

# **BOARD REPORT**

(Amended June 23, 2021)

**May 8, 2021**

**TO: Montage at Mission Hills Board of Directors**

**FR: Scott Reese, Montage Resident**

**RE: Montage Detention Basin Use**

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## **Action Requested**

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1. Review, receive and file report for future reference.
2. Request a motion: That the Montage Detention Basin Reuse Ad Hoc Committee be directed to proceed with the development of a multiple use proposal for the Board consideration.

## **Summary**

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This report and the associated attachments are provided to create an historical document that unequivocally establishes the permissibility of using the Montage detention basin for passive recreational uses and community activities. The report primarily consists of communications with City of Cathedral City, Director of Public Works, John Corella relative establishing the possibility of multiple use of the Montage Basin, communications with and communications with Aldea at the Vistas Board officers Nazir Lalani and Rick Lowe regarding the current and past neighborhood use of the Aldea at the Vistas detention basin, immediately adjacent to Montage. The Aldea detention basin is an upstream contributor to flow into the Montage detention basin.

## **Background**

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During the 2020 and 2021 Montage General Membership meetings there was discussion about exploration of the concept of expanding the use the Montage detention basin for passive recreational and social events. During the discussion there was concern that expanded use might be precluded by City codes, ordinances or engineering standards. The purpose of this document is to present information to mitigate the concern and show that there are many uses of the stormwater basin. It is also to provide a clear pathway for future Board consideration of possible passive recreational and special event use of the basin.

During the Annual Meeting discussion there were rational concerns raised that multi-use of the Montage basin for a passive recreational use like a private dog play area or green space might be against City/County ordinances or precluded by City policy. This belief seemed counter to anecdotal information because there are many stormwater detention and retention basins being used as multiuse recreation facilities across the country, in this region and in Cathedral City. Century Park and Ocotillo Park in Cathedral City both contain large detention areas which are used for sports and activity areas. In addition, the Cathedral Canyon Golf Club is located in a major drainage channel. Adjacent to Montage in the Aldea at the Vistas development there is a detention basin with a long history of neighborhood use.

The Montage Detention Basin is an approximately 14,000 sf stormwater detention basin (located in southeast corner of Montage at the intersection of Van Gogh and Dali. The site is part of the Montage at Mission Hills HOA owned Common Areas. The rectangular basin is approximately 6 feet deep as graded into a tub shape with slopes between 4:1 and 8:1 and a basin floor with a 1-3% grade. There are two surface structures (one drywell manhole and one outflow manhole). The subdrainage system keeps the basin dry 350- 360 days a year. An aerial photo of the basin is attached along with a panoramic movie view of the basin can be seen by [clicking here](https://youtu.be/bcKZPUNZk3U) or pasting this link into your browser. <https://youtu.be/bcKZPUNZk3U>

In evaluating the physical characteristics and operational history basin it appears the basin could be used for a number of different passive purposes including a walking trail, plant arboretum, demonstration planting, or recognition-memorial garden, small event space, disaster response space, public/environmental art space, throw and catch or yard games space or a dog play area. Some of these uses could be accomplished with little or no grading or improvement work although it would be appropriate that a small amount of grading be completed to allow for a “Accessible” trail across the slope leading from the street to the basin bottom. Any of these uses would significantly improve the appearance of the basin and render the basin a more valuable community resource.

## Findings

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In summary, the preliminary findings are as follows:

### **Can the detention basin be further improved as a parklet, mini-park or open space area to enhance its scenic values or introduce passive recreational uses?**

**Short Answer:** Yes, according to *Director of Public Works, John Corella*, the City maintains several “multi-use” detention basin areas that also function as active recreational areas in City parks and there are other detention basin recreational areas located in developments in our City and surrounding cities including both Rio Rancho (tennis courts) and Aldea at the Vistas (passive recreation)

**Caveat:** The primary purpose of the basin is for stormwater control purposes and any additional recreational or event uses cannot interfere with the primary purpose or functioning of the basin. Large scale improvements would require City review and approval.

### **Would installation of small-scale landscape improvements and/or passive recreation amenities impact HOA insurance costs and/or HOA fees?**

**Short Answer:** Probably not. There would not likely be any additional insurance HOA blanket property and liability policies cost according to *Ryan Gasell, Montage insurance agent* as long as the improvements are similar to the type of improvements already covered on the Montage insurance policy. And it is likely there would be little or no additional maintenance costs as long as improvements were minimal and similar to those on other Montage common areas.

**Caveat:** Adding new large amenities which are significantly different than the current type and scope of improvements installed on Montage common areas might lead to a minimal additional cost. Examples: would a tennis court require additional coverage? Definitely yes. Would a turf area for yard games, a neighborhood event or dog play require additional coverage? Probably Not.

### **What type of uses might be possible without significant construction or maintenance cost or triggering of insurance related costs or issues?**

**Answer:** In general, improvements like pathways, landscape beautification (trees, shrubs, ground cover or grass), signage, benches, lighting, irrigation and fencing would involve minimal site grading and would not reduce basin volume or change the hydraulics of the basin.

**Caveat:** Improvements should be above the potential flood line or be capable of being submerged in water for short periods of time. Improvements should not interfere with the ability to maintain the basin for its primary stormwater control use.

### **Next Steps**

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- 1) Board approves a motion accepting the report and direction the ad hoc committee to proceed with the development of proposes for enhancement and expanded use of the basin.
- 2) The Ad Hoc committee proceeds with the development of a multiple use proposal for presentation to the board no later than the March 2022 Annual General Meeting.

### **Attachments**

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- 1) Engineering Plan Montage Detention Basin
- 2) Aerial photo Montage Detention Basin
- 3) Email Chain with Cathedral City Public Works Director John Corella
- 4) Email Chain with Aldea at the Vistas Detention Basin restoration project manager
- 5) Photo showing use of Aldea at the Vistas detention basin.



Aerial photo Montage Detention Basin

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## Email Chain with Cathedral City Public Works Director John Corella

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**Monday, May 10, 2021 at 11:27:30 Pacific Daylight Time**

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**Subject:** RE: Montage Detention Basin Multi-Use Proposal  
**Date:** Wednesday, May 5, 2021 at 7:09:07 PM Pacific Daylight Time  
**From:** John Corella  
**To:** Scott Reese  
**CC:** Tony Michaelis, Norman Giere, Robert Rodriguez  
**Attachments:** image003.png, image004.png, image005.png

Scott,

You are generally correct. For clarification, we are not approving the "details of the design". The design, maintenance and use of any of the retention basin for other than it's intended purpose and functionality are at the responsibility and liability of the HOA ( and/or underlying property owner).

Best,



Cathedral City  
John A. Corella, P.E.  
Director of Engineering/Public Works  
760-770-0327  
[JCorella@cathedralcity.gov](mailto:JCorella@cathedralcity.gov)

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From: Scott Reese <scott.o.reese@gmail.com>  
Sent: Wednesday, May 5, 2021 3:21 PM  
To: John Corella <JCorella@cathedralcity.gov>  
Cc: Tony Michaelis <tonymichaelis@icloud.com>; Norman Giere <gierearc@gmail.com>  
Subject: Re: Montage Detention Basin Multi-Use Proposal

John –

Thank you very much for speaking with me yesterday in your capacity as City Engineer and Public Works Director regarding use of the detention basin in the Montage at Mission Hills community. I am using this email to memorialize our conversation for the benefit of our Montage Board of Directors. I would appreciate it if you confirm some details of our conversation that I have set out below with a brief return reply email that can be used to validate the nature of our conversation for our Directors.

As I indicated yesterday, the purpose of my contacting you is to confirm some general details about the design of the detention basin as it relates to the potential multiple use for passive recreational purposes by Montage residents. As you know from our discussion and the plans and photos sent to you, the Montage detention basin is a roughly rectangular, approximately 14,000 sf basin with a depth of approximately six feet. The basin has side slopes that vary in steepness from about 4:1 to 8:1 and the bottom of the basin is a rectangle approximately 6,000 in size with cross slope of about 1-3 %.

An ad hoc committee of Montage residents has been formed to consider possible multiple uses that could include some passive recreational uses such as a plant arboretum / demonstration planting area, walking paths, benches, dog play area, or a turf area for croquet or badminton and possibly throw and catch activities and possible HOA social events. You did not feel that any of these types of activities would be precluded from either the flat basin perimeter or basin floor.

In discussing the Montage basin, you were able to confirm that the City does own and maintain Ocotillo and Century parks which contain detention basins that have been additionally designed to accommodate recreational uses. You confirmed that there is nothing in City codes or ordinances that precludes detention basins from multiple uses such as those I described as long as the primary stormwater purpose and capacity is not compromised in any way. Based upon my description of the Montage facility, and your cursory understanding of the information sent to you, you did not see any concerns regarding the multiple use / public use of the Montage basin during dry periods.

You cautioned that there can be no significant alterations to the basin that would reduce its net capacity, flow characteristics or restrictions to storm flow or the primary function of the detention basin grading or drainage without approval of the City. You suggested that any new uses consider access to complete necessary basin maintenance and you commended the HOA for its current maintenance practices, especially as it pertains to period cleaning of the drywell and silt traps.

In concluding you noted that in as much as the Montage detention basin is located on private property, and not maintained by the City, the appearance and use of the detention basin is under the control of the HOA, with the caveat that the stormwater design and use of the facility should not be altered without the approval of the City.

John, thank you again for your cooperation and assistance with this inquiry. If you have anything to add, or if anything here requires correction, please let me know. If you would please corroborate this summary with a brief reply email to this communication, the HOA would be most appreciative. I have copied Tony Michaelis (HOA President) and Norm Giere (HOA VP) on this email for their information.

Regards,

Scott Reese  
69701 Van Gogh Road  
Cathedral City, CA 92234-8933  
408-482-8290

## Email Chain with Aldea at the Vistas Detention Basin restoration project manager

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Monday, May 10, 2021 at 12:12:54 Pacific Daylight Time

**Subject:** Re: Aldea Retention/Detention Basin  
**Date:** Thursday, April 29, 2021 at 11:41:41 AM Pacific Daylight Time  
**From:** James Feeley  
**To:** scott.o.reese@gmail.com

Thank you , Rick Lowe

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Scott Reese <scott.o.reese@gmail.com>  
**To:** James Feeley <felo1978@verizon.net>  
**Cc:** Tony Michaels <dorymichaels@icloud.com>; Nazir Lalani <nazirlalani1@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thu, Apr 29, 2021 11:31 am  
**Subject:** Re: Aldea Retention/Detention Basin

Rick -

Thank you very much for the tour of the newly completed renovations of the Aldea detention basin. What a pleasant space and I am certain that renovation work , especially the turf renovation in the bottom of the basin, will restore the functionality of the space for all types of small events and for dog play as well. It's good to know that your space has supported welcomed use by the neighborhood in the past and will soon be revitalized for that purpose.

I will keep you up to date as discussions on our site continue. I think you said you had never seen the Montage detention area, so I am sending you short video panorama so you can understand the type of project we may be embarking upon.

I hope your trip is a safe and pleasant journey.

Regards,

Scott Reese  
69701 Van Gogh Road  
Cathedral City, CA 92234-8933  
408-482-8290

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**From:** James Feeley <felo1978@verizon.net>  
**Reply-To:** James Feeley <felo1978@verizon.net>  
**Date:** Thursday, April 15, 2021 at 7:46 AM  
**To:** Scott Reese <scott.o.reese@gmail.com>  
**Subject:** Re: Aldea Retention/Detention Basin

Hi Scott . Please give me a call anytime 760-202-7450. Rick Lowe Aldea The Vistas

**Aldea at the Vistas Detention Basin**

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**Basin Entry**



**Basin Entry**



**Basin Looking Southeast**



**Basin Looking South**



**Basin Looking North**



**Basin Looking East**

Monday, May 10, 2021 at 12:18:04 Pacific Daylight Time

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**Subject:** Re: Retention Basin Parklet Pictures  
**Date:** Thursday, April 8, 2021 at 4:56:03 PM Pacific Daylight Time  
**From:** Nazir Lalani  
**To:** Scott Reese

Glad the photos will be helpful. Ours is a Retention Basin. The water does not go anywhere and eventually disappears into the ground after the water ponds in there. If you take a look at google earth images, you will see that the basin is surrounded by walls except where the water comes from the streets into the basin. I am a licensed civil engineer so I had better know the difference.

Thanks.

Nazir

On Thu, Apr 8, 2021 at 4:34 PM Scott Reese <[scott.o.reese@gmail.com](mailto:scott.o.reese@gmail.com)> wrote:

NL, thank you very much for taking the trouble to dig these photos out of your files. They will be very helpful to me in my discussions with our board. BTW, I believe the correct terminology for these dry basins is "detention basin" because they are used to temporarily detain and then release stormwater. A retention basin has much the same function, except a retention basin normally contains a permanent body of water / pond. The lakes in Mission Hills are retention basins. The areas around the lakes are graded to receive and storm additional water above the pond level and then release that water at a controlled rate until pond/lake elevation is reached. These basins are frequently mis represented in the desert for some reason. I have attached a good reference. Scott

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**From:** Nazir Lalani <[nazirlalani1@gmail.com](mailto:nazirlalani1@gmail.com)>  
**Date:** Thursday, April 8, 2021 at 12:52 PM  
**To:** Scott Reese <[scott.o.reese@gmail.com](mailto:scott.o.reese@gmail.com)>  
**Subject:** Retention Basin Parklet Pictures

I dug back through our recent Board agendas and found two paper copies of the Retention Basin when it was in use as a parklet probably 15 years ago.

I hope they will be of some use to you. I scanned them and saved them to my Retention Basin folder. We may need to look at them in the future ourselves.

Photo showing use of Aldea at the Vistas detention basin.

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