




# City of Sierra Madre Agenda Report

*Gene Goss, Mayor*  
*Rachelle Arizmendi, Mayor Pro Tem*  
*John Capoccia, Council Member*  
*Denise Delmar, Council Member*  
*John Harabedian, Council Member*

*Melinda Carrillo, City Clerk*  
*Michael Amerio, City Treasurer*

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

FROM: Elaine I. Aguilar, City Manager 

INITIATED BY: Ryan Baker, Director of Library and Community Services

REVIEWED BY: Elisa C. Cox, Assistant City Manager

DATE: July 12, 2016

**SUBJECT: Kersting Court Renovation Concept and Related Use of Art in Public Places Funding**

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## **SUMMARY**

The Sierra Madre Community Foundation (SMCF) has proposed a community project renovating Kersting Court to the Community Services Commission, which the Commission has approved in concept. SMCF is seeking conceptual approval from the City Council before moving forward with any additional planning. If completed, the Kersting Court renovation will be considered a donation/gift to the City. Furthermore, SMCF is requesting funding through the Art in Public Places fund for sculptural and artistic portions of the project.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Sierra Madre Parks Master Plan outlines multiple items that need to be updated in Kersting Court. These include, but are not limited to, repairing brickwork, installing a monument sign that reads "Sierra Madre", grading the area with new landscaping, and adding additional picnic tables and seating. Additionally, City Council and the Community Services Commission have been discussing the possibility of public art pieces in Kersting Court using Art in Public Places funds.

In May of 2016, the Sierra Madre Community Foundation (SMCF) and other interested community groups presented the Community Services Commission a concept proposal (attached) to renovate Kersting Court. The concept improvements match the Parks Master Plan and also include proposed sculptural and aesthetic elements for which SMCF is requesting a commitment of Art in Public Places funding to support.

This project is not based on the direction Council previously provided to the Community Services Commission regarding Art in Public Places funding, rather it is a new opportunity that has arisen from community organizations for which such funding could be appropriated. The Community Services Commission will continue to look into further art projects as previously directed by Council depending on Council direction for this current proposal.

### **ANALYSIS**

SMCF working with other groups, is proposing to demolish the existing infrastructure in Kersting Court, with the exception of the bell tower and the stained glass kiosk, and replace with a:

- New front corner design
- New retaining walls, irrigation and lighting
- New picnic tables and seating/benches
- Native drought-resistant plants and turf similar to civic center landscaping
- Permanent "holiday" tree
- Pergola

In addition, the groups would install the following possible sculptural/art additions:

- Compass inlay inset within antique cobble interlocking ground pavers. The compass inlay will feature pictures that feature Mount Wilson Trail representing North, the Library for West, and Sierra Vista Park for East, and the Sierra Madre Post Office for South.
- Standing wrought iron compass sculpture
- Sculptural monument sign reading "Sierra Madre" with mountain profiles in stone and wrought iron
- Sculptural wayward signs on a decorated post listing Sierra Madre sights such as E. Waldo Wards, Pinney House, the Wisteria Vine and/or other locations
- Sculptural Stone Benches reminiscent of Lew Watanabe's work

The total estimate of the project is \$110,000.

Several community groups are interested in contributing to the project pending acceptance of the donation of the project to the City. Furthermore, SMCF is requesting Art in Public Places funds for the sculptural/art additions. Further donations may be necessary to complete all work upon final commitments by the currently interested community groups.

### **FINANCIAL REVIEW**

This is volunteer community project that will be considered a donation/gift to the City and will address the much needed renovation of Kersting Court. As such, there should be no cost to the City's General Fund or CIP funds. SMCF and interested groups are

requesting Art in Public Places funds in the currently estimated amount of \$27,175 to complete the proposed sculptural/art additions:

<i>Estimated sculptural/art costs for project:</i>	
Ground compass art inset within pavers	\$16,950
Standing compass sculpture	\$ 975
Monument sign sculpture	\$ 5,250
Wayward sign sculpture	\$ 800
Sculptural stone benches (four)	<u>\$ 3,200</u>
Estimated total request:	\$27,175

The current balance of the Art in Public Places fund is \$57,714. Should the City Council approve this project in concept, there would be \$30,539 remaining in the Art in Public Places fund.

The project and project component costs are provided by the SMCF and are currently only estimates.

#### **PUBLIC NOTICE PROCESS**

This item has been noticed through the regular agenda notification process. Copies of the report are available via the City's website at [www.cityofsierramadre.com](http://www.cityofsierramadre.com), at the City Hall public counter, and the Sierra Madre Public Library.

#### **ALTERNATIVES**

1. The City Council may approve the project proposal in concept and direct the Community Services Commission to obtain working plans and renderings from SMCF and volunteer groups as well as approve the commitment of Art in Public Places funding for sculptural/art components of the project at an amount not to exceed \$30,000 pending approval of each individual art piece.
2. The City Council may approve the project proposal in concept and direct the Community Services Commission to obtain working plans and renderings from SMCF and volunteer groups as well as approve the commitment of Art in Public Places funding for sculptural/art components of the project at an alternate not to exceed amount pending approval of each individual art piece.
3. The City Council may approve the project proposal in concept and direct the Community Services Commission to obtain working plans and renderings from SMCF and volunteer groups but deny the use of Art in Public Places funding for the project.
4. Reject the project in concept including any use of Art in Public Places funding.

5. Request the Sierra Madre Community Foundation and volunteer groups explore other options for the concept.

**COMMITTEE / COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

The Community Services Commission made the recommendation that Council move forward with the Kersting Court Project and use Art in Public Places funds to assist with the public art pieces integrated into the design.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staffs' recommendation is to approve the project in concept as well as to approve a commitment of Art in Public Places funding for sculptural/art components. Staff further recommends that the Community Services Commission work with SMCF and other interested groups to obtain plans and costs for subsequent review.

Attachments (2):

1. Parks Master Plan – Kersting Court
2. Kersting Court Concept Drawings



## **MINI-PARKS**

### **KERSTING COURT – the corner of Baldwin Avenue and Sierra Madre Boulevard**

#### **BACKGROUND**

Shaded by a couple of well-established California pepper trees, Kersting Court, one of the City's two mini-parks, is tucked into the generally commercial area at the corner of Baldwin Avenue and Sierra Madre Boulevard. The largest of the pepper trees located on the NE corner of the park and estimated to be over 100 years old was destroyed by termites and a windstorm in December 2011.

The centerpiece of Kersting Court is the bell tower, dedicated on October 27, 1974. The bell tower houses the school bell from the 1885 schoolhouse that once sat on the site.



#### **FACILITIES AND AMENITIES (SEE APPENDIX 3)**

In addition to being a bustling commercial area, Kersting Court is the venue for numerous community, family, and youth events, as well as seasonal displays. Facilities include several park benches; two picnic tables; a community information kiosk; a Chamber of Commerce flowerbed; a brick patio; open lawn space; bike racks; two drinking fountains (one for dogs and one for their owners); and a community flag pole. Also in close proximity, informational banners span Baldwin Avenue, advertising upcoming community events; and handicapped and other parking is available. The banners and the information kiosk on Kersting Court are popular ways for residents and visitors to receive information regarding City programs and events.

#### **PARK ACTIVITIES**

**Winter Events:** In November, Kersting Court is the site of the yearly Chamber of Commerce Sierra Madre Dickens Village event. In the past, this event has included horse and buggy rides, sledding, caroling, tree lighting, a visit from Santa Claus, and, of course, lots of good shopping, and food. In celebration of the winter holiday season, the Chamber of Commerce, community churches, and the City provide a variety of activities in Kersting Court. A holiday display, consisting of a nativity scene, snowman, menorah, lighted tree, and other seasonal items, is showcased in Kersting Court. The festivities usually begin in early December with a visit from Santa Claus. Santa has also been known to visit Kersting Court on Christmas Eve, distributing stockings to all the children (an event sponsored by the Sierra Madre Fire Department). The weekend before Christmas, Kersting Court is also the site of a candlelight walk with caroling.

**Spring Events:** During the spring, the Wistaria Festival Committee, in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce, the City, and other volunteers, hosts a celebration in honor of the Wistaria Vine. In 1994, the celebration marked the Centennial birthday of the "Lavender Lady." Sierra Madre's Wistaria Vine is listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as the largest blooming plant. Around Kersting Court (and in Memorial Park) the Wistaria Festival typically features such events as an Art & Garden Fair, a student art sale at the nearby Creative Arts Group, and live music. On Friday evenings, beginning usually in May, family movies, displayed on a large, outdoor screen, are shown in Kersting Court. Families are encouraged to bring chairs and blankets. Food is available from local restaurants and merchants.

**Summer Events:** First held in 1908, the Mount Wilson Trail Race is the second oldest trail race in the country. At that time, runners raced to Mount Wilson, rested 1/2 hour, then raced back down. The race was held sporadically from that first year until the late 1940s and early 1950s, when it was abandoned completely. In autumn of 1965 it was revived and has grown over the years to its present format. Sierra Madre sponsors the May event, offset through revenue collected for race registration. Organized by the volunteer Trail Race Committee, the current race is 8.6 miles in length and open to all participants in all age categories. On the day of the yearly race, Kersting Court is the site of various booths and activities. Past activities have included the Kids' Art show, beer garden; live video feed, food truck(s), and the Kidz' Fun Run. On the evening prior to the race, Kersting Court is the site of the Pre-race Pasta Load dinner.

The 4th of July Firecracker Fun Run, which begins in Kersting Court, was held for the first time in 2011. The 5K event is open to runners of all ages and runs a loop along the Fourth of July Parade route.

**Fall Events:** In fall, Kersting Court plays host to the annual Wine Jazz Walk, benefiting the City of Hope. The event includes a VIP Wine Garden, world-class jazz bands, silent auction, antique cars, and a stroll through historic downtown Sierra Madre, sampling fine wines and local cuisine. During the Halloween season, community fun kicks off with the Downtown Window Painting contest, typically held the weekend before Halloween. Youths compete in teams of up to four contestants, decorating the windows of downtown Sierra Madre businesses with their most creative Halloween designs. Painting takes place over Friday and Saturday with awards presented in Kersting Court on Saturday afternoon. On Halloween, youth enjoy trick-or-treating in downtown Sierra Madre as business owners open their doors. Kersting Court marks the start of the Halloween parade along Sierra Madre Boulevard. The parade is led by the Sierra Madre Fire Department to the Memorial Park Band Shell, where a costume contest is held, with prizes awarded to the top three costumes in each of the age categories.

### **CURRENT CONDITIONS/NEEDS**

One of the pepper trees had to be removed because of termite damage. A non-damaged portion of the tree trunk was placed in the same location as a memorial to the original tree.

There is termite and/or other wood damage to the kiosk, the bell tower, and possibly the remaining pepper trees.

Information in the information kiosk is often outdated.  
The information board in the kiosk is falling apart.

Residents are unaware of the purpose or history of the bell tower.

Bricks are settling near the bell tower.

There is no obvious provision for recycling.

There are not enough bike racks.

More picnic tables or bench seating would encourage increased usage.

As with all the City's parks and facilities, on-site monument signage, and in-town directional signage are lacking or in disrepair.

### **GOALS AND PRIORITIES**

As the "gateway" to Sierra Madre and the center of the business district, this mini-park welcomes guests to the City, generates a gathering place in the downtown shopping district, and contains items of historical significance. The goals of the Committee are to highlight the City's small-town character, increase utilization, and provide timely and relevant information to visitors and guests (see Appendix 6).

#### **Level I Priorities**

Termites have been a major problem in Kersting Court and in 2012 one of the pepper trees had to be removed because of damage. It appears that the bell tower and the kiosk may also have some damage from termites or wood rot or both. A termite and/or engineering or other safety inspection should be conducted on both the kiosk and the bell tower in order to be certain that they are both structurally sound.

Replace damaged wood at bell tower and kiosk.

Fix the settling bricks next to the bell tower (consider replacing bricks with pavers like those used at the library).

Keep the information in the kiosk current and attractively presented. Determine the responsible parties for maintaining the information.

#### **Level II Priorities**

Place a monument sign (i.e., Welcome to Sierra Madre), similar to the one on Sierra Madre

Boulevard at Michillinda, or the one at Bailey Canyon, on the southeast corner of Kersting Court. The City could sponsor a competition for the sign, or solicit donations from businesses and/or community organizations and could include “sponsors” on the sign (see Appendix 5).

After the stump is removed (see Level I above), grade the area where the pepper tree stump currently sits. Add new landscaping, and picnic tables and/or benches, with some shade trees or other covering in that area (see Appendix 6).

Replace the kiosk with a more durable material such as stone. Keep the stained glass inlays as part of the kiosk.

Replace the information board in the kiosk as the current one is falling apart. A digital display, containing a downtown business directory and other points of interest is desired.

Add more bike racks.

### **Level III Priorities**

Create signage detailing the history of the bell tower. The City could obtain funding for this from private sources, such as a fund-raising activity by children.

Install a second flag pole in Kersting Court specifically for the City’s flag.

## **MILTON AND HARRIET GOLDBERG RECREATION AREA - 171 South Sunnyside Avenue**

### **BACKGROUND**

In December 2006, the Sierra Madre City Council approved the purchase of an undeveloped vacant lot at 171 South Sunnyside for a community passive park. The property is approximately 9,479 square feet. It is bordered by a home on Ramona to the west, Ramona Avenue to the north, Sunnyside to the east and another vacant parcel to the south. The lot had long been identified as a potential passive public park as far back as the 1973 General Plan. For many



years, in fact decades, the property owners, Milton and Harriet Goldberg (Mr. Goldberg was a former Parks and Recreation Commissioner and youth advocate), allowed neighborhood children to play in the lot. The City agreed as terms of the sale to name the park after the owners.



































