

Greening Up Golden Gate Park

Brown hails plan to renovate seedy corner

ALVORD LAKE

An amphitheater with lakeside stage would provide a new venue for puppet shows, mimes and other performances.

SKATER'S PAVILION

Includes open, in-line skating track that would convert to ice-skating rink in the winter. Terraced hillside would accommodate spectators.

STANYAN PROMENADE

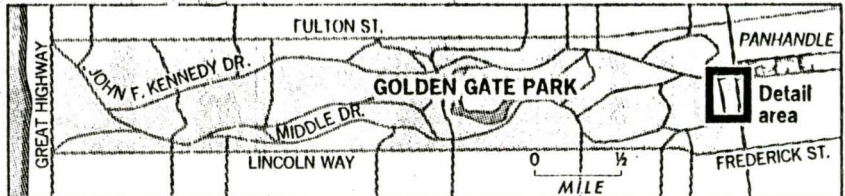
A broad pedestrian promenade, well-lit and lined with trees, would run the length of Stanyan Street, from Waller to John F. Kennedy Drive.

FANTASY PLAYGROUND

Adjacent to a picnic area would be a new playground with shapes of animals and storybook characters for young children to play on.

SKATEBOARD PARK

The park would include a freestyle court, slalom run and bowls.



Source: Tito Patri & Associates

JOHN BLANCHARD / The Chronicle

By Alex Barnum
Chronicle Staff Writer

Mayor Willie Brown's state of the city address reflects an interest in the city's parks and open spaces that has not been seen in City Hall since Dianne Feinstein was mayor in the 1980s.

In a wide-ranging speech Tuesday, Brown floated a variety of proposals for rejuvenating city parks, the centerpiece of which is a plan to use private funds to reclaim a section of Golden Gate Park overrun by the homeless and transform it into a children's playground.

"Not too many other mayors have addressed parks at all in their state of the city address, so I'm really pleased,"

said Isabel Wade, executive director of the Neighborhood Parks Council. "People have had enough of their parks falling into decline."

At the same time, Brown endorsed the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum's move from its earthquake-damaged home in Golden Gate Park to a downtown location to attract more visitors and earn more money.

Park advocates have fought the move, fearing that it will re-

duce visitation to Golden Gate Park. But they said yesterday that they were intrigued with the mayor's proposal to replace it with a museum of city history, saying the idea reflects the kind of creative thinking needed to fix park problems.

As documented in a series of articles in The Chronicle in July, Golden Gate Park has been in decline since the late 1970s, when the parks became an easy target for budget cutting in the aftermath of the tax-slashing frenzy spurred by Proposition 13.

Even Feinstein, who so loved the park that she would assign aides to repair individual flower beds, could not re-

PARK: Page A21 Col. 4

"People have had enough of their parks falling into decline."

ISABEL WADE
Director of the
Neighborhood Parks
Council

S.F. Chronicle 10-16-97 p. A17

AREA

PLAN: Restoration in Golden Gate Park

From Page A17

sist the budget-cutting onslaught. And today the park continues to suffer from natural disasters, old age and financial neglect.

In recent months, however, Brown has spoken forcefully about using private funding to help fix park problems. And in unveiling a new plan for Golden Gate Park's southeastern end, the city is taking on an area that has become symbolic of many of those problems.

The Alvard Lake area, fronting on Stanyan and Waller streets, is a gateway to other sections of the park. Yet the homeless and drug users so dominate the area that many parents and other park visitors are often afraid to use it.

Under the concept developed by Joel Robinson, the city's recreation and park manager, the area would be transformed into a haven for family recreation, a place where people would roller-skate in the summer and ice-skate in the winter and kids would clamber over statues.

In the northern section, the plan calls for an in-line skating rink that could be converted into ice-skating in the winter. The area is designed to replace the ad hoc skating scene on John F. Kennedy Drive and would include terraced seating for spectators and a family picnic area.

At the southern end would be a skateboard and roller-skate park, complete with bowls and curving tracks so that, as Brown said, skaters "can kill themselves if they choose."

In the middle, Alvard Lake would get an amphitheater for puppet shows, mimes and other performances. Nearby would be a kids' playground with shapes of animals and storybook characters for younger children to play on.

Along Stanyan Street would be a broad pedestrian promenade. Parts of the area, if not all of it, would be closed off at night to prevent homeless people from moving in, said Donna Ernston, executive director of Friends of Recreation and Park, which helped develop the plan.

"We were really thrilled to

hear that (Mayor Brown) had endorsed the ideas for the new east end," said Ernston, whose organization is midway through a highly praised restoration of the park's western end. "It's going to make a huge difference for the way the park serves people."

Brown said the \$2.5 million project will be privately funded, and the city already has received a commitment of \$500,000. "We're already a long ways down the road," Brown said. The mayor did not identify the source of the \$500,000.

"It's a fantastic idea, and it can be done by drawing on private funding," said Supervisor Susan Leal. "There are foundations and corporations in town just dying to be asked" to participate.

Chronicle staff writer Carla Martnucci contributed to this report.