

Berkeley Partners For Parks

Fall 1997

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Restoring Berkeley's Play Areas

City Offers \$125,000 in Matching Funds for Play Area Safety Projects

Many of Berkeley's play areas were built long before current guidelines for safety and accessibility. The deterioration posed by passing time and the need to meet new safety standards mean that many of our play areas are inadequate and even hazardous.

Measure AA and special one-time PERS parks allocations and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) began the important task of bringing play areas into safety and access compliance, and twenty-two play areas have either been recently renovated or are currently slated for renovation. In 1996 a Playground Safety Review Committee, comprised of members of Berkeley Partners for Parks (BPPF), the Parks and Recreation Commission, and City staff, was formed to assess safety levels at the remaining twenty-seven play areas. Of the twenty-seven play areas evaluated, twenty-two were found to have significant hazardous conditions or unfunded needs. It is estimated that \$1 million is required to bring these playgrounds into compliance with current standards.

In response to this need, the Berkeley City Council allocated \$150,000 from the parks budget for 1997-1998 to go toward playground safety projects. In addition, they set aside \$125,000 in matching funds for play area renovation. Berkeley Partners for Parks (BPPF) has pledged to raise the matching \$125,000. BPPF will have the option of managing these projects, and can stretch limited funds further through



Photograph by Natasha Beery

Berkeley's Children Deserve Safe Play Areas

a design-build approach. A legal agreement between the City and BPPF for managing matching fund projects was finalized in August. The Thousand Oaks Tot Lot is scheduled to be the first project to receive matching funds, and the community has raised around \$12,000. BPPF is now actively engaged in fund-raising for future projects.

\$10,000 Challenge Donation

A generous anonymous donor concerned with play area safety has stepped forward with a pledge of \$10,000 on the condition that BPPF raise an additional \$20,000 by the end of the year. The combined amount of \$30,000, when matched by the City, will allow us to proceed with \$60,000 worth of projects, so each dollar you donate will be more than doubled in impact. We invite the community to help us create safe play areas for all of Berkeley's children by sending your tax-deductible contribution to Berkeley Partners for Parks today! ■

About Berkeley Partners for Parks

Berkeley Partners for Parks (BPPF) is a citywide nonprofit devoted to supporting parks and open spaces in Berkeley through encouraging citizen involvement. Since its incorporation as a nonprofit in 1994, BPPF has played an instrumental role in bringing additional funding and thousands of hours of volunteer labor ("sweat equity") to bear on improving Berkeley's parks, community gardens, and public landscaping. The participation of adopt-a-park groups working in partnership with the City and local businesses has led to improvements in dozens of parks and community gardens throughout the City of Berkeley. ■

Measure A Passes and Leads to Strong Parks Budget

The passage of State Proposition 218 brought a crisis earlier this year, as basic funding for parks had to go back to voters and win a two-thirds majority. Despite an off-season election, BPPF and a large coalition of other parks supporters were successful in securing voter approval of continued funding for our parks and landscaping, with a 69 percent yes vote on Measure A received in early May.

Following the victory for Measure A, BPPF participated in the City's budget process, both to make sure that citywide budget cuts did not affect the Parks Department and to ensure that the way Special Parks Tax funds are spent aligns with the intent of the voters in passing Measure A. Thanks to the joint efforts of the Parks and Recreation Commission and BPPF, the City Manager's proposed budget along with majority and minority budgets proposed by the City Council all agreed on funding for parks and included provisions for continuing the successful Mini-Grant Program for Parks and Open Space with \$50,000 a year as well as an annual allocation of \$150,000 for play area safety improvements (in addition to the \$125,000 matching funds approved the year before). The City's budget also commits \$250,000 annually towards bringing our parks into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), to ensure access for all our citizens.

The City Council fulfilled its pledge to voters that the Parks Department would no longer be charged indirect costs for overhead, which expands the purchasing power of the department. To ensure that parks funds go directly toward parks and landscaping, sidewalk repairs will no longer be paid for out of the Parks Department budget but instead will come from Public Works, as parks advocates have long proposed. The parks budget for fiscal year 1997-1998 halted the erosion in parks funding for the first time in over a decade. However, there are still many more needs than there are resources, and public-private partnership will continue to provide the key to revitalizing our City's precious parks. ■

*This newsletter is published by
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*P.O. Box 13673
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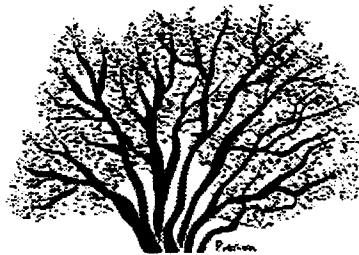
*Editor: Nancy Grimley Carleton
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support parks and open spaces in Berkeley. For
more information, contact Mark Liolios
(549-0818), Nancy Carleton (644-0172), or
Sarah Butler (845-8323).*

The President's Corner

For the first half of the year, BPPF faced an unexpected challenge as we rallied behind Measure A to ensure basic funding for parks. Since the passage of Measure A, we have been getting back to our primary tasks: supporting the adopt-a-park groups that are working so hard to improve Berkeley's parks, and following through on our pledge to raise matching funds for play area safety (see page 1).

In June, Board member and prior BPPF president William Clark submitted his resignation from the Board of Directors for personal reasons. Mayor Shirley Dean joined BPPF members in expressing appreciation to William for his years of service in parks by issuing a proclamation honoring him at a City Council meeting. Natasha Beery, a founding member of Los Chicos de Codornices and one of the authors of the Play Area Safety Report, was elected to the Board to fill out the vacancy. She has been a welcome addition to our team.



In September, BPPF treasurer Louise Francis resigned due to time constraints. Our new treasurer, Scott Boyer of Mechanics Bank, was elected to take her place. We are pleased to have Scott's financial skills and training behind us as we move into our expanded role managing matching fund projects. As we approach the final months of the year, our nominating committee is searching for strong candidates for the Board of Directors and officer positions in 1998. We look forward to a fall and winter of successful fund-raising on behalf of play area safety. ■

Nancy Carleton, BPPF President

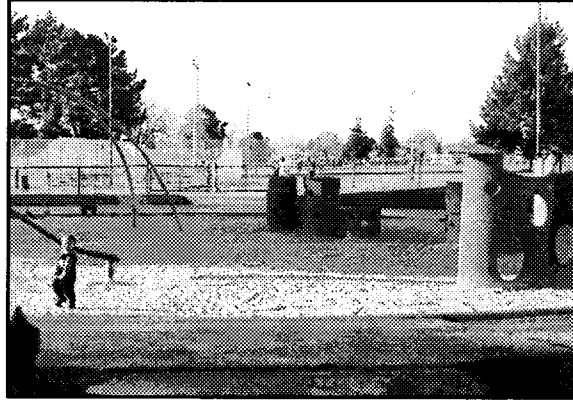
Adopt-a-Park Group News

Adopt-a-park groups bring together concerned neighbors and park users who want to take responsibility for improving specific parks, community gardens, or public landscaping. Working in partnership with City staff when appropriate, citizen volunteers participate in a wide range of activities, from weeding, cleaning, and helping with ongoing maintenance to generating community participation in planning and implementing new park projects. This column reports on the activities of some of the adopt-a-park groups that make up Berkeley Partners for Parks.

Friends of Willard Park celebrated the completion of the new tot lot with a dedication and community picnic this past June. The group has just received a mini-grant award for additional improvements to the park, and will be exploring the possibility of additions for older children. Contact 525-7532.

Friends of Shorebird Park has continued to meet with success in raising funds for the building of an innovative visitor's center constructed of straw bales. This fall they were presented with a check for \$25,000, including \$12,500 from the Lawrence Berkeley National Lab matched by \$12,500 from the Department of Energy. So far, they have raised a total of \$91,000 for the project. They are still raising funds, since for each \$10,000 raised, they can add an additional 100 square feet to the center. They will also be seeking grants for the interpretive displays inside the center. This fall, the Shorebird Nature Center is offering three-hour Bay Interpretive Trainings on 30 and 31; November 6 and 7; and December 4 and 5. Contact 644-8623.

Friends of San Pablo Park has finalized plans for a new tot area. They received a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and raised private funds to replace the outdated and hazardous equipment that has been in the park for over twenty-five years. They are excited to be installing equipment designed for tot-appropriate imaginary and active play. The new tot area is scheduled for completion in the early spring. Volunteers are needed to help with the installation. Contact 849-4175 or 649-9874 for details.



San Pablo Tot Lot to Be Restored (Photo by Sara Rigler)

Friends of 61st Street Mini-Park has finalized the design for play area renovations. They hope the project will be complete by next summer so children can enjoy the park during summer vacation. Call 652-7869.

Friends of the Berkeley Rose Garden (FOBRG) reports that City staff and volunteers are working together to preserve and improve the beauty, views, and ambiance of this irreplaceable Berkeley treasure. The most dramatic and noticeable change is the completion in January of the basic skeletal structure of a much-needed rebuilt entry at Euclid. Because of insufficient City funds, FOBRG has taken on the task of raising the money to complete the project, including wall finishes, seating, and new rose plantings. They are halfway to their goal of \$10,000. FOBRG also sponsors monthly maintenance of the roses (first Saturdays of every month at 10 a.m.). To mark the sixtieth anniversary of the garden, FOBRG sponsored a Mother's Day event attended by one thousand people. Contact Friends of the Berkeley Rose Garden, P.O. Box 7664, Berkeley, CA 94707; 525-3005.

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Mini-Grants Fuel Community Projects

Over the last two and a half years, over \$120,000 has been allocated in three rounds of mini-grants for community-sponsored improvements in Berkeley's parks and open spaces. Grants have been given to several dozen projects throughout the City. Among the projects receiving funds in the latest round are picnic tables, shrubbery, and trash cans at Aquatic Park; Rose Garden entrance plantings; see-saw replacement and fireplace restoration at Codornices Park; renovation and landscaping of an Elmwood circle diverter; improvements near the tennis courts at King School; a new sign and fence at Live Oak Park; landscaping improvements at Malcolm X School; planter boxes on Milvia Slow Street; and a new bench and planters at the Peralta Community Garden. As part of the City's budget process for fiscal year 1997-1998, \$50,000 was set aside for continuation of the mini-grant program in recognition of the extraordinary benefits the projects bring to the community. The next round of mini-grants will be awarded in the spring of 1998. A public meeting will be held in March or April to inform interested groups about the grant application process. Applications will be due a month later, and recipients will be selected soon thereafter. Grants of up to \$3,500 will be awarded. Berkeley Partners for Parks is available to serve as the nonprofit sponsor for newly formed groups. To be added to the mailing list for receiving notice of meetings and mini-grant application packets, contact Lisa Caronna, Acting Director, Parks & Waterfront Department, City of Berkeley (644-6943, ext. 222). ■

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At **Halcyon Commons** mini-park, John Steere raised funds from family members, supplemented by Halcyon Neighborhood Association (HNA) funds, for installation of a distinctive bench in memory of his father. Following input from John and members of the HNA Steering Committee, the bench was designed and built by Scott Constable from recycled 100-year-old wood, and is a popular new feature in the park.

Last year, **Los Chicos de Codornices** received a mini-grant for the purchase of new toddler bucket seats in the play area. Thanks to William Clark's hard work, the seats were recently installed. **Thousand Oaks Park Society (TOPS)** has successfully raised close to \$12,000 in individual and business contributions toward a new tot lot, in addition to a range of in-kind donations. The project will be the first to receive the City's matching funds for play area safety projects. The Berkeley school district has pledged to provide funds for installation of resilient surfacing, and City crews will help install the play equipment. The project will be managed by Berkeley Partners for Parks and should be finished by next spring. TOPS is still in the process of raising funds to ensure that they can complete the full scope of the project. Contact 526-5888 for more information.

Friends of César Chávez Park continues to provide Mutt Mitts at the park. The third issue of their popular newsletter, *The Berkeley Bark*, is due out soon. A citywide Task Force on Dog Use in Parks met this year and has made recommendations for an off-leash dog area in the undeveloped northern part of the park. This proposal will come before the City Council for approval later this fall. For more information, contact 704-0827.

Berkeley Community Gardening Collaborative reports that the Edible Schoolyard at MLK Middle School is going strong, and blossomed during the summer with intensive garden programs and new cooking programs in a lovely refurbished kitchen. Work continues on the Santa Fe right-of-way for open space and parks. The group is looking for funding to continue employing its essential part-time staffer. Contact 525-5290. The **HopPer Commons Association** recently hosted a special dedication ceremony for two unique community gardens in North Berkeley — the Peralta Community Garden and adjoining Northside Community Garden. Contact 528-3035.

Friends of Totland reports that renovation work on Totland should begin this fall and will include a volunteer workday to install new Timberform equipment in November. Contact 644-1181. **Friends of Dorothy Bolte Park** received a \$3500 mini-grant for additional play equipment and landscaping. Contact 527-2556. **Columbus Neighbors for Aquatic Park** helped secure a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for new play areas at the park. To participate in the design process, contact 549-0818.

The **University Avenue Gardeners** meet twice monthly to work with the beautiful natives on University Avenue's newly planted medians (first Saturdays and third Sundays, from 9 to 11 a.m.). Bring gloves and favorite weeding tools, or the City will provide. Call 849-2103 for more information. A new group, **Berkeley Path Wanderers Association (BPWA)**, has formed; BPWA is "dedicated to the restoration and preservation of the public paths, steps and walkways in Berkeley, for the use and enjoyment of all its citizens." Contact 525-7990 for more information. ■

Help support Berkeley's parks, community gardens, and open space! Please give to Berkeley Partners for Parks, a 501(c)3 nonprofit. Make your check payable to BPPF. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent provided by law.

Name(s): _____

Business: _____

Address: _____

Title: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

- \$1-15 (low-income)
- \$25 (individual partner)
- \$35 (participating family)
- \$50 (contributing partner)
- \$100 (supporting partner)
- \$250 (business partner)
- \$500 (benefactor partner)
- \$1000 + (patron partner)
- Other: \$ _____

Please mail this form and your check to BPPF, P.O. Box 13673, Berkeley, CA 94712.