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Mike McCollum

Youngster rummages for abandoned bicycle parts at site of proposed Kearney Street park

Hopes high for new Kearney Street park

If all goes as hoped at the next Watsonville Redevelopment Agency meeting, a vacant and overgrown city lot will be reincarnated into a popular neighborhood park by next summer.

If the plans for the Kearney Street Park are approved Tuesday, the project will go out for bids, and if the weather cooperates, children could be playing there by late spring, said Pat Donohue, city Recreation and Parks director.

"I'm really excited about this park," Donohue said. "This area is long-overdue for a park."

The one-third-acre parcel,

next to 112 Kearney St., was purchased by the city two years ago with a park in mind. The neighborhood that will benefit from the park has been pitching in since then in helping to ready the lot.

A year ago, the city and Watsonville Boy Scout Troop 517 coordinated two clean-up days, and the response was terrific.

"Fifty people a day came in for the cleanup," Donohue said. "There's been a lot of neighborhood support."

City Councilman Al Alcala said the project has enjoyed much support from its incep-

tion, the only question was when the city budget would allow it.

"The day we went out to clean that property, we had a fantastic turnout from the parents and children," he said. "It was really gratifying. They came out in full force. We've gotten a lot of input from the people about what they want there, so that the big kids don't control it."

"There's nothing for the children right now," he added, "and there are a lot of children in that neighborhood."

Reflecting the recommendations and suggestions from residents, the Recreation and Parks

Commission and staff, the park will offer an enclosed half basketball court, children's play apparatus, a hard-surface play area, a place for picnics, benches, a drinking fountain and a variety of trees.

The entire park will be bordered by lawn and will be fenced.

Paul Rodrigues has been hired by the city to do the landscaping.

Construction is estimated at \$173,391, and will be paid for by Redevelopment and Landscape & Lighting Assessment District funds.

-Judy Brill