

Task force to study ways to make Pioneer Park more inviting

by Lara Jones
 Assistant Editor

The Salt Lake City Redevelopment Agency Board voted unanimously last week to approve the creation of a task force to study ways to make Pioneer Park a more inviting public open space.

As recommended by the Redevelopment Advisory Committee (RAC), a 17-member Pioneer Park task force will be made up of a variety of city officials or their appointees and city staffers, as well as representatives of social service agencies, property owners and community councils near the park. They include the mayor, a city councilmember, a city council staffer, one RAC member, the RDA executive director, the Gallivan Utah Center director, the Police Chief, planning division director, transportation division director, Historic Landmarks Commission member, Downtown Alliance, Utah Division of State History representative, members of the People's Freeway and Rio Grande community councils, three property owners near the park, as well as representatives of a social service agency near the park and the Pioneer Park Fort Restoration Committee.

The RDA took to the idea of a task force after advice during an October meeting from Dan Biederman, the man who turned New York City's Bryant Park from "needle park,"



Jim Urquhart/The Enterprise

Pioneer Park, goal is to make it attractive public open space.

known for the refuse left by drug users, into a place where families gather to watch outdoor movies in the summer.

Biederman concluded that Pioneer Park, a full city block at 10 acres, was too big, and would benefit from design elements to shrink the park's usable space. Those things, according to a report by RAC chairwoman Polly Hart, included low, bushy plantings to reduce the amount of lawn at the park, to allowing uses such as a restaurant, museum or permanent marketplace.

"While all these things are great ideas, they come with quite a bit of controversy," Hart said when recommending the task force to the board last

week. The task force will be the RDA gather public input about changes at the park which marks the site of the first permanent encampment of pioneers upon entering the Salt Lake Valley in July 1847.

"He (Biederman) basically came back and said to get that kind of activity that we seem to think we wanted, the park was really too big," said Alicia Larkin Steiner, executive director of the RDA. "I mean you could have 10,000 people on the block and it still would not feel crowded."

The Pioneer Park task force will be formalized soon after mayor-elect Rock Anderson takes office in January, Steiner said.