

A Moment in Redondo Beach History

As voted at the September 18, 2019 regular meeting of the Redondo Beach Historical Commission a brief item of Redondo Beach historical interest would be included as part of our Commission meetings.

FRANCIS HOPKINS WILDERNESS PARK

Located on the corner of Camino Real and Prospect, this 11 acre park is unique to our community. It is named after Francis E. Hopkins, who served Redondo Beach as City Manager from 1954-1973. Historically, it was one of 16 missile sites that were part of the Nike Missile Defense system that protected Los Angeles during the Cold War. Nike missiles were designed to intercept fast-moving objects in flight. According to Wikipedia, there was no evidence of launchers at the Redondo Beach location. However, according to the Los Angeles Times, the location was used as a radar-tracking site. The park sits atop the highest point of the El Segundo sand dunes and, before the city was formed, was used by the Chowigna Indians as a look-out place.

The site was initially opened as a missile base in 1956 and was out of service by 1963. In 1971, the Department of Interior transferred the land to Redondo Beach for \$1, on the condition that the land be developed as a public recreation area. Wilderness Park opened to the public in 1977.

Sources: City of Redondo Beach; Old Redondo; Daily Breeze (4/2/09); Los Angeles Times (9/15/01; 4/17/92); Wikipedia ("Chowigna, California"; "Nike Missile Sites").

Library Director Vinke stated he would like to attend one of the meetings, if possible.

M. MEMBER ITEMS AND REFERRALS TO STAFF

Motion by Commissioner Maroko, seconded by Commissioner Lang, to agendaize having Wilderness Park designated as a Historic Landmark for the next Public Amenities Commission meeting.

Motion carried 6-0. Commissioner Caldwell was absent.

Commissioner Maroko mentioned the framed Presidential Letters and wondered why they are not in the museum and requested a follow up.

In reply to Library Director Vinke's question regarding Wilderness Park, Commissioner Maroko offered a brief history of the topic; referenced existing materials and offered to forward them to Library Director Vinke.

Commissioner Maroko asked about museum metrics and Library Director Vinke referenced existing metrics for the library that might be applied to the museum and discussed working with staff to refine the process including training docents.

Commissioner Maroko announced a Holiday Celebration at the Morrell House on Saturday; mentioned an educational display in the library for Charter Day on January 19th; referenced an Arcadia book on Redondo Beach sold through Community Services regarding sales at the museum and asked about money budgeted for a Historical Researcher and about a Park Ranger program and the status of the Vilarino plaque.

Commissioner Lang talked about the Recreation and Parks Commission Park Ranger Subcommittee; reported meeting with Deputy Community Services Director Orga; stated that no conclusions were reached and noted the Commission subsequently, dissolved. Regarding the Vilarino plaque, she reported receiving an email from Cultural Arts Manager Margolis but there is nothing new to report.

Commissioner Galassi asked about the status of recruitment for a pickleball consultant to complete the CEQA study and requested updating the website.

Commissioner McCauley requested an update on speed mitigation efforts at Alta Vista Park and suggested agendaizing the matter of the Park Ranger.

Chair Yousufzai thanked the Recreation and Parks Department for helping his family hold an event at Alta Vista Park; talked about discussions had by the Park Ranger Subcommittee prior to consolidation of the various Commissions including adding an enforcement component to the position and expressed interest in carrying the conversation forward to a future Commission agenda including the possibility of re-

From: **Ron Maroko** 365ronaldo@gmail.com
Subject: Re: Wilderness Park Historic Designation
Date: February 19, 2025 at 5:12 PM
To: Marc Wiener Marc.Wiener@redondo.org
Cc: Dana Vinke Dana.Vinke@redondo.org

Thank you. Let me know if you need/want assistance.

On Feb 19, 2025, at 2:50 PM, Marc Wiener <Marc.Wiener@redondo.org> wrote:

Hi Ron,

My department will prepare the staff report. Please work with Dana on determining a date for when this will be heard.

Thanks,

Marc Wiener, AICP
Community Development Director
310.697.3185

Marc.wiener@redondo.org

We value and welcome your feedback! Please take our short survey so that we can understand how to better serve you ([click here](#)).

-----Original Message-----

From: Ron Maroko <365ronaldo@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2025 2:07 PM
To: Marc Wiener <Marc.Wiener@redondo.org>
Cc: Dana Vinke <Dana.Vinke@redondo.org>
Subject: Re: Wilderness Park Historic Designation

CAUTION: Email is from an external source; Stop, Look, and Think before opening attachments or links.

We voted to agendize it at our December meeting. I was under the impression that you were going to speak on the process when it comes to our meeting and/or help in drafting the staff report, so that it covers the important components in what gets sent to the council.

Dana: I can draft or help draft the staff report for this and the other two matters that we voted to agendize. Let me know who will be signing off on the staff report for each element so I can work with them.

Ron Maroko

On Feb 19, 2025, at 12:14 PM, Marc Wiener <Marc.Wiener@redondo.org> wrote:

Hi Ron,

I confirmed with the CM that the proper process would be for Public Amenities Commission to make a recommendation to the City Council to pursue the historic landmarking (local and State) of the Wilderness Park. I suggest that the Chair coordinate with Dana on getting this scheduled for a future agenda.

Marc Wiener, AICP
Community Development Director
310.697.3185
Marc.wiener@redondo.org

We value and welcome your feedback! Please take our short survey so that we can understand how to better serve you ([click here](#)).

-----Original Message-----

From: Marc Wiener
Sent: Wednesday, February 5, 2025 11:49 AM
To: Ron Maroko <365ronaldo@gmail.com>
Subject: RE: Wilderness Park Historic Designation

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: William Meeker, Planning Director

SUBJECT: **Vincent Park**
Request for City Council authorization for landmark designation of a park owned by the City of Redondo Beach

RECOMMENDATION:

The Planning Department recommends that the City Council:

1. Authorize the Mayor to sign an Owner's Affidavit, on behalf of the City of Redondo Beach, consenting to the filing of an application for a Landmark Designation for a historic park (Vincent Park) located at the intersection of Vincent Street and Vincent Park.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Planning Department has received an application and petition request from members of the community for landmark designation of Vincent Park greenspace located at the center of the street circle of Vincent Park and Vincent Street, to the east of Redondo Union High School. The Municipal Code requires that all such requests, at any location within the City, be authorized by the property owner through an Owner's Affidavit. This site is on city property and is owned by the City of Redondo Beach. Council authorization for the Landmark Application is therefore requested. Although the Mayor has the authority to sign an application affidavit for City property, this historic designation application merits consideration by the full Council before proceeding.

BACKGROUND:

The park's surrounding residents have recommended that the City Council nominate the greenspace inside Vincent Park as a local landmark (attached application and map). Nomination of an historic resource as a landmark can only be made by application of the property owner, or in this case, the City. Realizing that historic preservation somewhat restricts the property in that changes must be reviewed by the Preservation Commission, and in order to

ensure that the Council is kept fully informed of restrictions on City-owned property, City Council consent is necessary for this application to proceed. This is an opportunity for the City Council to set a positive example to other owners of historic property, in stepping forward to designating City property as an historic landmark.

The Planning Department has declared the Landmark Application incomplete, pending consent from the City of Redondo Beach as the property owner. At this time, the Council is requested to authorize the Mayor to sign the Owner's Affidavit accompanying the application so that it may be scheduled for a public hearing before the Preservation Commission. By authorizing the Mayor to sign the Owner's Affidavit, the Council is not approving the landmark designation, but is merely consenting to the nomination of the property as a historic landmark. The application will then be forwarded to the Preservation Commission for formal consideration. The Preservation Commission will hold a public hearing on the landmark application, which will allow for further public comment on the historic nature or worthiness of preservation.

Although the petition also asks for protection of the surrounding residential neighborhood, the only way to accommodate the request is for the property owners to gather together and ask for a historic district by filling out a district application, and receiving owner authorization from 100% of the owners for historic district designation. That application has not been completed at this time, and is therefore not part of this request.

In order to be eligible for consideration as a landmark, an historic resource must be at least 50 years old and meet criteria for designation as specified in the Historic Resources Preservation Ordinance. An historic resource is defined as "any improvement, building, structure, landscape, feature, site, place or area of scientific, aesthetic, educational, cultural, architectural or historic significance to the citizens of the City."

Vincent Park was originally designed in 1887 by William Hammond Hall, the civil engineer who prepared the plan for the original townsite of Redondo Beach. Constructed before 1890, Vincent Park reflects special elements of the City and South Bay's cultural and development history as part of the original townsite development, and is an example of historic park design.

The park site was designed and located to generate interest from the Chautauqua in Southern California. The Chautauqua Assembly was an organized nationwide learning movement that provided educational programs for people not able to participate in traditional higher education. In the late 1800's, a real estate boom was taking place in Redondo Beach, and civic leaders were looking for additional attractions to help the city grow. City boosters knew having a Chautauqua Assembly building in Redondo Beach would generate tourism and residential growth in the area. In fact, boosters attempted to attract the Chautauqua by offering large sections of land for use by the group near the city's downtown.

The unique oval shape, location and design of Vincent Park are a result of the promoters' efforts to attract the Chautauqua group to Redondo Beach. Keeping in line with the learning philosophy, Hall's subdivision plan gave Vincent Park a unique design that eventually shaped the surrounding streets and blocks. Chautauqua learning included conferences held in park settings; thus Vincent Park was designed as a central gathering place for members and events. The Chautauqua used an oil lamp design as their symbol and called it the "lamp of learning." The design of Vincent Park and the surrounding streets on the City's first map in 1887 incorporates a "lamp like" configuration as an attraction for the Chataqua members. Vincent Park is the center of the "lamp of learning."

In addition, names of local and national leaders in the Chautauqua movement (such as Vincent, Fleming and Spencer) served as street names for areas surrounding the park. The park's name honors the movement's founder, John Heyl Vincent. Lastly, the popularity of the Chautauqua movement was so large during this period that part of Pacific Coast Highway was called Chautauqua Avenue, as is also noted on the first map of the city.

The park's unique location represents an established and familiar visual feature and landmark of the neighborhood and City. Located where Vincent Street meets the oval street of Vincent Park, the neighborhood-serving greenspace serves as a focal point for the community in surrounding blocks.

In addition to local significance, the park may also be eligible for listing in the National Register and/or the California Register because: it is associated with events (the Chautauqua

movement) that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history and cultural heritage; and, the design represents the work of an important creative individual, William Hammond Hall, the California State Engineer who also designed Golden Gate Park.

In terms of improvements, the City recently installed new play equipment on the south section of Vincent Park. There are approximately 25 mature trees scattered throughout the oval shaped park. Aside from the children's play equipment, the park is a passive open space with slightly sloping grass areas. The open space is approximately 130 feet wide and 465 feet long. Vincent Street and parallel sidewalk improvements run through the center of the park. Vincent Park, a loop street, also surrounds the exterior edge of the park oval.

Staff is requesting that council recognize the unique shape and history of the park as an historic site. The park's unique oval shape, cultural history and age appear to meet requirements for landmark designation.

COORDINATION:

This landmark designation was suggested by the Preservation Commission after interest from local residents. The Department of Recreation and Community Services was consulted and supports this historic site designation.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact resulting from designation of Vincent Park as an historic site.

SUBMITTED BY:



Teresa Gianos
Associate Planner

APPROVED BY:



William Meeker
Planning Director

Attachments:

Landmark Application for Designation

Summary of Chautauqua History

Sections from City's Historic Context Statement, 1995

Sections from "Old Redondo"

Article from 1992 Centennial Magazine

Beach Reporter Article on Chautauqua and Vincent Park, July 15, 1999

Photographs of Vincent Park

CITY OF REDONDO BEACH

APPLICATION FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION

For Office Use Only

| |
|------------------------------------|
| Date Application Submitted: 4/6/99 |
| Date Accepted: |
| Accepted by: |



Application is hereby made to the Preservation Commission of the City of Redondo Beach for designation of the herein described historic resource as a landmark pursuant to Chapter 4, Title 10 of the Redondo Beach Municipal Code.

PROPERTY IDENTIFICATION:

Street Address: VINCENT PARK

Legal Description (lot, block, tract): -

Assessor's Parcel Number: -

DESIGNATED CONTACT PERSON(S):

Owner of Record: CITY OF REDONDO BEACH

Address: 415 DIAMOND STREET

Phone No. (Residence) _____ (Business) 372 1171

Authorized Agent (if any): _____

Address: _____

Phone No. (Residence) _____ (Business) _____

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED LANDMARK:

Type and use of building (residential, commercial, etc.): N/A

Type of construction (wood frame, masonry, etc.): N/A

Architectural style: BAROQUE SHAPED GREENSPACE

Year main structure was built (indicate factual or estimated): INITIATED 1887

Listed in Redondo Beach Historic Resources Survey (yes or no): NO

If yes, indicate rating: _____

Other information (provide any useful additional detail regarding the proposed landmark's architectural style, history, etc.):

Over 110 years ago Captain Ainsworth, known as the "father of Redondo Beach," and the Dominguez sisters laid out the original land tract of Redondo Beach in 1887. (See Exhibit A.) This is the land tract and street layout that we still use to this day. Notice that Vincent Park is one of the few remaining features of Redondo Beach still intact.

Vincent Park was created as a baroque-shaped greenspace to be the hub of the city and also the center of the base of the *Lamp of Learning*, clearly seen in this 1887 land tract.

During the 1960's the Redondo Union High School, originally located at the current intersection of Pacific Coast Highway and Diamond Street, expanded eastward to Prospect Avenue, destroying the northern half of the *Lamp of Learning* and abutting itself to the northern edge of Vincent Park. (See Exhibit B.)

With growing concern over additional school expansion, not only into Vincent Park but also into the residential district surrounding the park, we propose that Vincent Park be designated as a landmark of Redondo Beach, along with the residential neighborhood that encompasses the park. To preserve this historically significant feature and to ensure that future generations may enjoy the benefits of Vincent Park, as was intended by the city's founders over 110 years ago, please help us (see attached petition) in the designation of Vincent Park as a city landmark.