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Fremont eyes new skate park

by Wes Bowers

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In an effort to give Fremont youngsters more recreation options, City of Fremont will begin studying options for building a permanent skate park.

Fremont City Council Tuesday night unanimously approved a professional design services contract to a consultant group tasked with creating options for a new facility. Santa Clara-based Verde Design Inc. was awarded a contract not to exceed \$210,240 for design services including public workshops, design studies, bid documents, and permit documents and assistance during construction.

If built, the first permanent skate park in the city will be located directly north of the Aqua Adventure Water Park in Fremont Central Park, in the one-acre undeveloped portion of the former Stivers Swim Lagoon, city staff reports state.

With the adoption of the fiscal year 2009 to 2014 Capital Improvement Program, the council included funding needed to complete a permanent skate park to replace the temporary one that closed last April.

The total cost for the new skate park is estimated at more than \$2 million, all from the city's capital improvement program. About \$1.2 million will be used for park construction, while the rest of the funding will go toward project management, construction management and project

contingencies.

The city opened a temporary wooden ramp skate park in 1999 with a plan to keep it open just five years, until enough funding could be accumulated to build a permanent park. A modern permanent facility differs from a temporary one in that it is built of concrete and typically includes multiple deep bowls combined with "street" style features that mimic an urban downtown plaza.

Through extensive maintenance and repair, the city was able to keep the temporary park open for 10 years. But the costs to maintain the park in a safe manner became too great, according to staff.

The city has been planning a permanent skate park prior to 1995, when the Fremont Park Master Plan was adopted.

Fremont Recreation Commission, staffers said, has kept the skate park as a priority by incrementally recommending funding over the years through the capital improvement plan process.

Two locations for the park had originally been considered: the temporary facility's current site at what is known as "the knoll," and the undeveloped portion of Stivers Swim Lagoon north of the water park.

Staff wants the new location to include or be:

A centralized location within the city and Central Park.

High visibility from outside for safety and convenience for police.

Substantial parking adjacent to the park.

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Available restrooms near the site.

Suitably segregated from other areas like play areas, picnic areas, and passive use areas.

Suitable distance from residential areas.

Controlled access.

Adequate area for skate park and appurtenances.

Utility connections reasonably accessible to the project.

Compatible land use designation.

City staff said while the existing temporary park site met some of the criteria, it lacked visibility, restrooms and adequate area for modern skate park amenities.

Verde Design Inc. was chosen from five design teams and had more experience in public park design with an emphasis in athletic facilities, staff said.

Sub-consultant Wormhoudt Inc. of Santa Cruz will join Verde Design in designing the park. Staff said Wormhoudt Inc. is one of the oldest skate park design firms in California and remains one of the most sought after firms in designing such facilities.

Verde and Wormhoudt have collaborated on three skate park projects, one of them the recently opened Lake Cunningham Regional Skate Park in San Jose, which is the largest skate park in Northern California.

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