

APPROVED

DEC 15 2022

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

BOARD REPORT

NO. 22-316

DATE December 15, 2022

C.D. 14

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

SUBJECT: LOS ANGELES PLAZA PARK – PROPOSED RENAMING OF A PORTION OF LOS ANGELES PLAZA PARK, TO BE CALLED YAANGNA PARK - CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION FROM THE PROVISIONS OF THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) PURSUANT TO ARTICLE III, SECTION 1, CLASS 11(5) [INSTALLATION OF SIGNS LOCATED ON CITY PROPERTY MANAGED BY A CITY DEPARTMENT WHICH HAS A SIGN POLICY ADOPTED BY ITS BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS], AND CLASS 11(6) [CONSTRUCTION OR PLACEMENT OF MINOR STRUCTURES ACCESSORY TO (APPURTENANT TO) EXISTING COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL OR INSTITUTIONAL FACILITIES] OF CITY CEQA GUIDELINES AND TO ARTICLE 19, SECTION 15311 OF CALIFORNIA CEQA GUIDELINES

B. Aguirre	_____	M. Rudnick	_____
H. Fujita	_____ <i>for</i>	C. Santo Domingo	_____ <i>DF</i>
B. Jackson	_____	N. Williams	_____



 General Manager

Approved X Disapproved _____ Withdrawn _____

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Take the following actions regarding the name of Los Angeles Plaza Park;
 - A. Approve the renaming of that portion of Los Angeles Plaza Park identified in this Report and in Attachment 1 of this Report as “Yaangna Park;
 - B. Authorize the installation of standard Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) wooden park signage consistent with such renaming;

2. Determine that the proposed project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Article III, Section 1, Class 11(5) [Installation of signs located on City property managed by a City department which has a sign policy adopted by its Board of Commissioners] and 11(6) [Construction or placement of minor structures accessory to (appurtenant to) existing commercial, industrial or institutional facilities] of City CEQA Guidelines and to Article 19, Section 15311 of California CEQA Guidelines and direct staff to file a Notice of Exemption (NOE) with the Los Angeles County Clerk;

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3. Authorize RAP's Chief Accounting Employee to prepare a check to the Los Angeles County Clerk in the amount of \$75.00 for the purpose of filing a NOE; and
4. Authorize RAP staff to make technical corrections as necessary to carry out the intent of this Report;

SUMMARY

Los Angeles Plaza Park is located at 125 Paseo De La Plaza, at the southwest corner of Alameda and Los Angeles streets, adjacent to the El Pueblo Historical Monument. Sitting at just 0.80 acre and 34,848 square-feet, the park is within the formal footprint of El Pueblo while being overseen and maintained by RAP.

A portion of Los Angeles Plaza Park that is located east and south of Los Angeles Street, which is comprised of 4 parcels (all with APN 5408010901) and which is identified in Attachment 1 (Subject Park Portion), was formally the location of a statue of Father Junípero Serra and for many years was informally, and unofficially, referred to as "Father Serra Park".

Naming Request

In November of 2019, Mayor Garcetti convened the Mayor's Office Civic Memory Working Group (Working Group) made up of three-dozen members, including historians, artists, architects, preservationists, indigenous leaders, and City officials. In early 2021 the Group issued their report, entitled "Past Due", presenting its findings and recommendations pertaining to this issue, with a significant portion dedicated to exploring the City's relationship with Tongva/Gabrielino tribal leaders and other Indigenous communities. One lengthy roundtable discussion within "Past Due" examined the complex legacy of Father Junípero Serra, and the detrimental role that he and the Catholic missions took on Native lives and communities. With the reemergence of social justice movements across the United States, calls intensified for the removal of statues of Father Junípero Serra from public places. In the summer of 2020, many statues of Father Junípero Serra were either removed from public places or torn down, including one in Los Angeles on June 20, 2020. The Working Group acknowledged that rather than celebrate Father Serra's complicated legacy, an effort should be made to commemorate the history of Native American influence and honor the importance of the park site to Tongva/Gabrielino history and culture.

In response to these recommendations, Mayor Garcetti announced on October 11, 2021 that the City was starting to take initial steps in a broader reparative direction. The Mayor pledged to rename the portion of Los Angeles Plaza Park that housed a statue of Father Junípero Serra in order to address concerns raised in the "Past Due" report.

As a first step in this process, the Mayor's Office conducted targeted outreach with Native leaders to determine an appropriate new name for the park area that would mark its importance to Indigenous communities and to members of the Tongva/Gabrielino community specifically. This

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included ongoing consultation across 2022 with the Native American Indian Commission's executive director, Alexandra Valdes, as well as meetings with the three tribal groups representing the Tongva/Gabrielino community in Los Angeles: with Chairman Anthony Morales and Kimberly Morales Johnson of San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians/Gabrieleno Tongva on May 31, 2022; with Chairman Andrew Salas and Matthew Teutimez of Gabrieleno Band of Mission Indians-Kizh Nation on July 29, 2022; and with Rudy J. Ortega, Jr., Tribal President of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians on Sept. 13, 2022. Tribal leaders suggested renaming the park Yaangna Park, in honor of the original Tongva/Gabrielino settlement located near the park site. This proposed new name is unanimously supported by the three groups of tribal leaders. The Mayor's Office presented an update on this outreach work to the El Pueblo Commission, as an advisory item, on Sept. 8, 2022. The update was further presented to the Native American Indian Commission on Oct. 18, 2022.

Background on the Yaangna Settlement

Six months prior to the establishment of the Los Angeles pueblo in 1781, Spanish Governor Felipe de Neve had sought to develop a relationship with the local native people, according to research by Dr. Harry Kelsey, curator of history at the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History. These people, who would later become known as the Gabrielino, lived in a settlement in the vicinity, named Yaangna.

Yaangna is believed to have been the largest of Gabrielino villages. Although we have no record of the size of its population, it is estimated to have had up to 200 residents. It was an important trading center for the native people of the region. Neve's contact with Yaangna was meant to develop friendly relations with the village before he moved Spanish settlers into its vicinity. He arranged for baptisms of dozens of Yaangna residents and even assumed the role of *padrino* (godparent) for 12 of its children. One couple sponsored by Neve, having been baptized and remarried under the Catholic religion, even assumed the names Felipe de Neve and Felipa de Neve. Dr. Kelsey believes that Neve might have been grooming this couple as a nucleus family around which Yaangna would become a Christian Indian community.

Although the exact site of the settlement has not been definitively established, it is believed that it was marked by a natural landmark. There, not far from the new pueblo of Los Angeles, grew a grand old sycamore tree, believed to be around 300-years-old at the time the Spanish settlers arrived. The towering tree was believed to have been a shady gathering place for Gabrielino councils. It was later named by the Spanish *El Aliso* (The Alder). It long survived the Yaangna village, but, beset by surrounding industrial development, eventually fell to the axe in 1892. Had Yaangna been centered around *El Aliso*, the village would have been located in the Los Angeles Civic Center area, centered at the location of today's Garey Street on-ramp to the southbound 101-freeway.

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Whatever hopes Neve might have had that Yaangna would become a Christian community never came to pass. Later in the year that the Los Angeles pueblo was founded, Neve was replaced by Pedro de Fages, a governor who preferred that Indians be subjugated at the missions. As the nearby pueblo of Los Angeles grew and encroached upon Yaangna, the village was forced to relocate. Increasing numbers of its residents chose or were forced to live at the Mission San Gabriel. It is believed that the village survived longer than other Gabrielino villages because it became a refugee camp. Gabrielino from smaller villages that were disbanded or destroyed by the Spanish joined Yaangna, hoping to avoid the mission. The numbers at Yaangna thus further served as a source of forced manual labor for the nearby pueblo. The Yaangna community and its importance as a center for the Gabrielino withered.

By 1828, with authorization from the Mexican government, French immigrant Jean-Louis Vignes was allowed to purchase the land upon which the remaining Yaangna community resided. He had all remaining Indian residents evicted. The community of Yaangna that had existed in the Los Angeles region for perhaps two to three thousand years came to an abrupt end.

BOARD NAMING POLICY

On June 5, 2013, RAP adopted a Naming Policy, Procedures and Guidelines for Parks and Recreational Facilities (Policy) for the naming of parks, recreation facilities, park amenities, landmarks and other park assets (Report No. 13-161). This Policy enumerates the criteria and guidelines for use when evaluating proposed park names (Attachment 5). Several of the adopted guidelines applicable to this application are as follows:

- The Naming of a park after a major historic event must be based on a direct connection
- between the park and such event
- The Naming engenders a positive public image which does not unduly commercialize the park or recreational facility.
- The proposed name for the park or recreational facility, and/or contributor, must be compatible with the Mission of RAP.
- Parks should not be subdivided for purposes of Naming, unless there are readily-identifiable physical divisions in the park (major roads, waterways, hillsides, etc.) which facilitate or warrant a subdivision; or there exist other compelling reasons for having more than one name connected to a park.

RAP staff has determined that the criteria and guidelines of the Policy have been met.

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CONCLUSION

For all the reasons stated in this Report, RAP staff recommends the approval of the renaming of the Subject Park Portion of Los Angeles Plaza Park as identified in Attachment 1 of this Report to Yaangna Park and installing standard wooden park signage consistent with such renaming.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The proposed Project consists of installation of signs located on City property managed by a City department which has a sign policy adopted by its Board of Commissioners and the construction or placement of minor structures accessory to (appurtenant to) existing institutional facilities.

According to the parcel profile report retrieved November 3, 2022 this area resides in a liquefaction zone. The implementation of this project will not create conditions that could lead to liquefaction. This is a highly developed area where the maintenance and repair of buildings occurs regularly without incident and, as such, this not an unusual circumstance. The project site is in the Los Angeles Plaza Historic District (El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historic District), a City of Los Angeles Historical Cultural Monument (HCM# 64). However, the change in name and installation of a limited number of signs will not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of the park as a historical resource.

This site is not within a coastal, methane, hazardous waste, or borderline zone so there is no reasonable possibility that the project will have a significant effect due to unusual circumstances. No other known projects would involve cumulatively significant impacts, and no future projects would result from the proposed project. As of November 3, 2022, the State Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) (Envirostor at www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov) and the State Water Resources Control Board (SWCB) (Geotracker at <https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/>) are not listed the Project site or any contaminated sites near the Project area (within 500 feet).

According to the Caltrans Scenic Highway Map, there is no scenic highway located within the vicinity of the project or within the project site.

Based on this information, RAP staff recommends that the Board of Recreation and Parks Commissioners (Board) determines that it is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Article III, Section 1, Class 11(5) and Class 11(6), of City CEQA Guidelines and Article 19, Section 15311 of California CEQA Guidelines. RAP Staff will file a Notice of Exemption with the Los Angeles County Clerk upon Board's approval.

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FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The cost to purchase and install the new signage will be paid for by account RAPX1900-304.

This report was prepared by Robert Eastland, Management Assistant, Planning, Maintenance and Construction Branch.

LIST OF EXHIBITS

1. MAPS



LEGEND

- Landbase
- Existing Parks
- Non-RAP
- RAP
- City Limits

**PORCION OF LA PLAZA PARK
PROPOSED TO BE NAMED AS
YAANGNA PARK**

NOTES



SCALE 1: 1,407

Disclaimer: This map is for informational purposes only and relies on data from a variety of sources, which may or may not be accurate or current. The City of Los Angeles assumes no responsibility arising from the use of this map. The map and associated data are provided "as is" without warranty of any kind.

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Printed: 10/05/2021