

July 5, 2022

Recreation and Parks Commissioners
[Transmitted by email to RAP Commissioners]

Re: Agenda item 22-188, Meeting of July 7, 2022

Honorable Recreation and Parks Commissioners:

The Neighborhood Council of Westchester-Playa del Rey (NCWP) is an elected body representing over sixty-five thousand constituents. We learned on Friday, July 1, 2022, that our Council Member, Mike Bonin, has requested a permit for Safe Parking in the parking lot next to the ballfields and recreation pool in Westchester Park. We do not know the details of this request because the link to Item 22-188 for the RAP Commissioners meeting of July 7, 2022, is not working.

The NCWP strongly opposes the granting of a permit for Safe Parking in Westchester Park. We have received hundreds of letters from our constituents opposing a Safe Parking program in Westchester Park, and we receive complaints from constituents about the Safe Parking program nearly every day. We ask that you deny the permit request for the following reasons:

The Chief Administrative Officer, in his report of August 10, 2021, determined Westchester Park is not feasible for Safe Parking because it is used by thousands of people. (https://clkrep.lacity.org/onlinedocs/2021/21-0350_misc_08-10-21.pdf) Westchester Park is the only park in Westchester, which has over 40,000 residents. The park also serves many people from Inglewood and other inland communities, who use and enjoy all park facilities and recreation programs. The City of Los Angeles is “park poor”, meaning there is a shortage of park space. Westchester Park is one of equity and inclusion. Westchester Park is a “recreation center” park that has four lighted multiplex ball fields, a recreation pool, picnic/barbecue areas and many other facilities.

The Safe Parking program near the ballfields, recreation pool, and a picnic/barbecue area (12 tables) uses 25 of the 50 parking spaces in that lot, and these 25 spaces are fenced off and not available for use other than for Safe Parking. The fenced lot sits empty most of the day. The fenced in Safe Parking program area is nearly empty many nights, and has at most 10 cars, based on observations of NCWP members and community members.

Many vehicle dwellers who do not want to follow the rules of the Safe Parking program live in their vehicles outside the fenced Safe Parking area in the same parking lot. Between Safe Parking (25 spaces) and vehicle dwellers in that lot (8 to 10 spaces), there are only about 15 to 17 parking spaces available for pool users. The recreation pool, the ballfields, and the picnic areas need all 50 spaces in that lot, and many more. Later this summer, when the renovation of the ballfields is complete, there will be a critical need for parking spaces in the park. The streets that are adjacent

to the park (Lincoln Avenue and Manchester Avenue) have heavy and fast traffic and it is not safe for park users to cross either of those streets for street parking.

Our community is concerned about the safety threat to children and seniors using the park presented by homeless campers in the park, many of whom have severe mental illness and drug addiction. This week, a homeless man went on to the tennis courts in the park saying the 12-year-old girls who were taking lessons on the court wanted to have sex with him. The next day, he jumped a fence onto another court where young girls were taking lessons, and talked about having sex with them. A couple weeks ago, a homeless woman grabbed a clipboard of an elderly woman at the courts and yelled and screamed at her. Over the past couple years, there have been hundreds of incidents of homeless people indecently exposing themselves to children, harassing and attacking children in the restrooms, following children, using IV drugs in public, and more.

The NCWP supports Safe Parking programs in general. However, we strongly oppose the use of any parking lot in Westchester Park for a Safe Parking program because it uses precious parking spaces and it attracts homeless people who live in the park full time.

The safety of children and seniors is of utmost concern to the NCWP and to our community. We believe that having homeless interventions in our public park is inconsistent with public safety and poses a risk to park users. Westchester Park is the only park in the City with a Safe Parking program.

LAX will have 50 spaces of Safe Parking beginning this summer, approximately two miles from Westchester Park. The eight or so vehicle dwellers who use the Safe Parking program at the park may park at LAX Safe Parking instead.

Based on the foregoing, we respectfully ask that you deny the permit request for Safe Parking.

Respectfully,

Paula Gerez
President, Neighborhood Council of Westchester / Playa

cc- Mike Bonin, CD 11 Councilmember