cherished elements and enhance those that are failing to meet needs, so that the park can continue to play a vital role in Cottage Grove's historic district. City Planner Amanda Ferguson lead this project to preserve and enhance All-America City Square as a place that is considered essential to the community's civic and historic identity. This report presents the findings of a community-based planning project designed to gather public input on the needs and wants for All-America City Square. Recommendations on page 6 and 7 reflect findings from public meetings held in May, 2016. These recommendations chart a course for park maintenance and future improvements by the City and interested stakeholders, which are outlined on pages 8 and 9.

This report is supported by the Cottage Grove Main Street, Cottage Grove Garden Club, EBID, and Sustainable Cottage Grove.

One of the maintenance and management recommendations identified by participants involved the renaming of the square. This idea would be an issue for further discussion by Council.

At their June 14th board meeting, the EBID pointed out that they are against renaming the square, as Mary Peck-Flahart requested that the park be named All-America City Square in memory of her husband Capt. Larry Flahart when she donated the \$55,000 to purchase the land from the Stewart family. One consideration would be for the park to be known as Opal Park in All-America City Square, as the square will expand in scope with the development of the festival street on 7th Street (between Main Street and Washington Avenue).

Recommendation

That a final report for the All-America City Square Planning Project be accepted.

Cost

None



Richard Meyers, City Manager



Howard P. Schesser, Community
Development Director