

Ladera Linda Park Master Plan

Security Analysis of Proposed Design

Introduction

The following report analyzes the draft Park Master Plan for Ladera Linda Park on the basis of security. While no park can ever be made 100% secure, the goal of an effective park design is to minimize the possibility and opportunity for crimes and undesired behaviors to occur. In the case of this site, the analysis also focuses on how the proposed park compares to the existing park grounds and buildings.

The basis for this analysis are the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) guidelines which have been a model for security design for decades. These techniques apply to urban settings, homes and to public spaces such as parks.

While there are different terminology used by CPTED practitioners and designers, this analysis will focus on four core principles:

- Natural Surveillance
- Natural Access Control
- Territorial Reinforcement
- Maintenance

The following security components are covered in this analysis:

- Lighting
- Fencing
- Access Points
- Parking
- Blind spots
- Sightlines
- Security cameras
- Ingress/Egress
- Landscaping
- Maintenance
- Staffing
- Impact on adjacent properties

Natural Surveillance

Natural surveillance design improves the visibility and sight-lines in a park or community building, thereby increasing the likelihood that a potential criminal will be seen. "See and be seen is the overriding goal." The criminal will also not feel as free to commit undesirable behaviors if he or she believes they may be seen. Below are elements that

either are incorporated in the proposed Ladera Linda Park design or could easily be incorporated during a pre-construction design phase:

- Landscape designs that provide and enhance surveillance, especially near to both official ingress/egress points and opportunistic ingress/egress points
- Appropriate fencing: Use of the lowest-profile fencing that is appropriate for the location, with the least limitations on visibility.
- Lighting design: Limits or eliminates blind spots. Potential problem areas are well lit, particularly pathways, hallways, entrances/exits, parking areas, children's play areas, storage areas, dumpster locations etc...
- Placement of windows for staff/park users easily to observe parking lots
- Use of lower intensity lighting. Overly bright security lighting can create intense glare of deeply shadowed area which actually hinders effective observation. Appropriate luminaires can also control glare.
- Place lighting along paths and pedestrian areas at appropriate heights to better light people's faces.
- The use of security cameras can be effectively used in conjunction with natural surveillance techniques to enhance or complement their effectiveness.

The existing park site and buildings have far too many blind spots to allow for adequate surveillance. The three distinct and separated terraces, the overgrown landscaping, and the multitude of building entry points and hidden areas are not conducive to enhancing observational opportunities and limiting criminal opportunities. While improvements in lighting and landscaping could be made to the existing park, the overall layout and especially the buildings could not easily be altered or reconfigured to make them anywhere near as well-designed as the proposed new park design.

Natural Access Control

Natural Access Control, as its name sounds, incorporates physical obstacles and impediments into the design, where appropriate, to limit access to undesired areas and control access in other areas. The selective use of ingress and egress points, appropriate fencing, lighting and landscaping features are all part of the current plan or could be part of a more refined pre-construction schema.

- Use of clearly identifiable entry points.
- Align layout of building structure and outside features to naturally direct people to established reception areas.
- Eliminate features that provide opportunity to access upper levels.
- Use of appropriate low landscaping and ground cover to discourage undesired access and direct park users to appropriate access points.
- Use of appropriate, open fencing to both control access and enhance sightlines.

Again, the existing park grounds would have to be completely redesigned in terms of fencing and landscaping and overall layout to improve its Natural Access Control profile

to an acceptable level. The existence of five distinct buildings with multiple entry points cannot feasibly be reconfigured to make it anywhere near as safe and secure as the proposed building design, which has one easily defined point of access and the capacity to lock off the other entry point at the exterior restrooms.

Natural Territorial Reinforcement

Natural territorial reinforcement techniques create a clear distinction of appropriate and inappropriate use in a given location. They create a sense of ownership and an environment where “strangers” and undesired park users stand out and are more easily identified. All park design elements: buildings, fences, pavement, signs, lighting, landscaping work together to identify both appropriate and inappropriate park use. An appropriate park user should feel safe while an undesired park user should feel an increased risk of apprehension. The following elements and techniques are already included or easily incorporated into the currently-proposed park design.

- Maintain landscaping and building so it sends a clear message that there is an active staff and community presence
- Well designed and defined pathways
- Security system signage at access points
- Avoid chain link fencing and razor wire because this sends a message to possible intruders that there is not a physical presence
- Motion sensor lights and cameras where appropriate
- Locate park elements such as courts, picnic tables and children play areas in prominent locations to attract appropriate users and make inappropriate users more visible
- Sufficient and well designed and lighted parking

The current park does not follow these techniques and would require a substantial redesign to be close to equivalent to the proposed park design. The dilapidated condition, the erratic and inconsistent landscaping and fencing, the insufficient parking, and the poor lighting do not convey a sense of community ownership or security for park visitors, and is potentially attractive to undesirable elements.

Maintenance (“Broken Windows Theory”)

The well-known “Broken Windows Theory” is certainly applicable to park design. The theory, in short, encourages a zero tolerance approach to the maintenance of a particular site, based on the proven belief that a single instance of graffiti or a simple broken window, if left unfixed, will serve as a magnet for more and greater problems. The sooner that graffiti or any damage is repaired, the less likely that future vandals or miscreants will repeat this behavior. Clearly, this zero tolerance could be applied to the existing Ladera Linda site, but its well-documented state of deterioration makes that problematic at best. There are so many issues with the existing park and its buildings that bringing it to an acceptable starting point would be difficult. 50 year old temporary,

modular structures cannot be maintained to the same degree as a new modern facility. The numerous blind spots combined with the poor aesthetic and physical condition of the existing facility would continue to make it a target.

This approach has significant positive impacts on properties adjacent to park sites. An unattractive site is a magnet for undesirable elements who may be attracted to local residences. While impossible to quantify the exact impact, a well-maintained and secure facility will have a positive overlapping effect on adjacent neighborhoods. Blight leads to additional blight which unfortunately can bleed into other areas as well.

The new design with its single structure, controlled access point, low-profile, site-appropriate landscaping, and modern materials would be significantly easier to maintain at a zero-tolerance level. Based on past experience, it is doubtful that the City would invest sufficient maintenance funding and resources into a facility as rundown as Ladera Linda is today. Staff is recommending a high level of maintenance and dedicated budget line item for the new facility once it is constructed.

Other Issues

Staffing/Hours

Ladera Linda’s staffing hours have always been substantially lower than other park sites such as Point Vicente Interpretive Center and Hesse Park. Ladera Linda’s hours were increased by Council direction several years ago to M-F 12-5 and 10-5 Sat/Sun. This increase is still far short of Hesse, PVIC, and Ryan Park as the following chart demonstrates:

Park Site	Hours Mon-Fri	Hours Sat-Sun
Hesse Park	9am-Dusk	10am-Dusk
PVIC	10am-5pm	10am-5pm
Ryan Park	9am-Dusk	9am-Dusk
Ladera Linda (current)	12pm-5pm	10am-5pm
Ladera Linda (proposed)	8am-Dusk	8am-Dusk

Staff is recommending an increase in Ladera Linda’s staffing hours to Daily 8-dusk. This sends a concrete message to the community that the Park is staffed and that there are eyes on the property to ensure a higher level of maintenance and an awareness for undesired activities. Staff currently is rarely present to secure the park at dusk, which reduces security, especially in securing the facility’s gates. The proposed new hours would enable staff to inspect the facility first thing in the morning and last thing at night, allowing them to secure the building and gates and notify law enforcement of any inappropriate activity.

Being open more hours will likely attract more users, but they will be the kind of users you want-people who are at the park for the right reasons. The concern should not be the total number of visitors but the number of undesirable, unwanted visitors. Having a

beloved, well-staffed, well-maintained community park will attract more of the desirable type of park users.

Law Enforcement Access/Sightlines

The proposed new design with its improved sightlines and singular building provides law enforcement the opportunity to easily scan the facility for inappropriate nighttime activity. The low-level landscaping and fencing also increases law enforcement ability to scan the sight and reduce blind spots. This is 180 degrees different from the current design with its multitude of blind spots and overgrown landscaping. Undesirable and criminal elements have literally dozens of hiding places that would currently require Sheriff personnel to exit their vehicle and walk around multiple building.

Having lower-profile landscaping is clearly a trade-off for nearby residents. While it discourages unwanted visitors and improves sightlines, it may increase views into the park for adjacent neighbors. Given the overriding importance of neighborhood safety, this is a balance that needs to be established and maintained. Staff has discussed security concerns and the contents of this report extensively with Captain Beringer of the Lomita Sheriff's Department. He fully concurs with its conclusions that the new design effectively addresses safety concerns and, if built, would have a positive impact on overall neighborhood safety.

Limiting Parking on Forrestal Drive/Dedicated Preserve Parking

Numerous concerns have been raised about park visitors parking on Forrestal and walking up into the park. These visitors walk past the residential Ladera Linda neighborhood. Red-stripping the majority of Forrestal Drive, up from Palos Verdes Drive South, would make parking in that area illegal. That action combined with creating a modest parking area for Preserve visitors located well beyond the current gate, would funnel visitors to appropriate parking areas located away from residences. Appropriate park design seeks to both minimize impact on residences and increase security, and this plan would achieve those twin results.

Park visitors would be directed by signage to the proposed parking lots adjacent to the park building and park amenities. Preserve visitors would be directed to the Preserve lot. All parking lots would be secured at night, since staff would now be scheduled until dusk.

Conclusion:

From a law enforcement perspective, the current park is problematic in terms of security and access. The condition of the buildings, the overgrown and inappropriate landscaping, the poor sightlines, the multitude of blind spots and many other factors laid out in this report all contribute to this determination.

The proposed design addresses these concerns. There is only building instead of five, eliminating the access and blind spot problems. The landscaping and lighting schema

is much more conducive to security and sightlines. Those improvements, combined with improved fencing, increased staffing, better parking, and interior/exterior cameras will make both the new park and the surrounding neighborhoods more secure.