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Residents gather on rainy Saturday to work together on Two Parks

Submitted by Grace Dixon



Photo Scientific Art Studio

The early morning chill and constant rainfall on Jan. 20 did not dampen the neighborhood's collaboration on two park designs. Residents age 0-85 years joined together in the spirit of mutual respect and shared love for Leigh Creekside Park and Gazebo Park.

City Parks Director Jonathan Katayanagi welcomed the large crowd into a 600-square-foot tent, and more neighbors gathered outside under umbrellas. Scientific Art Studio (SAS), the design team for these two projects, began the workshop with Creative Director Ron Holthuysen.

SAS designed the artful playgrounds at San Francisco Zoo, Oakland Zoo, Bay Area Discovery Museum Lookout Cove, and more. As raindrops tapped nonstop overhead, Holthuysen invited members of the public to share their hopes for the two parks. He emphasized the studio's

preference for natural-looking play environments and natural materials, a sentiment shared by key stakeholders and the community. Members of the public then offered constructive feedback and ideas, including a request that East Bay Regional Parks District repair the adjacent connecting trail.

After more than 10 years, the key stakeholders agreed that a small front section of Leigh Creekside Park, between the pathway and Moraga Boulevard, may be redesigned as a nature-inspired playscape for children up to 4 years old. They also agreed that the larger, active play environment for 5- to 8-year-olds will shift to a creekside portion of the Gazebo parking lot.

One 85-year-old park neighbor said, "I think change is inevitable and I have no problem with what is going on. I think it is wonderful. I think it will be a better thing. One of the things that never changes is change." The workshop concluded with SAS's Jon Betthausen and Xilou Wang distributing dot stickers for audience members to place on the displayed play element images they preferred from other SAS projects.

Both properties are city-owned, but these designs require community donations. All Ages Recreation Downtown (AARD) is a Lafayette-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit actively fundraising for these two new park designs. The deadline to raise the remaining \$50,000 needed for Phase 1 is quickly approaching this October. To make a tax-deductible donation or to volunteer to help, visit allagesplay.org.

Mayor Gina Dawson, Council Member Carl Anduri, East Bay Regional Park District's Dee Rosario, and Lafayette's Parks, Trails, and Recreation Commission also attended the workshop. The Community Foundation of Lafayette and All Ages Recreation Downtown brought children's activities, multiple tents, and seven teen volunteers to help kids play and craft.

The second parks design workshop date is to be determined. To stay informed, sign up at? www.lovelafayette.org/two-parks

to receive email updates from the City of Lafayette.

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