

Jeremy Swan

From: nancy buenger [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2025 2:48 PM
To: Jennifer Stark; Adam Pirrie; Jeremy Swan
Subject: Public Access and Park Improvement Plan

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Ensuring Public Access to Claremont Parks in the Park Improvement Plan

Dear Councilmember Stark,

I am writing to provide input on the City of Claremont's draft Park Improvement Plan. While I appreciate the effort to outline necessary park upgrades, the plan omits one of the existing public parks, the Blaisdell Ranch Preserve, and is missing a critical goal that reflects a core community value: ensuring that public parks remain accessible and inclusive spaces for all residents.

The Park Improvement Plan should explicitly affirm the City's commitment to maintaining parks as accessible and inclusive places by ensuring that public parkland remains publicly accessible. This principle is essential to preserving Claremont's identity as a community that values shared spaces where families, athletes, seniors, and children can gather and enjoy the outdoors.

In addition, the Park Improvement Plan should formally recognize, as the City has done in the past, the Blaisdell Ranch Preserve as part of the City's park system. The Preserve, which serves as a cherished gathering place for community members, was established in 1985 in exchange for the private right to denser adjacent home development. Public tax dollars have helped maintain, repair and improve the Preserve since then as part of a public-private agreement between the City of Claremont and the Blaisdell Ranch Homeowner Association. The agreement stipulates that the general public will have access to the preserve during daylight hours between sunrise and sunset. The possibility of losing access to this treasured space has raised concerns among residents about the future of our parks. Including the Preserve in the Park Improvement Plan would affirm its status as a public park and ensure that its future remains tied to the needs of the broader community.

Protecting and enhancing access to parks aligns with California's broader commitment to public access. Coastal communities like Malibu, Laguna Beach, Half Moon Bay and Martin's Beach have faced challenges with private efforts to block public access to beaches, and the state has consistently acted to defend public rights. Claremont can demonstrate leadership by proactively embedding this value into our Park Improvement Plan.

I urge the City Council to amend the Park Improvement Plan to include both the goal of protecting public parkland and the Blaisdell Ranch Preserve as an integral part of the City's park system. Doing so will not only strengthen the plan but also reaffirm Claremont's commitment to equity, inclusion, and the preservation of public spaces for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration and for your work to ensure our parks reflect the needs and values of our community.

Nancy Buenger
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

Jeremy Swan

From: Kristin Hobbs [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, February 20, 2025 11:04 AM
To: Jeremy Swan
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Request for Funding Allocation for Lights on the Girl's Softball Field

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr. Swan,

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to request consideration for funding allocation to improve the girl's softball field at La Puerta Sports Park as part of the city's upcoming sports park improvement plan.

Currently, the lack of lighting on the softball field limits the ability for players to practice and compete during the evenings, especially as daylight hours shorten. Our program only has access to one field with sports lighting (Wheeler Park), which requires many teams to have practices starting at 4pm, and which creates a burden and strain on working families. Installing lights would not only extend playing time for the girls' softball teams but also create more opportunities for community engagement, tournaments, and league games, benefiting both participants and spectators.

This investment would enhance the overall experience of players and families, ensuring that our city continues to support girls youth sports in a meaningful way. We believe that with proper lighting, the field would become a more inclusive and accessible resource for the community, providing greater visibility and safety for our softball players.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this further and provide any additional information you may need to support this request. Thank you for considering this proposal, and I look forward to your response.

Warm regards,

Kristin Hobbs, Secretary

Claremont Fastpitch
[REDACTED]

Jeremy Swan

From: Luis Godoy [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, February 21, 2025 8:34 AM
To: Jeremy Swan
Subject: La Puerta

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello,

I hope this email finds you well. I have been a coach for CFP since 2021 and every fall and spring the league has struggled scheduling games and more importantly, practices at La Puerta Park.

I was told that there is a chance that the city may look into putting in some lights at the park for Softball. This would be awesome.

Lights would help us out in so many ways, but I think more importantly due to the safety of these girls who range in age of 4-14.

So your consideration in this would help these girls continue to thrive in a sport we all love and in a sport that is only growing in our community.

Thanks,

Luis Godoy

Sent from my iPhone

Jeremy Swan

From: Tony Spinrad [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, February 23, 2025 7:34 PM
To: Jeremy Swan
Subject: Park Improvement Plan input

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hey Jeremy,

I understand the city is currently gathering community input on a Park Improvement Plan. I'm a father of three, and for seven years I had the joy of coaching my son in Claremont Little League at College Park, including managing his U11 all star team to Claremont's first state championship in 2023. Having multiple fields with lights at College Park gave us practice and game time to compete at a high level.

He has now aged out of little league, and a significant portion of my free time is spent coaching my daughters in Claremont Fastpitch Softball. I am writing to urge the city to install additional lights at La Puerta Sports Park to include the softball fields.

Practice for the spring softball season starts in late January/early February. It is extremely difficult to find adequate practice time for all the teams in Claremont Fastpitch with only one lighted field in the city (Wheeler Park), particularly when it gets dark so early. Fall softball is even more difficult.

La Puerta is the primary park for our league, and there are already lights there for the soccer fields. There are even light towers adjacent to the softball fields that could potentially support additional lighting pointed toward the softball fields.

This is an important opportunity to support our league and improve the quality of play at La Puerta. It would significantly enhance our ability to host games during the evening, provide more flexibility for practices and games, and improve safety for players and families.

Please help give my daughters the same opportunity my son was able to have at College Park. Thank you for your consideration.

Tony Spinrad
[REDACTED]

Jeremy Swan

From: Kim Watkins [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, February 24, 2025 12:23 PM
To: Jeremy Swan
Subject: Softball lights at La Puerta

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello,

I am reaching out to contribute community feedback on Claremont's Park Improvement Plan. My daughters play softball with Claremont Fast Pitch and their experience would be greatly enhanced by having lights installed at our 2 main fields at La Puerta Sports Park. Currently, the only softball field in Claremont that has lights is Wheeler, where we have recently encountered unsafe situations involving unhoused men wandering on the field during practices, making the teenage players feel uncomfortable. In addition, only having one field with lights greatly limits the weekday games we can host, the times we can practice, and our ability to raise funds for the program through the snack bar (only at La Puerta). Please take this need into consideration as you review the Park Improvement Plan.

Kindly,
Kim Watkins

Jeremy Swan

From: Gaetana Wilmot [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, February 24, 2025 1:34 PM
To: Jeremy Swan
Subject: Sports Lights at La Puerta park

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello Jeremy,

I am writing to share our family's thoughts on having sports lights installed at La Puerta park. Our daughter has played softball with Claremont Fastpitch for many years. We love the park and fields at La Puerta and they are much more conveniently located to us than other parks. Due to there being no lights, we have never been able to have evening practices or games there, often causing us to drive farther or have less than ideal schedules for practices and games. Only having one field with lights makes the scheduling much harder and we usually have very late practices and games during the week, which is challenging since we have a younger child as well who needs to be in bed sooner. Even the times we do practice at La Puerta, sometimes visibility is an issue as practice wraps up. I feel this is a safety issue for the girls.

We strongly support installing sports lights at La Puerta.

Thank you!
Gaetana Wilmot

Jeremy Swan

From: Melissa Salter [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, February 27, 2025 3:55 PM
To: Jeremy Swan
Cc: Justin Gaw
Subject: Park Improvement Plan - Need lighting at La Puerta

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello Mr. Swan,

It has been brought to our attention that the city is currently reviewing a Park Improvement Plan, including the maintenance and installation of sports lights throughout the city. Currently, Claremont Fastpitch, our city's softball league, only has one practice field (Wheeler) that has sports lights. Our main field, La Puerta, does not have lighting for the softball fields, as I am sure you are aware. The lack of lighting at La Puerta severely limits our league's ability to flexibly schedule practices. Practices have to be scheduled during daylight which means only a few teams can practice on any given day and they must be in the earlier afternoon. This is prohibitive and inequitable to working families. Many parents who work until 5 simply cannot sign their daughters up for softball if practices are only taking place between 3-5pm. As parents of two daughters in Claremont schools, we have personally spoken to many families who would love to sign their daughter up for softball, but can't due to the early practice times, which seems at odds with the city and school district's commitment to equity, inclusion, and the whole child. Additionally, our league is unable to host evening games and tournaments like our neighboring cities do. As a result, we are losing girls to Upland Fastpitch. Please help us continue to build our community based league by providing adequate lighting at La Puerta Sports Park. To not fulfill this need is a disservice to our Claremont girls and their families. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Melissa Gaw (CUSD educator & mother) and Justin Gaw (Fastpitch Coach & father)

Guiding Document

This guiding document outlines a bold vision for Claremont's parks, ensuring they remain vibrant, accessible, and well-maintained community spaces. Through strategic planning, sustainable investments, and community-driven design, Claremont parks will be designed to serve all residents while prioritizing environmental responsibility and long-term financial sustainability. The goals established below align with the adopted 2024-2026 City Council Priorities:

- Maintain Financial Stability;
- Increase Livability in Our Neighborhoods and Expand Opportunities for Our Businesses;
- Promote Community Engagement Through Transparency and Communication; and
- Invest In the Maintenance and Improvement of Our Infrastructure.

Goal 1: Enhance Parks as Vibrant Public Places

Design parks that foster community gathering, social engagement, and cultural expression.

1.1: Strengthen Community Engagement in Park Planning

- **Promote opportunities for community engagement** through multiple channels, leveraging social media, the city newsletter, community center postings, and other platforms to ensure broad awareness and participation.
- **Encourage broad public** input by offering multiple ways for residents to engage in park planning, including in-person community workshops, online surveys, and drop-in feedback options.
- **Incorporate public input** in shaping project priorities, ensuring parks reflect the needs and desires of Claremont residents.

1.2: Preserve and Enhance Public Parks Spaces

- Maintain parks as accessible and inclusive public spaces by ensuring that public parkland remains publicly accessible.
- Install more seating, picnic areas, and shade structures.
- Integrate art installations and murals to create a sense of identity in each park.
- Maintain flexible event spaces that can host city-sponsored events, concerts, and cultural festivals.

Goal 2: Create an Innovative, Inclusive, and Sustainable Playground System

Establish a flagship playground as a centerpiece for the community while ensuring all parks feature inclusive, nature-based, and accessible play spaces.

2.1: Establish a Comprehensive Community Engagement Process for Playground Development

- Conduct an initial community workshop 6–12 months before project planning begins to assess how the playground fits into the broader parks system, considering community needs, current usage, and city priorities. This workshop will help guide staff in identifying grant opportunities and setting project priorities.
- Once funding is finalized, a community workshop will be held to refine the playground design. This workshop will gather input on key features to align with the plan developed in the initial workshop.
- Facilitate a community vote on final designs to ensure the chosen design reflects resident preference.

2.2: Integrate Inclusive, Sustainable Play Features Across All Playgrounds

Play spaces will prioritize high play value for children of all ages and abilities by incorporating:

- **Inclusive design principles** to ensure equipment is not only accessible but also engaging, usable, and exciting for all children. Play elements should foster shared play experiences, avoiding isolation by ensuring equipment is enjoyable for children of all abilities.
- **Multi-age play equipment** that encourages cooperative play and skill-building, featuring open-ended elements that adapt to different developmental stages.
- **Nature play elements** that create sensory-rich experiences, encourage imaginative exploration and strengthen connections to the environment. These features should also provide opportunities for risk-taking, problem-solving, and hands-on interaction with natural materials.
- **Engaging, dynamic play structures** such as climbing towers, zip lines, net structures, and spinning elements that support strength, coordination, and confidence-building.
- **Sustainable materials and eco-friendly practices** that align with the city's Sustainable City Plan.

2.3: Plan for a Flagship Playground

- Select a centrally located park for a destination-worthy playground that draws visitors and serves as a community hub.
- Design a one-of-a-kind play space with nature play, interactive features, and universal accessibility.
- Engage the community in design workshops and surveys to ensure the playground reflects local character and needs.

Goal 3: Improve Health, Safety, and Security in Parks

Ensure parks are well-lit, safe, and encourage healthy, active lifestyles.

3.1: Upgrade/Expand Park and Greenspace Lighting for Safety

- Convert outdated lighting to energy-efficient LED fixtures, consistent with the city's sustainability initiatives for low-energy retrofits.

- Improve pedestrian and pathway lighting in high-traffic areas.
- Add new lights at unlit play areas and green spaces to expand the available play options after sunset.

3.2: Improve Park Restrooms and Hardscape Infrastructure

- Upgrade and replace park restrooms to improve accessibility and hygiene.
- Renovate pedestrian pathways and parking lots to enhance accessibility and safety, applying sustainability best practices for streets and landscaping

Goal 4: Enhance and Modernize Sports Parks

Address field quality, lighting, and usability to meet the growing demand for sports and recreation parks.

4.1: Establish a Comprehensive Community Engagement Process for Sports Park Upgrades

- Engage local sports leagues, schools, and community members early in the process to assess current and future recreational needs, ensure accessibility, and promote equitable access for all users.
- Hold an initial planning workshop 6–12 months before project planning begins to evaluate how the sports park fits within the broader parks system, identify key community priorities, and assess current usage.
- Host a workshop to review City’s draft plans as they relate to feasibility, community priorities, and available funding. Gather feedback on proposed field improvements, lighting, amenities, and other key features.
- Facilitate a final community input process through a survey or structured feedback session to refine the design before implementation.

4.2: Upgrade and Expand Athletic Facilities

- Work with local sports leagues to identify high-priority improvements and co-funding opportunities.
- Modernize sports field lighting to improve evening usability and reduce energy consumption, in line with the city’s commitment to energy efficiency and carbon reduction.
- Resurface and improve drainage for high-use fields.
- Renovate underutilized sports courts (tennis, pickleball, basketball).

4.3: Enhance Sports Park Maintenance and Accessibility

- Implement a comprehensive maintenance plan focusing on turf management, irrigation improvements, and regular field inspections.
- Ensure ADA compliance across all sports facilities, including pathways, seating, and spectator areas.
- Incorporate environmentally sustainable practices in field maintenance, such as water-efficient irrigation systems and eco-friendly materials.

Goal 5: Pursue Creative and Sustainable Funding Models

Diversify revenue streams to fully implement park improvements without sole reliance on city funds.

5.1: Expand Funding Sources Through Grants & Partnerships

- Direct City staff/consultants to pursue grant opportunities that align with community-identified park priorities, ensuring funding reflects how residents use and envision parks.
- Apply for state and federal grants, such as Prop 68 and accessibility-focused funding, to support park improvements that align with community priorities.
- Partner with local businesses, foundations, and community organizations to co-author grant requests and co-fund improvements.

5.2: Engage Community Groups & Volunteers in Park Stewardship

- Partner with community groups to assist with fundraising and advocacy.
- Encourage corporate volunteer days for park cleanup and minor upgrades.

Public Comment RE Proposed Park Improvement Plan

Parks Hillsides Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this important document for our community. We are thankful that the City Council and staff have prioritized creating such a document to better plan for and meet the needs of our community. It's important that any such plan is mindful of providing resources across our community, and for all members of our community. I'm glad to see that the park improvement plan outlines certain amenities for each park and a timeline for specific replacements to allow for budgeting; however, the limited scope of this plan is a good start but must be acknowledged as such.

The plan as presented is limited to a playground replacement, sport court replacement, and park lighting plan. While a true master plan would be a significant undertaking and somewhat perfunctory, as in all likelihood there's not even sufficient funding to enact everything included in even this proposed plan, it's important to acknowledge that elements like sports fields, new improvements such splash pads, fitness equipment, shaded picnic structures, and other amenities which could benefit the community are not even contemplated. With limiting funding available, this plan does not provide an opportunity for the community to provide feedback on the priority of these other items.

However, with the abovementioned in mind, planning for and providing visibility to the city's plan for updating and replacing park playground equipment and installing security lighting is an important first step.

Throughout this process there's been a fair amount of discussion around looking to more "sustainable" equipment materials, however there's more to sustainability than the materials the playgrounds are made out of, and I would caution significant investment in equipment whose useful life in the Claremont environment is unknown until more years have passed, and it becomes clear how the first playground at Lewis Park using these new materials holds up. The plan also does not indicate the annual investment in maintenance or additional increases needed in budgets to enable city staff to replace equipment as it breaks rather than leaving pieces of equipment or portions of play structures out of service without sufficient funding to replace damage as is the case today.

There's also been a lot of discussion about inclusive and accessible play structures, yet the design chosen for Lewis Park does not actually provide for a universal design experience and accessibility for significant interaction with the equipment to individuals utilizing wheelchairs. There seems to be significant confusion among both the public and the specific plans when it comes to inclusion, accessibility, and universal design.

These kinds of aspirational principles would be helpful to spell out in the plan including defining them and using them consistently and noting what the intent going forward is.

Another item that continues to come up is a flagship park. While there's some logic to consolidating funding into one park, there are limited options for parks where you could install a large area for a playground and not disturb heritage trees or sports fields. In addition, the concept of a single flagship park inherently indicates favoritism to the park or neighborhood in which it is located and flies in the face of all the historic park design in Claremont which purposely spread parks of varying sizes and amenities throughout the community to ensure sure access by all Claremont residents. Consolidating funding to one flagship park inherently will rob smaller neighborhood parks of funding for future replacements as these funds are limited and this is a zero-sum game.

The plan indicates continuation of the current engagement process involving two community meetings, a Parks, Hillside, and Utilities Committee meeting, a Community and Human Services Commission hearing, and ultimately City Council for approval. This number of meetings is similar, if not equal to, the total number of meetings held to approve the annual city budget which seems more than sufficient for input on playgrounds.

As the Parks, Hillside and Utilities committee, Community and Human Services Commission, and City Council consider this plan I hope they will keep in mind that with a plan like this that is a 15 to 20 year plan, it's aspirational in nature and thus should both include what we know can be done as well as what we would prioritize should additional funding and opportunity arise, as well as be flexible enough to adapt to changes in the industry and the needs of the community over the course of that period of time. Adopting this playground replacement plan is an excellent first step to what I hope will be a more concerted effort to pay additional attention to the city parks which are as integral a part of the infrastructure of Claremont as our streets, storm drains, urban forests, and sewer system.

Appreciation to staff for moving this item forward and providing more visibility to these plans as well as the opportunity for the public to participate in the development of this plan.

Thank you for your consideration,

Colin Tudor

Park Facilities Improvement Plan

Public Comment Log

Our city has an opportunity to create imaginative playgrounds that foster creativity, connection, and accessibility for all children. Yet citizens are frustrated with a regurgitated parks improvement plan. What is the PLAN?? Many of our parks still lack engaging play spaces, leaving families with dirty, outdated seating. Our sports fields (particularly soccer) remain unsafe and poorly maintained. The city must prioritize children and sports by investing in quality, well-maintained recreation spaces and sports fields that ensure safe play. In addition, a flagship playground could serve as a central hub boosting local businesses, attracting tourism, and enhancing civic pride. It's time to move beyond empty promises and create parks and sports facilities that are safe, inspiring, and built to last.

Bird

What a beautiful and nicely designed play structure at Lewis Park. This will serve our children so well into the future. I am so happy to see our young ones exposed to something exciting, that is also physical. Way to go, Claremont!

Greg Cliff

I live across the street from Wheeler Park and enjoy playing pickleball there on a weekly basis. I'm glad to hear that the courts will be resurfaced. A lot of areas have already worn down to the old hockey rink surface, making for an uneven and slippery surface. I hope the nets will also be replaced. Some of the nets are already in severe disrepair. Players have been attempting to keep them function with tape. I also think the divider fencing between the courts should be replaced with a different design. The fencing has been broken off in places (presumably from players running into the fence on the cramped inner court). This has left jagged pieces of metal sticking out from the ground where the poles have been broken off. I've attempted to make repairs myself, taking together the poles with electrical tape so that the broken pieces aren't dangling into the court.

Seth Pringle

Incorporate language committing to inclusive, innovative, and sustainable playground design. Also, a flagship playground design is desired.

Golie

Thank you to the City of Claremont Council & Staff for your work and commitment to parks and playgrounds. I'm so excited seeing the new playground at Lewis Park currently under construction and I know the future is bright when it comes to updating our parks. Our family moved to Claremont in 2018 for the quality of life. Parks & Open space are one of the primary amenities that we see as contributing to the quality of life that we are looking for in our City. The Park Improvement Plan is a good start, and I think it can be strengthened and can commit to making every park exceptional. Specifically, I would like to see the following included in the plan:

- Commitment to exceptional playgrounds - the newer playgrounds in the City, Blaisdell and soon

to be Lewis are exceptional and highly utilized by families in their neighborhoods and citywide. Playgrounds revitalize our parks and neighborhoods and we should invest in them as community building assets.

-Flagship Playground - a flagship playground at the Memorial Park would serve our community and residents but would also be a regional draw that would further the City's economic development strategy, provide more opportunity for local businesses, and increase sales tax revenue to the City.

-Upgrading our Fields for youth Sports - My kids have played soccer and baseball at parks throughout the City. College Park Baseball fields are in good repair. The plan calls for \$120K investment in lights, but it is unclear if that is related to updating Fields 1 & 2 to LED or adding lights to field 3. I highly recommend the addition of lights in Field 3. The Soccer Fields at Larkin are in very poor repair, often the kids are playing on dirt, not grass. In addition La Puerta Sports Park needs significant investment.

- Safety & Security - Restrooms, paved and DG paths, lights should all be in working order for everyone in the community to benefit.

Thank you for your consideration of these items - we can all work together to make our parks vibrant and inviting places that make Claremont a wonderful place for our community and visitors.
Helen McAlary

I appreciate the opportunity to give my personal opinion as a stay at home mother of two children and a licensed occupational therapist. As part of our daily routine, my children and I go to the park in the mornings. Often times we go to our surrounding cities because Claremont parks are outdated, unengaging and unsafe. That's saying a lot because we have 4 parks within a .5 mile radius of us. It seems as though our children have been forgotten in this city. I have seen playgrounds that are sensory interactive with music key buttons, colorful musical instruments, ADA accessible, and multiple themes, such as a pirate ship or tree house. Just to name a few. Most importantly, I am looking for a flagship playground that will be able to sustain overtime. Claremont is very big on community and renovating our parks will bring more children and families together here outdoors! Thank you for the opportunity to voice my opinion. I know we can do this!
IT IS MUCH NEEDED!
Cristal T.

1) Safety is most important in terms of the design and maintenance

2) please, please have a universally designed playground that welcomes all children of all abilities and ages

3) We want a sustainable playground design that is better for the environment and makes maximum impact

4) as a Girl Scout troop leader, moms playgroup organizer, parent of kids of various ages and loves Claremont, we want a playground where we all congregate and meet at that is the flagship for all our meetups where we can stay for hours

Karena P.

As a Claremont teacher, I believe in creating a supportive environment for kids to grow. Our community should collaborate to build a park that inspires and meets their needs.

The park should be safe, inclusive, and have cool designs with diverse exploration and learning areas. It should be accessible to all, regardless of their mobility.

Sustainability should be a priority, using eco-friendly materials and practices to teach kids environmental care.

This new playground will foster fun and community growth, attracting visitors and showcasing Claremont's quality of life.

As a teacher, I'm committed to this vision that reflects Claremont's values and prioritizes our kids' future. Let's invest in their growth and the community's well-being.

Teacher4parks

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide feedback on the Park Facilities Improvement Plan. I appreciate the city's dedication to maintaining and enhancing these vital community spaces.

As the plan moves toward finalization, I would encourage the inclusion of language that reflects a commitment to inclusive, innovative, and sustainable playground design. Designing playgrounds that are accessible to children of all abilities fosters a sense of belonging and ensures that every child in Claremont can benefit from safe and engaging play opportunities. Additionally, prioritizing sustainability in materials and design will contribute to long-lasting, eco-friendly spaces that reflect Claremont's values.

Furthermore, I would like to express a strong interest in developing a flagship playground within the city. A standout, state-of-the-art playground could serve as a central hub for families, not only meeting the recreational needs of local residents but also attracting visitors from surrounding areas. This playground could incorporate innovative play features, shaded gathering spaces, and amenities that serve diverse age groups, promoting community connection and wellness.

Thank you for considering this feedback. I look forward to seeing how the final plan reflects the community's shared vision for vibrant, accessible, and sustainable park facilities.

Natalie F

The playground equipment at Claremont parks is outdated, unimaginative not engaging and not available to children with special needs. As a grandmother with children and grandchildren who live in Claremont, it seems untenable that I drive my grandchildren to surrounding communities to use their playground equipment because Claremont parks are so poor. The hot metal structures burn their skin, there is no shade and there are very few picnic tables provided. The parks in Claremont are a poor reflection on the city.

dianacliff

The playground equipment at parks in Claremont is old, unsafe and unavailable to children with special needs. I babysit my grandchildren who live in Claremont but usually take them to other cities where the equipment isn't outdated but is imaginative and engaging for children. This is not true for any playground that I have found in Claremont. Hot metal play equipment is untenable in the hot summer months and there is no shade provided for children or adults. There are no picnic tables for families or communities to enjoy the parks and the sports fields are poorly maintained as well. The parks and sport fields are a poor reflection on the city of Claremont.

dianacliff

The current fields being utilized for sports in the city are in need of improvement, via improved grass surfaces without large holes where kids tend to get hurt, better lighting in areas that get dark sooner during daylight saving. Please do a better job of maintaining the parks overall, some of the restrooms at these parks are not maintained properly as well.

Rivas

I believe the current plan does not fully meet the needs of our community, and I want to share my thoughts on how our parks can better serve residents. Claremont's parks should be welcoming spaces where the whole community can gather, connect, and enjoy time outdoors. We need more shaded seating, picnic tables, and areas designed for people to come together. As an arts-rich community, Claremont has a unique opportunity to showcase local talent by incorporating art installations and musical elements into our parks. These creative touches would give each park its own identity and transform them into destinations where people want to spend time. Please prioritize creating parks that foster connection and reflect the creativity and spirit of our community by ensuring the Park Improvement Plan includes these enhancements to make our parks vibrant gathering spaces. Claremont's playgrounds also need to be updated to better serve children of all ages and abilities. We need play spaces that are not only accessible but also engaging for kids with diverse needs, encouraging social and inclusive play. Incorporating nature-based elements can spark creativity and provide sensory-rich experiences, while more challenging and imaginative equipment will keep children of all ages active and engaged. I also support the development of a flagship "destination playground"—a standout space that brings families from across Claremont together. It's essential that families are involved early and often in the playground planning process, with real opportunities to shape the design and ensure it reflects what our community wants and needs. Let's ensure the Park Improvement Plan commits to these elements and includes a clear goal to create inclusive, innovative play spaces designed with families.

Eva Garcia

This is not a Park Facilities Improvement Plan. It's a generic park inventory and overview with a budget. There's no improvement and no plan. Where's the detailed plan of action for the design, budget and implementation of imaginative new playgrounds? We have amazing park spaces in this City but no one from City Staff seems to be working to implement creative playgrounds like we see in neighboring cities all around SoCal that foster learning, imagination, play and inclusivity. The budget in place is enough to create truly one-of-a-kind playgrounds that our great City and its citizens deserve. Please try harder. Start from scratch. Don't do it like it's always been done. Get creative!

Toby Tewell

Upgrade Sports Fields and Improve Field Maintenance Our sports elds are in terrible condition and need urgent attention. Poor drainage, uneven surfaces, and worn-out grass make it unsafe for kids to play and for volunteers to volunteer. We need resurfaced elds, better irrigation, and improved lighting. The city should work with local sports leagues and families to ensure the upgrades meet the needs of the community. We also need a plan that ensures our fields are properly maintained, keeping them safe and enjoyable for kids now and in the future. Let's ensure the Park Improvement Plan includes a clear commitment to these field improvements and ongoing maintenance, informed by input from local families and sports leagues.

Monique h. Ott

The planned improvements for Griffith Park's playground are minimal and do not adequately address the needs of the public. Since its installation in 2001, the playground has seen little to no upgrades beyond the replacement of slides and the addition of newer restrooms. Having lived on Woodbend since 2005, I have noticed that the playground has become less toddler-friendly and does not meet ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) requirements. It's particularly shocking that there is a lack of accessibility at Griffith Park, especially since Sumner/Danbury School, which caters to students with accessibility needs, is less than 100 feet away. Besides the lack of accessibility, the non-existent toddler (0-3) equipment makes the park only accessible to children and adults with fully developed motor skills and a safety concern for children under 5. Again this park is located next to a state-run daycare, a school for children with accessibility needs, and a TK to 6th-grade elementary school. Why has the remodel of Griffith Park been pushed back to 2030? Does the slide installation, which has been closed multiple times due to safety concerns, qualify as a remodel for such a high-traffic park that hosts various events every weekend? Please put local children at the top of your priority since our federal government has not.

Lolli

This assessment is deeply flawed, in that it does not treat soccer fields as long-term amenities that require significant funding and resources. Just as basketball courts and tennis courts sometimes need resurfacing, so too do soccer fields. The grass at Padua and La Puerta, in particular, has been neglected and simply aged to the point that routine maintenance is not enough, and a more extensive investment is required. I am a Claremont resident, volunteer youth soccer referee, and parent of a soccer player, among other things. Our Claremont fields have become a serious risk to the health of both the children and the adults involved. I regularly find myself apologizing to visitors from other cities about the quality of our fields. We should be doing better.

I am all in favor of new playground equipment, etc. But I find it absurd, for example, that we would spend \$600,000 on new playground equipment at Padua, without any attention at all to the existing, highly used amenity of the soccer fields, which are in desperate need of refurbishing.

Gabriel White

The field conditions at La Puerta and Padua park (e.g. gopher holes, spiky liquidambar seed pods, among other hazards) are dangerous for athletes and spectators.

Field lights should also be installed at June Vail park.

Susan

I think the policy should include a provision to donate equipment that can be re-used. Although there is some normal wear and tear on 30-year old playground equipment, most of the equipment in Claremont is in great condition and can be re-used. The equipment should not go to the land

fill or to scrap metal recycling if it can be re-used. It should be preferable that Claremont donates used playground equipment for re-use in other locations. There can be provisions in the RFP/contract that require that playground vendors facilitate the disassembly and shipment for donations.

Steve Finn

Please consider prioritizing the dirt parking area for Padua Park. These fields, like La Puerta are used by Claremont residents, but also represent Claremont when residents of surrounding areas participate in sporting events at our parks. The dirt parking lot is becoming severely rutted and is getting difficult to navigate following various rain storms. This parking is needed for youth sports and needs to be maintained (preferably with pavement) to support different vehicles and for individuals with limited mobility. Additionally, the gopher population and resulting holes at Padua and La Puerta are significant hazards and may result in serious injury to athletes and park visitors using these parks. Please resolve this and repair the fields.

Leigh G

I noted that the replacement timeline for the playground at Jaeger park was well into the future, which would mean that the equipment would be 30 years old before it is replaced. It is already very dated and this timeline seems highly unrealistic if we want kids actually playing on the equipment.

I'd like to underscore the need for lighting at Padua park and also advocate for bathroom updates in Memorial Park - my kids won't use the bathroom there because it is "scary," and I can't really disagree.

The other huge issue that doesn't seem to be addressed here is aging equipment - goals, nets - at Padua, as well as extremely poor field maintenance on the soccer fields which poses real threats to physical safety. I've lost count of how many times my kid has rolled an ankle or fallen on a rock during AYSO games. I'm glad to see this work happening and think that additional budget would help address many of these concerns and allow for more priority projects to happen in a more timely manner.

Amy Carnes

The softball facilities are in need of lights for night games! Many of our girls walk, ride to La Puerta (the main softball facility) but we have no lights so practice times are limited to daylight hours. There are already light poles for soccer, but none of them face the softball fields.

Meg C

Higginbotham Park is in serious need of better safety-approved climbing equipment. The rocks are dangerous for most little children and their grandmothers. It's difficult to see my grandson trying to climb up, and with me not able to help or protect him. The coil horses are pathetic, old and unsafe. The swings are high enough to not be accessible to grandmothers trying to reach up and put a toddler in the seat. (I would imagine the city is trying to prevent teens from using the swings, but really?). This playground needs some major and more colorful, child/toddler friendly climbing structures. The heavy duty metal train is no substitute for this, either. Make Higginbotham safer and more attractive please.

S. Sellers

Dawn Ross

From: Emily McLean [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 4:38 PM
To: Jeremy Swan
Cc: Dawn Ross
Subject: Comment for Park Facilities Improvement Plan

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello!

My name is Emily McLean and I'm a dog trainer and graduate student at CGU. I recently wrote an opinion piece for the Courier about the unfortunate lack of canine access to Claremont parks. I pasted the text below and included a link to the Courier article at the bottom. Have a great week!

The article:

Claremont has a dog problem. With few exceptions, our public parks prohibit canines. I believe that limiting dogs to the city's two "off-leash areas" harms canine welfare and does a tremendous disservice to the entire community.

I'm a grad student at CGU and an avid dog trainer. I compete in obedience competitions with my own dogs and work with clients around Los Angeles. Training dogs brings me so much joy, but it's nearly impossible to do so within Claremont city limits. Dog professionals are an argumentative bunch, but we agree on one point: small dog parks aren't a great idea. I don't even recommend them for social dogs because they encourage unbalanced, stressful play. During healthy canine play, dogs carefully negotiate social dynamics – the chasing dog lets herself to be chased, a big dog goes easy on the puppy he's wrestling. If a dog gets uncomfortable, they disengage and move away.

Claremont's off-leash areas do not promote healthy dog play. In fact, they encourage its antithesis. Chaos ensues when a ton of dogs are corralled into a tiny space, unable to choose their playmate or create distance from uncomfortable situations. I often train dogs outside of the Pooch Park and have seen several fights and countless overwhelmed dogs, unfortunate, but predictable, outcomes for such a park. I don't think we should eliminate dog parks altogether, but our dogs need alternatives.

My own dogs are very social, but we don't use Claremont's off-leash areas due to my personal risk assessment. Many dogs don't enjoy interacting with strange dogs at all. Where can our dogs run, sniff, and play? I instruct my clients to use long leashes on park walks so their dogs can engage in these fulfilling activities while remaining under control. It feels ridiculous to dispense advice that I can't follow in my own neighborhood!

Before I begin formally training dogs with "behavioral issues," I recommend daily strolls through a local park interspersed with sniffing, exploring, and play. The majority of clients report that this dramatically reduces the severity of the problem. Some realize they don't need training at all.

Every day, dogs are surrendered to the shelter where I volunteer because their unmet exercise needs have sparked destructive and even dangerous behaviors. How many dogs would still be in their homes if they had regular access to green spaces?

I acutely understand how out of control dogs can ruin a park for all visitors, but blanket prohibitions do more harm than good. How will dogs and owners ever learn to responsibly use public spaces if they can't access them?

In my experience, a blend of education and enforcement powerfully changes the behavior of dog owners. This observation informs the following proposal:

- Pilot a "leashed dogs allowed" policy in two Claremont parks.
- Deploy education initiatives explaining the importance of abiding by leash and poop scooping laws. This might include hosting events and distributing literature to dog owners; hanging informative signs in the pilot parks; and/or posting engaging content on city social media accounts.

- Aggressively enforce leash and poop scooping laws in the pilot parks. Strict enforcement in the early days will set the right cultural norm around park use: ticketing for first offenses, and allowing offenders to complete an online education course to reduce the cost of their ticket.

A more informed decision on the status of dogs in Claremont's parks can be made after this pilot period. I am happy to support any and all of these efforts with my time and expertise. Dogs can responsibly use public spaces. A robust program of education and enforcement will make Claremont's beautiful parks open to everyone.

Link: <https://claremont-courier.com/opinion/a-solution-to-claremonts-dog-problem-80069/>

Best,
Emily McLean

Dawn Ross

From: Katie Tewell [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 13, 2025 10:57 AM
To: Dawn Ross
Subject: Comment for tonight's PHU committee meeting

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good morning, Dawn,

Below is my comment for this evening's Park, Hillside & Utilities Committee meeting. The comment relates to agenda item 2.

Thank you!
Katie Tewell

Good evening, esteemed members of the Parks, Hillside & Utilities Committee. My name is Katie Tewell, and I have been a resident of Claremont for the last 11 years and am the mother of three young children.

As you may already be aware, a small group of determined citizens organized a little over one year ago to bring attention to and help the city address the very mediocre, outdated, and boring playgrounds in our city. While I'm not sure any of us knew what we were getting ourselves into, Better Claremont Playgrounds (BCP) has spent hundreds of hours in meetings, drafting emails, making phone calls, meeting with playground equipment manufacturers, attending council meetings, creating signs, organizing community outreach events... the list goes on.

While we are encouraged by the impact our group has made, namely, the Lewis Park Playground (set to re-open soon with a beautiful, sustainable, and creative playground design), BCP continues to stress the importance of the broader "big picture" vision that Claremont must have for its parks and playgrounds.

The Park Facilities Improvement Plan you are reviewing tonight is a positive step in addressing the disparities in our parks and playgrounds, however, the current plan appears to be primarily an assessment and inventory of what the city currently has. The plan should also serve as a vision and guiding document for the necessary enhancements and changes our city must make in order to bring our playgrounds and parks to a standard of excellence our residents deserve.

The current iteration of the plan lacks a clear vision, goals, and guiding principles to shape these updates in a meaningful and impactful way. In the materials provided to you tonight (Item 2, page 3) it states, "the goal of the plan is to develop a framework for prioritization and funding of park improvements for the next 10 years." BCP would like the plan to go beyond a funding framework by establishing clear goals that will guide the improvements at each park, ensuring that each space maximizes its full potential within the broader parks system in our city.

For example, we understand that Larkin Park is scheduled to be the next park updated. Pages 22-23 of the draft plan outline the existing amenities, states a few improvements and replacements needed, and then shares the proposed budget rather than a plan for improvements. Could the plan not go a step further? What about a brief visionary statement or goal for this park? Considering Larkin Park playground's proximity to the Joslyn senior center, this presents an excellent opportunity for an intergenerational playground! Why not incorporate this into the plan?

This is just one example, but there are countless additional ways in which this plan can become more impactful—ensuring the City of Claremont truly transforms its playgrounds and parks and becomes a standard of excellence in our region.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Claremont City Council

Claremont City Hall
225 W. Second Street
Claremont, CA 91711

March 13, 2025

Dear Claremont Parks, Hillside, and Utilities Committee,

I would like to begin by expressing my sincere appreciation for the recent construction of the new playground at Lewis Park. The improvements will make a wonderful difference in the community, offering a fresh, exciting space for children and families to enjoy.

However, I am writing to express my concern regarding the current Parks and Recreation Program Improvement Plan. While the assessment of existing playgrounds and parks is a helpful starting point, I am disappointed that the plan does not provide a clear vision or concrete steps for further development. As a community, Claremont deserves more than just an assessment—we need a comprehensive plan that outlines specific actions to create new parks, particularly a flagship park that could serve as a central gathering space for residents of all ages.

The construction of a flagship park would not only benefit our community's physical and mental well-being but also elevate Claremont as a destination city with ample green spaces. A well-planned, expansive park could foster greater social cohesion, host events, and provide a much-needed escape for residents.

I urge the City Council to consider revising the current program to include a long-term plan for creating such spaces. The vision of a flagship park would make Claremont a truly standout community in terms of recreation and family-friendly spaces, offering a place for both relaxation and connection.

Thank you again for the work already done on the Lewis Park playground, and I look forward to hearing about further efforts to improve and expand Claremont's parks and recreation opportunities.