

Measure C may thwart park plan

Huntington OKs high-intensity proposal

By Jeffrey Miller

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HUNTINGTON BEACH — Proponents of Measure C hope to use it to scuttle an ambitious development plan for the city's Central Park.

Measure C was the 1990 charter amendment that requires voter approval before the city can lease public parks and beaches for commercial development.

The City Council voted 4-2 Monday night in favor of a Central Park Land Use Master Plan that called for "high-intensity" development of the park's southern area, near Ellis Avenue and Golden West Street. High-intensity or active development could include youth sports facilities, a golf course or even a bowling alley.

Under the terms of Measure C, a specific plan for the park must be approved by voters. Residents who favored more low-intensity or passive areas — those featuring trees, open space and walking trails — said the council-approved plan is doomed to defeat.

"All the surveys that everyone has taken regarding Central Park say the same thing — over 50 percent of the people want the

park to be passive," said Dave Sullivan, president of the citizens group, Huntington Beach Tomorrow, and a member of a task force appointed by the council to study the issue.

Council members who supported the more intense development plan said they are not worried about being overruled by voters because residents want more baseball and soccer fields.

"I'll bet you if we went to (a) Measure C (vote) and started talking about youth sports complexes, it would be overwhelmingly passed," Councilman Don MacAllister said.

Council members Grace Winchell and Peter Green opposed the higher-development plan.

"I really feel that Central Park historically was created to be an oasis in a metropolitan and ever-growing area," Winchell said.

The plan voted on by the council was not the one recommended by the city staff or the one approved by the city's Community Services Commission. The plan originally submitted to the council called for less intensive development. For instance, the

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FROM 1 southern area of the park was designated for medium-intensity uses, such as playing fields, without any buildings.

However, some members of the Central Park task force complained they had voted 4-3 in favor of a plan that called for greater development, but the proposal was squelched by the Community Services Commission. The task force later voted 4-3 for a plan with reduced development potential.

A task force member who

changed his vote to favor less development said he did so based on assurances by city staff that the revised plan was unanimously supported by the other members of the group.

"I feel the original plan was the best plan, primarily because it had more high-intensity uses," George Cross said.

After hearing of the discord on the task force, council members asked to see a map of the plan originally preferred by the group, then adopted that proposal.

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