

Daily Breeze

Hawthorne working to renovate Bicentennial Park

By Sandy Mazza Staff Writer
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Bicentennial Park in Hawthorne, with its three padlocked tennis courts and uninviting picnic tables, has been a lost opportunity for some time.

But plans are in the works to change the 1-acre public space into a park that actually appeals to residents.

On Saturday, a community meeting will be held from 9:30 a.m. to noon at the park to discuss the future design options. Residents are invited to suggest their favorite plan for the 33-year-old park on Doty Avenue.

The city is working with two nonprofits - Trust for Public Land and From Lot to Spot - to apply for a \$3 million grant from the state to pay for the project. If approved this fall, construction plans could be in the works by the winter.

"It's a perfect project," Trust for Public Land Project Manager Tori Kjer said. "It's a super-dense community that needs green and play space."

From Lot to Spot has led a community outreach effort since October to learn what residents want at the park. Saturday's meeting will narrow down the proposed amenities to one final design, said From Lot to Spot Executive Director Viviana Franco.

"Most community members did not even know it was a park," she said. "They thought it was a private piece of land for the two apartment buildings there. There are people who live blocks away and didn't even know it existed."

The city wants to demolish the existing unused tennis courts and parking lot, and build a small basketball court, a walking path, restrooms, a playground and possibly a splash pad and exercise area.

The state Department of Parks and Recreation grant will allow the cash-strapped city to improve the park without spending its own money.

Recreation and Community Services Director Mark Hardison said the improvements are overdue.

"The park has been nonfunctional since some time last year," Hardison said. "It was locked because of vandalism and tons of calls for service for police there - people drinking and not using the tennis courts for what they're there for."

"This is a good project to do since we're trying to rehab something existing instead of buying new land. And that community there is very underserved for park land."