

NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

RE: **RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF ALDERS** Approving the acceptance of \$44,200 from the State of Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program for improvements to Cherry Ann Park in partnership with the Urban Resources Initiative, Inc. (Director of Parks, Recreation, and Trees)

REPORT: 1534-06

ADVICE: Approval

BACKGROUND

Until three years ago, Cherry Ann Park was a derelict dumping site overgrown with invasive vegetation, fenced off, and considered dangerous. Without appropriate park access, this left over 90 children who live in the neighborhood to use the street as playground.

Over the past two years, community visioning meetings were held with the Urban Resources Initiative (URI) and the City landscape architect to develop a park site plan with neighborhood input. Beaver Ponds Park and the Cherry Ann site are part of the Greater New Haven Harbor Watershed Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership, one of the inaugural sites of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) Urban Refuge Initiative. Through this effort, a strong set of partners including the USFWS, URI, Common Ground, Audubon Connecticut, the New Haven Parks Department, and the Long Island Sound Study are working to create a matrix of “urban oases” at schools, parks, and urban greenspaces across the city. With continued support from the City, a portion of the park has been transformed to include an “urban oasis” for wildlife habitat, installation of water, electricity, two play structures, a fishing platform, and a very rough, crushed asphalt, walking loop. Alongside this work, community volunteers, and students from both the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies and Common Ground High School have also planted 49 trees and 48 shrubs.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The proposed project is the next phase of a long-term commitment to restoring this site. The project will complete portions of the Master Plan for Cherry Ann Park developed by the City’s landscape architect. The project will restore and enhance public access to approximately five acres of city park land, and create a more effective access for the Newhallville community to the 109 acres of Beaver Ponds Park. Specific project elements include:

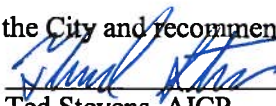
- *A 1/4 mile (1096 linear feet) handicapped accessible nature and exercise trail, making a loop throughout the park.* This trail will traverse near the Urban Oasis bird habitat garden. The path will allow residents to explore wooded areas and the park’s pond and provide access to playgrounds. The stone dust surface of the walking loop will replace an existing crushed asphalt surface that is broken through with invasive vegetation including Phragmites.
- An acre of restored habitat through removal of dense invasive vegetation by community volunteers and Yale Forestry students at the east end of the park that currently blocks sight-lines into the park that has created safety concerns and thus reduced park access
- *New entrance spur path from eastern side of park (263 linear feet by 5 feet wide, 3/8” stone dust) connected to the nature loop trail.*
- *New benches and entrance signage.*
- *Newly restored habitat.* Planting of additional trees, shrubs, and perennial flowers by community volunteers and high school interns to create an inviting space as well as improve aesthetics, wildlife habitat, and overall environmental quality.

The match for the grant will be achieved through in-kind staff time, \$7,500 in capital improvements for FY 2018, and in-kind time from URI.

ADVICE

The Commission finds the Resolution in the best interest of the City and recommends approval.

ADOPTED: August 16, 2017
Leslie Radcliffe
Acting Chair

ATTEST: 
Ted Stevens, AICP
Planner II