



Lori Droste
Councilmember District 8

Time Critical Agenda Material

Meeting Date: September 15, 2020

Item Description: Urgency item related to public health and safety in Willard Park

This item is time critical as there are rapidly growing public health and safety concerns in Willard Park. These conditions are particularly impacting recreation areas for children, who have limited opportunities for outdoor play and recreation given current public health orders.



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Consent Calendar
September 15, 2020

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Councilmember Lori Droste and Mayor Arreguin
Subject: Preserving Our Children's Recreation Areas

Recommendation

Request the City Manager to implement the following recommendations for Willard Park and utilize them for other parks where appropriate:

1. Increase nighttime enforcement and enable the police to enforce park rules and ordinances.
2. Consider the presence of needles and feces a Public Health threat and enable the Public Health Department to cordon off areas of encampment for the purpose of clearing the areas of contamination and ensuring the areas are safe for public use.
3. Determine where additional signage is needed to clarify rules regarding camping and park hours, as well as compliance with public health orders regarding COVID, included but not limited to facial coverings.

Background

Unsanitary Conditions at Willard Park

The City of Berkeley strives to be compassionate with all residents, including those in our unhoused community. The City is also committed to ensuring all residents can safely utilize our open spaces and recreation areas. Unfortunately, over the past weeks Willard Park has experienced an increase in problematic and sometimes dangerous behavior and an increase in unsanitary conditions that endanger the health of all those utilizing the park.

Willard Park has a growing community of campers that have taken over several areas of the park that have traditionally been shared spaces for visitors and, in particular, children's recreation and outdoor activities. With the increasing unsafe conditions, numerous parents have expressed deep concern for their children's health and wellbeing, or have stopped using the park altogether. Porta potties are currently located in the park, for example, yet campers continue to relieve themselves in public areas. Last week a resident was assaulted. There have also been complaints of open fires/barbeques at the park. Neighbors to the park have reported increasing rat populations that are drawn to the area because of the ongoing trash accumulation at the park.

The City needs increased patrols in the park and to enforce the existing park rules.

Financial Implications

Staff time

Contact Information

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