



Community Services and Youth Committee Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

**TO: HONORABLE COMMUNITY SERVICES
AND YOUTH COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

DATE: MARCH 20, 2017

**FROM: PARKS, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY
SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

WARDS: 3, 5, AND 7

**SUBJECT: UPDATE ON IMPACT OF HOMELESSNESS ON PICNIC SHELTERS AT LA
SIERRA, HUNT, AND SHAMEL PARKS - DIRECT SUBMITTAL**

ISSUE:

Receive an update on the impact of homelessness on picnic shelters at La Sierra, Hunt, and Shamel Parks.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Community Services and Youth Committee provide feedback and receive the report.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:

A City Council workshop on homelessness in Riverside was held on October 11, 2016. On January 31, 2017, City Council directed staff to work with the Budget Engagement Commission to refine a five – year spending plan for Measure Z which includes adding a Community Advocate in the City Manager's Office and a Deputy Attorney II in the City Attorney's Office to support multi-functional Ward Action Teams --which will be deployed to attack and resolve quality of life issues such as homelessness and vandalism.

BACKGROUND

The large picnic shelters at La Sierra, Hunt, and Shamel park locations are often occupied by members of the homeless community as a shelter and feeding location. However, the picnic shelters were not designed to accommodate the needs of homeless groups, and such misuse often create unsanitary and unsafe conditions.

Park patrons regularly observe homeless and other transient users engaging in illicit behavior such as panhandling, drug trafficking, and vandalism. Other negative impacts include frequent contamination with human waste, debris, graffiti, destruction, and discarded drug paraphernalia, all of which discourage the positive use of the park, and lead to an increase in complaints from residents who feel anxious or disturbed by the unsanitary and unsafe conditions or illicit activities they observe.

Within the last 12 months, the large picnic shelters at La Sierra Park, Hunt Park, and Shamel Park (and surrounding areas) were so negatively impacted, they required significant maintenance efforts. In order to perform a more intensive maintenance and repair of these picnic shelters, it was necessary to install temporary fences. Once fenced, as time and workload permitted, staff scheduled maintenance tasks beyond routine cleaning in order to restore these amenities to a more sanitary and serviceable condition. In addition, decorative shrubs were trimmed back and lighting improved at some of these locations.

The table below summarizes the dates and estimated costs to address unsanitary and unsafe conditions.

TABLE 1: Dates and Estimated Costs of Repair Work Related to Homeless Groups at La Sierra, Hunt, and Shamel Parks

Picnic Shelter Location	Temporary Fencing within the last 12 months	Estimated Cost	Description of Work Completed or To be Completed
La Sierra	May 10, 2016, to Present	\$15,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paint • Install new LED Lighting • Strip, Paint, Seal picnic tables with anti-graffiti • Pressure wash concrete • Replace barbecue stands • Replace trash receptacles • Repair drinking fountain /drain (Shamel Only) • Refresh decomposed granite surface under the barbeques (Shamel Only)
Hunt	June 1, 2016, to December 21, 2016	\$16,000	
Shamel	January 25, 2017, to Present	\$20,000	

Understanding the plight of homeless individuals, and taking care not to infringe upon their right to occupy public spaces, the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department staff works closely with the Police Department and Homeless Outreach Team to request services whenever a trend or concentration of homeless activity (especially any illicit behavior) is reported or observed to negatively impact the parks. The Police Department and Homeless Outreach Teams also initiate contacts, and responded to service requests from others at these locations. Table 2 provides an excerpt summary of calls for services and responses by both the Police Department and Homeless Outreach Teams at these specific locations.

TABLE 2: Summary of Service Calls and Responses Related to Homeless Groups at La Sierra, Hunt, and Shamel Parks

Location	Homeless Outreach Service Requests Jan, 2016 – Feb, 2017	Police Department Extra Patrols Requests Jan, 2016 – Dec, 2016
La Sierra	16	131
Hunt	30	197
Shamel	23	287

Long-term/permanent mitigation measures or alternatives include: 1) installing decorative wrought iron fencing around the larger picnic shelters and 2) converting use of space by removing tables and benches and replacing them with outdoor gym equipment.

Option 1) Installing decorative wrought iron fencing: Picnic shelters would be fenced, and made available only by paid reservation. This would require staff coordination to open and close fences for rentals, and for regularly scheduled maintenance. Installing decorative wrought iron fencing is estimated to cost between \$150 and \$200 per linear foot. Therefore, a 400 linear foot fence would cost between \$60,000 and \$80,000.

Users may perceive this as a loss of amenity by regular park patrons. This solution may be applicable at any of the three locations but is not recommended since it may simply displace homeless groups, and penalize all park patrons by requiring a fee to access to the picnic shelter amenity.

Option 2) Outdoor Gym Equipment: Removing the existing tables and benches, and installing outdoor fitness equipment under the shade shelters would introduce a new amenity to the park, and attract positive use. Regular park patrons could use the facility for outdoor exercise. The estimated cost to transform the space to an outdoor gym is approximately \$120,000 per park. This alternative is recommended. Hunt Park is eligible for Community Development Block Grant Funds and could serve as a good pilot location.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact as a result of this update. Costs to maintain picnic shelters, as outlined in the report, are absorbed within the department's operating budget.

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Certified as to availability of funds:	Scott G. Miller PhD, Chief Financial Officer/City Treasurer
Approved by:	Alexander T. Nguyen, Assistant City Manager
Approved as to form:	Gary G. Geuss, City Attorney

Attachment: Presentation