

## Slaying the dragon guarding Angels Gate

Back in April I wrote about the process to develop a master plan for Angels Gate Park and urged people to go to the first public meeting to discuss what should go into that plan. At the time, the committee established to gather comment and create the document intended to finish its work in September.

Unlike most fairy tales, those told around government campfires usually end with the dragon killing the prince. Every good deed requires an environmental impact report and the damsel in distress often gives up and runs off with a developer.

Scary stuff, indeed.

Still, a bunch of us quixotic types got out our broken lances and have been making runs at the Recreation and Parks windmill. Since spring, there have been public meetings where groups and individuals have presented their visions for Angels Gate Park.

They've included proposals for



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a dog park, athletic fields, a small theater, restaurant, gardens, outdoor performance area, classrooms and a visitors center. Hiking trails and better signs, more restrooms and parking are being considered.

Making things work better for the park's current tenants while accommodating new uses is an especially tough nut to crack. Native American, Korean, sports, educational, historical, artistic and other cultural entities are interested in obtaining, keeping, improving or enlarging their chunk of Angels Gate.

It's a particularly complicated

situation in that the park has accumulated a number of uses, ranging from historical museum to cultural center to railroad club to hostel to playground and picnic area. Each of these uses has its proponents and opponents. Then, too, there are those who desire, and sometimes demand, a place they don't now have at Angels Gate.

The best idea I've heard is a proposal to create an umbrella organization to manage the park. It would work with every group there to effectively implement the master plan and operate and maintain the property. They do this in other places and it works incredibly well.

Since the federal government turned over the former military base to Los Angeles, a hodge-podge of organizations has taken up residence. Typically, the city has allowed the park to become a patchwork quilt where groups jealously guard their turf. They recognize the value of working together, but it seems their landlord, the Department of Recre-

ation and Parks, is incapable of facilitating consensus.

This is yet another reason for the park's tenants and community to form an organization to do the job. Taking charge of their neighborhood — Angels Gate Park — might enable them to trust each other and empower them to escape the bureaucratic shackles imposed by their municipal masters.

I've attended all of the public meetings and all but one or two of the committee meetings. There has been extended discussion about what is possible and what is not. In some cases, such as a dog park, the city has flat-out said no. In others, money is the problem.

On top of all this, the Los Angeles Unified School District wants to build a school next door on its piece of Angels Gate and run all its traffic through the city's part. Oh, and by the way, don't expect much in return. The district has a long history of broken promises when it comes to joint use facilities, such as athletic fields.

As a veteran of San Pedro's public process battles, I can tell it's almost time to form the circular firing squad.

We have many residents who are deeply involved in the community. Their causes benefit and enrich our lives. But too often there is an all-or-nothing attitude that prevents consensus and frustrates the ability to make decisions.

People come to the table believing their cause is the cause that takes priority over all others. If they can't have what they want, then nobody should get anything. Even those who should be allies and make common cause agree to remain apart for fear they might step on each other's toes.

The reason I've given so much time and effort to neighborhood councils over the last eight years is because I believed they could be the place where everyone in town could go and be treated equally. Councils could provide the neutral ground for Pedrans to bring their issues and ideas and hammer out practical solutions to common problems.

We still have a long way to go, but if we can get past the past and focus on the future, maybe Angels Gate Park will get its master plan. Maybe we will learn to share. Maybe we can slay the dragon and live happily ever after.

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