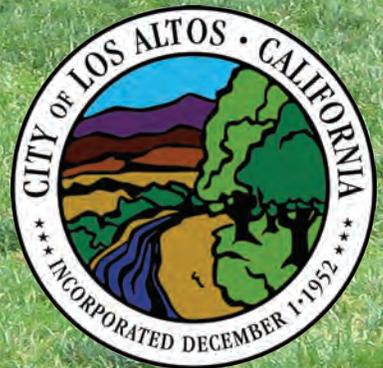


*Los Altos
Parks Plan*



May 8, 2012

Los Altos Parks Plan

May 8, 2012

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Parks Assessment	5
Citywide Goals	23
Funding	33
Park Maintenance	39
Priorities	41
Appendices	47



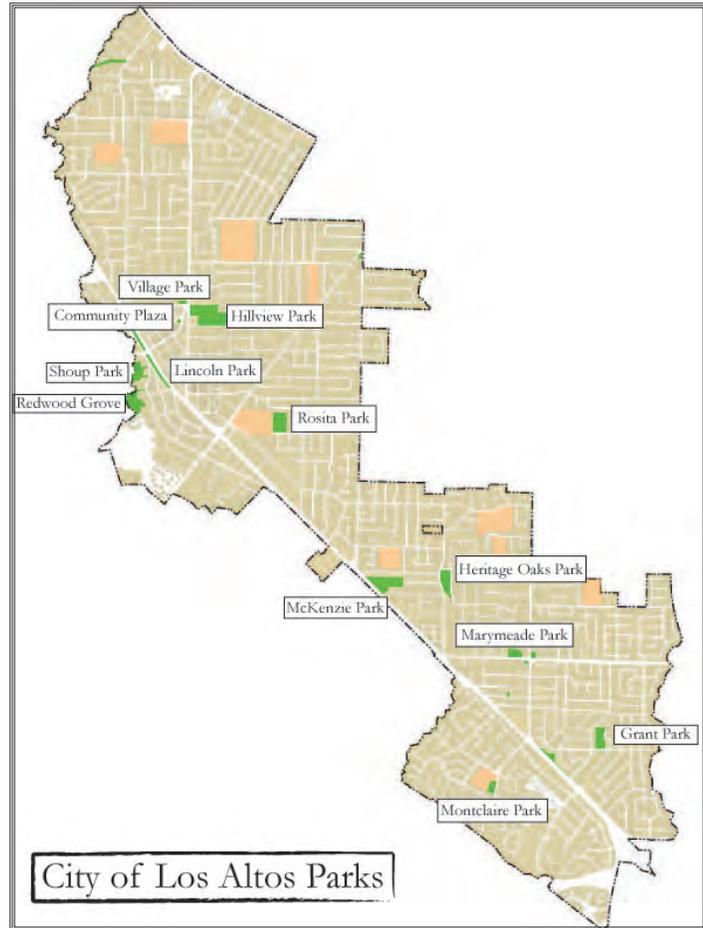
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INTRODUCTION

Tree lined streets and a small village atmosphere characterize the City of Los Altos which is located in the heart of world famous Silicon Valley. The seven square mile city is developed with small businesses, schools, libraries and churches. Incorporated in 1952, Los Altos is a community with a clear and beloved semi-rural character.

The parks of Los Altos are well loved and convey the high quality of life within the community. They advance the City's mission to "foster and maintain the City of Los Altos as a great place to live and to raise a family."



Key questions facing the City of Los Altos with regard to parks are:

- How will Los Altos continue to improve its parks based on the changing recreational needs and desires of all its residents?
- How can these and other goals be achieved through park opportunities while continuing to preserve the semi-rural character of the community, quality of life and the numerous reasons for which people live in and love Los Altos?
- How can Los Altos create new parks and where will they be located?



Introduction

PURPOSE OF THE PARKS PLAN

The purpose of this Plan is to create a clear set of goals, policies and objectives that will provide direction to the City Council and City staff for the development, improvement and enhancement of the City's park system for the next twenty to thirty years.

This document will evolve over time through continued planning efforts and may require updates over time as unforeseen issues may arise or as the community of Los Altos grows and changes.



RELATIONSHIP TO THE GENERAL PLAN

The General Plan is the guiding, long-term planning document for Los Altos. The General Plan presents goals, policies and plans for future development and is separated into elements, including: Land Use, Housing, Circulation, Safety, Conservation, Open Space and Noise. There is no State-required element specific to parks, however parks are addressed within the Open Space, Conservation and Facilities Element. The planning information related to parks within the General Plan is broad, whereas the Parks Plan provides specific direction and recommendations related to parks in Los Altos. Just as the General Plan is designed to be updated over time, so too is the Parks Plan.



EXISTING MASTER PLAN DOCUMENTS



Prior to the undertaking of this comprehensive Parks Plan document, the City of Los Altos completed park master plans for the following sites:

- Redwood Grove
- Rosita Park
- Community Center (including Hillview Park)

This Plan supports the goals set forth in these documents, while also providing additional recommendations as needed.

Redwood Grove

The Redwood Grove Nature Preserve Master Plan was completed in 1980 by Multiple Use Managers, Inc. This document was designed to preserve the grove as a unique resource while also improving facilities, accessibility and circulation. Since the adoption of the Master Plan, the City has followed through with many recommendations including development of facilities such as a boardwalk, continuation of the nature program, an access road from University Avenue, pathways, bridge and restroom facilities (temporary facilities have been installed). However, there are still recommendations in that Master Plan that have yet to be implemented and should be considered as part of planning for Redwood Grove.

Rosita Park

The Rosita Park Master Plan was prepared by Hansen McArdle Inc. and MacLeod Reckord and completed in 2009. The Master Plan addressed access, circulation and recreation facilities for the 5.0 acre, well-used park. The park includes “improved access and circulation, expanded recreation facilities, more passive park opportunities, a new public restroom, a new storage and concession building, new planting and screening, new fencing and the addition of a multi use pathway” as well as a new playground. Construction on the park was completed in 2011.





Introduction

Community Center

The Community Center Master Plan has been under development since 2008 when the City selected Anderson Brule Architects as the consulting planner. The Community Center Master Plan aims to redevelop the underutilized 18-acre Community Center site. The proposed Master Plan reorganizes the site for more efficient use of space with the addition of a community pool facility, new community center and new City buildings. The Master Plan was approved in early 2010, following completion and certification of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

PARK ACREAGE COMPARISON

Compared to similar, regional cities, Los Altos has a low park acreage ratio. Per 1,000 residents, Los Altos has approximately 1.57 acres of dedicated parkland.

	Population ¹	Developed Parks Acreage	Park Acreage per 1,000 Residents
San Carlos	28,406	143	5.03
Campbell ²	39,349	132	3.35
Burlingame	28,806	94	3.26
Cupertino ²	58,302	162	2.78
Mountain View ²	74,066	187	2.52
Palo Alto	64,403	162	2.52
Saratoga	29,926	63	2.11
Menlo Park	32,026	54	1.69
Los Altos	28,976	45.45	1.57

¹ Based on 2010 Census

² Includes school sites under joint-use agreements

Several area cities count joint-use properties among total park acreage. Given limited opportunities for expansion within the City, the development of joint-use agreements with the local school districts provides an avenue for expanding available park acreage. Joint-use agreements with the School Districts could potentially add up to 66.4 acres of parkland or 2.29 acres per 1,000 residents.



PARKS ASSESSMENT

The City of Los Altos currently has a well-loved parks system comprised of 11 parks, one trail, one nature preserve and one open space property accounting for approximately 45.45 acres of developed parkland. City parks are generally well-maintained and well-used by residents, community groups and sports leagues. An assessment of city parks provides the basis for recommendations for each park. The assessment inventoried and assessed types of amenities and general functional issues of each park.

Park	Acres
Community Plaza	0.16
Grant Park	4.50
Heritage Oaks Park	5.33
Hetch Hetchy Trail ¹	0.17
Hillview Park	6.63
Lincoln Park ²	4.44
Marymeade Park	2.47
McKenzie Park	4.30
Montclair Park ³	1.10
Redwood Grove	6.12
Rosita Park	5.00
Shoup Park	3.95
Village Park	0.78
647 N. San Antonio Road	0.50
Total	45.45



¹ Owned by City and County of San Francisco
² Leased from Santa Clara County
³ Leased from Cupertino Union School District

In addition to dedicated parkland, the City owns several other, significant-sized parcels that serve as open-space. These parcels add to the City’s rural character and complement the City’s park system. The following are larger parcels that can be characterized as open-space:



- Woodland Library (1975 Grant Road)
- Springer Road and El Monte Avenue
- Green Oaks Lane and Bendigo Drive
- Heritage apricot orchard located at the Los Altos Civic Center



Parks Assessment

Besides providing parkland for the community, Los Altos should strive to provide a diverse range of parks. Some of these can be provided by the City while others may be provided through joint-use agreements or by other neighboring agencies. Parkland in Los Altos can be categorized in the following areas: Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Nature Preserve, Open Space, and Trail.

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

Neighborhood parks serve as social and recreational focal points for neighborhoods. They provide greenspace and social opportunities and are the basic units of an area park system. As such, the majority of parks within Los Altos can be defined as neighborhood parks. Neighborhood parks include playgrounds, picnic areas and large grassy areas or fields that provide space for both active and passive recreation (programmed and non-programmed). They may also contain recreation facilities. These types of parks may provide restrooms, but typically in connection with a “destination facility” (ex. an athletic field, playground or picnic area). Although accessible by bicycle and on foot, neighborhood parks also require on-site parking (ex. Marymeade Park).

Neighborhood parks may also include pocket parks which are typically created on “left-over” portions of land (usually after development of a larger portion of land). Pocket parks may also be open space.



COMMUNITY PARK

A community park is larger than a neighborhood park and provides both active and passive recreational opportunities. They accommodate large group activities and organized sports play. They often house specialized recreation programs; contain facilities; and provide space for public gatherings, special events and large scale

community interaction. Generous onsite parking and public restrooms are typical for community parks (ex. Hillview Park).

NATURE PRESERVE

A nature preserve is a protected area established to safeguard or retain wildlife, flora, fauna or features of geological, historical or other special interest. These areas are “reserved” from development and managed for conservation and provide special opportunities for study or research. Nature preserves may be designated by government agencies or by private landowners, such as charities or research institutions. Nature preserves fall into



different International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources categories depending on local protection laws (ex. Redwood Grove).

OPEN SPACE

Open space refers to undeveloped land or water. It may be specifically established as open space by zoning regulations or occur naturally due to lack of development and may include greenbelts. Zoned open space offers many public benefits including resource conservation, water supply protection and enhanced property values. It may also be used to conserve historic, cultural or natural resources and to protect scenic vistas. Large open space areas also provide multi-generational recreational opportunities (ex. Intersection of Springer Road and El Monte Avenue).

Open space can also include pocket parks. Some open space areas have minor improvements such as on-site parking and public restrooms to accommodate users.

TRAIL

Trails are pathways or routes designed for non-automobile traffic. Trails may be segregated into specific activity types such as walking and biking. Exercise trails often feature exercise stations on regular intervals. Some trails allow pedestrian access (shortcuts) between streets, neighborhoods and schools. Trails may be publicly owned or established through easements (ex. Hetch Hetchy Right-of-Way).





Community Plaza

Main Street and State Street

Community Plaza is a 0.16 acre piece of land located at the intersection of Main and State Streets in downtown Los Altos. It can be described as an urban, active neighborhood park (with elements of a pocket park). It offers tables with umbrellas and a small bandstand with turf areas for informal seating. Its current configuration causes it to be underutilized and not reach its full potential.



Assessment

- No major known maintenance issues
- Large raised planting area
- Current design impedes easy maneuverability and ability to host large gatherings

Recommendations

- Schedule the Community Plaza Renovation CIP Project to reconfigure and expand the Plaza
- Include an iconic feature as part of a redesign of the Plaza
- Move Walter Singer Bust to a new location to expand the openness of the Plaza



Grant Park

1575 Holt Avenue



Grant Park is a 4.5 acre community park serving south Los Altos that offers an outdoor basketball court (3 hoops), pathways, a large multi-purpose turf field, playground areas for tots and school-age children (featuring a water/sand area and climbing boulder), picnic tables, barbeques, bike racks, drinking fountain and public restrooms. Grant Park also offers meeting rooms (classrooms) and a multi-purpose room.



Assessment

- Limited shaded seating at play area
- Asphalt pathways worn
- Benches, picnic tables and barbeques are worn
- Light poles and fixtures outdated

Recommendations

- Look for opportunities to provide shaded seating through planting of trees
- Complete the Grant Park Renovation CIP which includes replacing lighting, benches and the pathway
- Complete the Grant Park Jogging Trail CIP



Heritage Oaks Park

Portland Avenue at McKenzie Avenue

Heritage Oaks Park is a 5.33 acre, neighborhood park nestled along Permanente Creek in central Los Altos. The park includes a tot play area with swings, a ropes and boulders play area for school-age children, school-age swings, large grass area, picnic tables, barbecues, sand play area and public restrooms. Heritage Oaks has a large, central turf area that is often used for informal soccer practice by area teams. Approximately one acre of undeveloped land exists south of the restrooms.



Assessment

- Play areas not shaded
- Inadequate seating at play areas
- Outdated light fixtures and poles
- Picnic tables and benches are worn
- Undeveloped area at south end of park
- Insufficient parking for certain community events (i.e., Concert in the Park)

Recommendations

- Consider installing parking spaces along Portland Avenue
- Complete the Heritage Oaks Park Renovation CIP which includes replacing picnic tables, benches and lighting
- Look for opportunities to provide shaded seating through planting of trees
- Maintain south portion of park as undeveloped open space



Hillview Park

97 Hillview Avenue



Hillview Park is an approximately 6.63 acre community park that is part of the Los Altos Civic Center. The park is home to the Hillview Community Center which houses the Los Altos Recreation Department administrative offices, Senior Center and many other organizations. The park includes a tot playground, exercise area, baseball and soccer fields, picnic tables, restrooms, bocce ball courts and dedicated parking lot.

Hillview Park is part of the Los Altos Community Center Master Plan. The proposed design replaces the aged Community Center and reorganizes the overall space. The preferred site plan includes a dedicated soccer field and baseball diamond, community pool facility, three play areas and open turf area. As of 2011, the City was investigating a bond to fund this effort. A full assessment of the facilities can be found in the *City of Los Altos Community Center Master Plan Report* dated June 10, 2008.

Assessment

- Heavily used fields
- Aged chain link fencing
- Lack of buffer between parking and field

Recommendation

- Proceed with Community Center Master Plan





Lincoln Park

University and Lincoln Avenues



Lincoln Park is a 4.44 acre passive neighborhood park bound by Foothill Expressway and Lincoln, University and West Edith Avenues. It includes magnificent trees, a gazebo, picnic tables and benches, a path and several prominent public art pieces. On-street parking can be found along both sections of the park, while the south end adjoins a parking lot.

The greenspace portion of the park is owned by Santa Clara County while the City maintains the entire park. Lincoln Park is the highly visible site of the yearly Rotary “Fine Art in the Park” event.



Assessment

- No major issues
- High water usage

Recommendation

- Obtain title for entire park from Santa Clara County



Marymeade Park

Fremont Avenue at Lisa Lane



Marymeade Park is a 2.47 acre neighborhood park in central Los Altos. It includes three lighted tennis courts, school-age and tot playgrounds, restrooms, drinking fountain, picnic tables, barbeque pits and large grass area.



Assessment

- Disconnect between the park and the parking lot caused by location of the tennis courts
- Aged irrigation system
- Inadequate parking
- Pathways are worn
- No fencing along Fremont Avenue
- Aged light fixtures
- Aged landscaping
- Worn picnic tables and benches

Recommendations

- Install new landscaping
- Proceed with the Marymeade Park Renovation CIP which includes replacing lighting and irrigation
- Look for opportunities to expand parking



McKenzie Park

Fremont Avenue and Clinton Road



McKenzie Park is a 4.3 acre active, neighborhood park. The front of the park faces Fremont Avenue and shares an entry with the City’s Municipal Service Center. The front portion of the park offers two parking areas, two lighted tennis courts, tennis backboard, picnic tables, benches, play structure and drinking fountain.

The back portion of the park includes a large grass area, tot and school-aged play structures, swings, sand play areas, picnic tables, barbeques and restrooms.



Assessment

- Conflict with non-park users parking in the parking lot for extended periods of time (primarily on weekends)
- Minimal seating at play areas
- Drainage issues in winter for grass area
- Conflict of tennis backboard in parking lot
- Back of park secluded
- Pathway is worn

Recommendations

- Proceed with McKenzie Park Renovation CIP which includes replacement of landscaping, asphalt pathway and lighting
- Remove tennis backboard from parking lot and place inside of tennis court



Montclair Park

Stonehaven Drive at Kent Drive

Montclair Park is a 1.1 acre neighborhood park located adjacent to Montclair School in south Los Altos. The entire park is leased from the Cupertino Union School District. Amenities include picnic tables, benches, barbeques, two lighted tennis courts and a tot play area. Users can access Montclair School's multi-purpose field located next to the park during non-school hours.



Assessment

- Park used as a pick-up and drop-off area for the school
- No public restroom facility
- Landscaping is dated
- Pathway is worn
- Worn benches, picnic tables and barbeques
- Tennis court lighting is aged

Recommendations

- Proceed with Montclair Park Renovation CIP which will replace site furnishings
- Proceed with Montclair Tennis Court Lighting CIP
- Replace dated landscaping and re-imagine placement of landscaping to create more usable space
- Create a CIP to install a public restroom
- Create a long-term agreement for use (lease or purchase) of the park prior to any improvements



Redwood Grove 482 University Avenue

Redwood Grove is a 6.12 acre nature preserve (including the connection to Shoup Park). It contains picnic tables, a boardwalk, observation decks, temporary restrooms and trails. It also includes the Halsey House which has been listed on the City’s Historic Resources Inventory, but, as of 2011, is closed due to safety issues. There is no parking within Redwood Grove, but parking is available along University Avenue.

Beginning in 2009, the City contracted with ACTERRA to provide restoration of Redwood Grove’s ecosystem with the removal of invasive plants, planting of native plants and the restoration of eroded creek banks. In 2010, the City acquired a portion of land between Redwood Grove and Shoup Park, for the creation of a pathway between the two. A Redwood Grove Master Plan was created in 1980 to “provide concepts and direction necessary to guide use and preservation” of Redwood Grove.



(Area in red highlights pathway connecting Shoup Park to Redwood Grove)



Assessment

- No dedicated parking
- No permanent restrooms
- Aged buildings
- Eight-ton weight limit on access bridge
- Worn boardwalk
- Natural trails throughout
- No boundary delineation
- Eroding creek banks
- Fire controls in place

Recommendations

- Construct pathway to Shoup Park
- Continue habitat restoration
- Create a CIP to address creek bank restoration and replacement of boardwalk
- Look for opportunities to enlarge site
- Address use of facilities
- Make a decision on the future of the Halsey House and the Caretaker House
- Install permanent restrooms

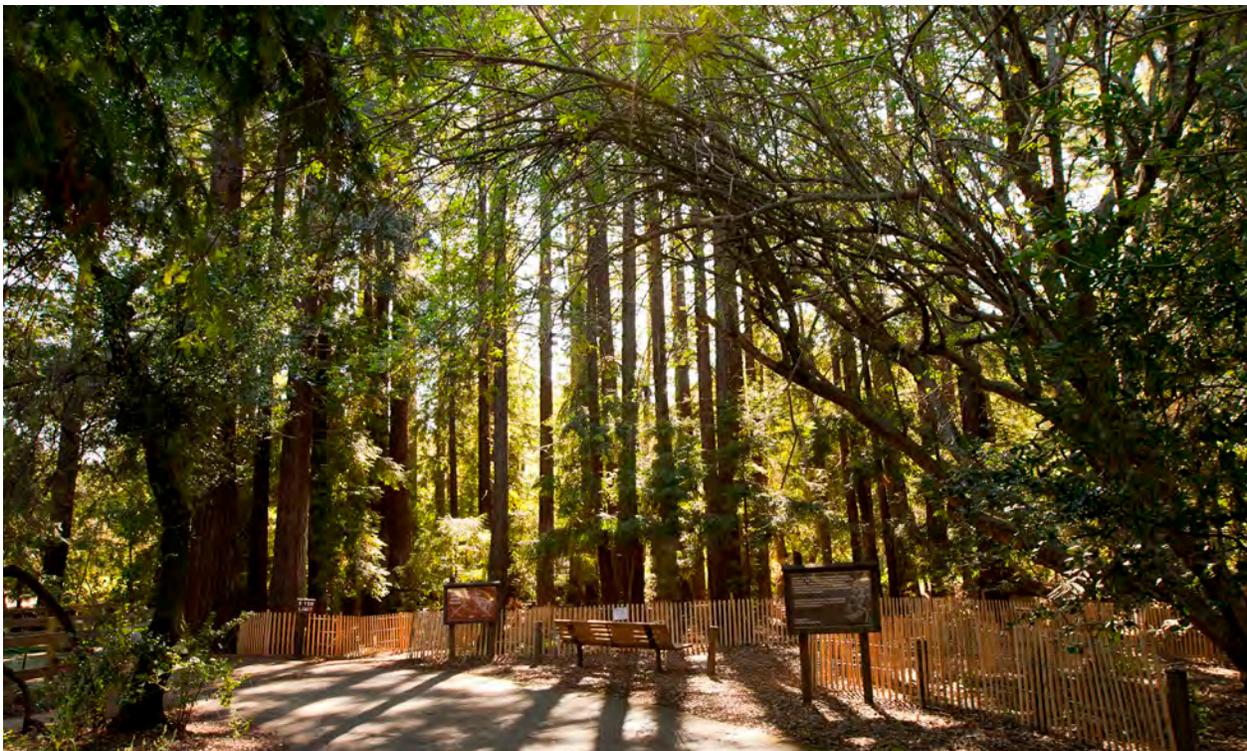


Redwood Grove

482 University Avenue

In March 2012, the Council directed that the Parks Plan consider the following recommendations from the Parks and Recreation Commission:

1. Provide facilities in Redwood Grove consistent with its current use, including:
 - a. Two meeting spaces, each to accommodate a group of 25 to 30 people, to meet requirements for the average size of school tours and designed to meet Group E Occupancy requirements for buildings used for children under 18 years of age
 - b. Public restrooms that are ADA-compliant with exterior access
 - c. Boardwalks and pathways
 - d. One ADA parking space
 - e. Signage for fire safety and dog rules
 - f. Outdoor gathering circle of rough-hewn design, integrated into landscape and potentially reflecting Ohlone customs
 - g. Administrative office with supplies storage
 - h. Teaching garden; may include raised vegetable beds, native landscape demonstration area
 - i. Pathway connection to Los Altos Hills
 - j. Animal safe trash receptacles
 - k. Kitchen to enhance program potential





Rosita Park

401 Rosita Avenue



Rosita Park is a 5.0 acre community park located in central Los Altos. The park includes a pathway, baseball and soccer, tennis courts, community garden, playground, concession stand and restrooms.

In 2009, the City completed and adopted the Rosita Park Master Plan. Construction on the park was completed in 2011.



Assessment

- As of 2011, Rosita Park had been completely renovated and had no known issues

Recommendation

- Maintain the park according to the City's standards of maintenance



Shoup Park

482 University Avenue



(Area in red highlights pathway connecting Shoup Park to Redwood Grove)

Shoup Park is a 3.95 acre neighborhood park located along Adobe Creek. It includes tot and school-age play areas, picnic tables, barbecues, turf area, off-street parking, a paved loop-pathway and public restrooms. It is also home to the Garden House, the Underground Teen Center and Patriot Corner (located adjacent to Garden House).

In 2010, the City acquired a portion of land between Redwood Grove and Shoup Park with the intention of creating a pathway between the two.



Assessment

- Parking lot is insufficient for park needs
- Conflict with non-park users parking in the parking lot for extended periods of time (primarily on weekends)
- Adjacent to Adobe Creek
- Access down entry road from University Avenue is steep

Recommendations

- Construct pathway to Redwood Grove
- Look for opportunities to provide additional parking



Village Park

San Antonio Road and West Edith Avenue

Village Park is a 0.78 acre, passive neighborhood park located across the street from downtown Los Altos. It offers walking paths (with lighting), benches, turf area, drinking fountain, picnic table and barbeque area. Limited parking is available along West Edith Avenue and additional parking is located in the Parking Plaza across the street.



Assessment

- Low impact park
- Bench seating
- One picnic table
- Limited parking

Recommendation

- Explore potential/low traffic generating activities





OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

647 North San Antonio Road

The City owns a property located at 647 North San Antonio Road in north Los Altos. The property is a 0.5 acre parcel and is home to the San Antonio Club, a local historical landmark. The site also includes play areas and off-street parking. The San Antonio Club was renovated in 2011 and houses the Tiny Tots pre-school program of the City of Los Altos Recreation Department. The site, including the building, is available for public use during non-school hours.



Opportunities

- Repurpose the site into a neighborhood park by opening the play areas for public use when not in use by users of San Antonio Club
- Rent the San Antonio Club for functions similar to what is in practice at the Garden House in Shoup Park



Hetch Hetchy Right-of-Way Los Altos Avenue (connecting to Arastradero Road in Palo Alto)



The Hetch Hetchy Right-of-Way is a 0.17 acre strip of land connecting Los Altos Avenue in north Los Altos to Arastradero Road in Palo Alto. The land is owned by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, but maintained by the City. The right-of-way includes a bike path.



Opportunities

- Augment the landscaping along the bike path and right-of-way



CITYWIDE GOALS

While the current City of Los Altos parks system is well-cared for and well-loved, goals and recommendations should be established to ensure future generations will be able to enjoy the use of city parks for years to come. These goals complement those set forth in the Parks Assessment chapter and should help to guide future development and planning of parks in Los Altos.

PARK ACREAGE

Los Altos currently has approximately 45.45 acres of dedicated parkland within the City. This equates to approximately 1.57 acres per 1,000 residents. As shown in the Park Acreage Comparison table in the Introduction of this Plan, Los Altos ranks below comparable cities in the Bay Area in terms of park acreage. One goal of the City should be to increase the amount of total parkland.



The General Plan calls for new subdivisions within Los Altos to dedicate 5.0 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. If this number were to be applied to the entire City, approximately 100 additional acres of parkland would need to be provided. Such a goal may prove too costly and may be impracticable for a fully-developed city such as Los Altos. Instead the City should seek to maintain current parkland and set a reasonable goal of total park acres.

As the City looks to expand its parkland, sites should be identified and selected based on location and proximity to other parks. The City should strive to “fill in the gaps” of the City’s park system (i.e., those areas which are not close to parks). Areas that are currently lacking in parks include all of north Los Altos (identified as north of Almond Avenue), south Los Altos (specifically south of Foothill Expressway), and central Los Altos (between Rosita Park and McKenzie Park). As land is identified, the City should look to provide primarily neighborhood parks as well as open space/nature preserves. The City should also look for opportunities to expand existing parks, where feasible.

The City also requires payment of park in-lieu fees for the purpose of providing park and recreational facilities as allowed by the Quimby Act (California Government Code Section 66477).



Citywide Goals



Recommendations

- Maintain current parks as dedicated parkland
- Provide 60 acres of parkland citywide
- Provide a park in north Los Altos
- Look for opportunities to expand existing parks, where feasible
- Continue to require park in-lieu payments for new developments

WALKING PATHS/TRAILS

Hiking and walking were identified by Los Altos residents as the most popular outdoor activity, as identified by the Community Survey conducted by Godbe Research in 2010.

Ninety-six percent of residents rated hiking or walking as “very” or “somewhat important.” This indicates a need for opportunities to hike and walk. Currently, Los Altos residents have trails within the City and enjoy close proximity to many hiking and walking facilities in surrounding communities, such as Los Altos Hills and the Rancho San Antonio Open Space Preserve. Several Los Altos parks also offer walking paths which traverse significant portions of the park including Rosita, Shoup and Lincoln Parks and Redwood Grove. The Hetch Hetchy Right-of-Way also includes a pathway. These pathways should be maintained so as to encourage their use by residents. Los Altos should also look for opportunities to create pathways and trails within the City. One such opportunity is the joint venture with the Cities of Cupertino, Mountain View and Sunnyvale to create a trail along Stevens Creek.

Recommendations

- Maintain current pathways in good condition and repair as needed
- Consider pathways when designing new parks or renovation of current parks
- Support the completion of the Stevens Creek Trail





FIELD SPACE

The scarcity of city-owned athletic fields is a topic that has created concern among various sports leagues and groups. Many of the various sports groups that use Los Altos parks complain of too many users and not enough fields. Many of the groups expressed that they have difficulties in scheduling what field space exists.

Currently, Los Altos owns and operates athletic fields at three parks: Grant, Hillview and Rosita. Hillview Park has separate soccer and baseball fields. The soccer field has been identified by user groups as too small for older age groups and the baseball field is relatively small and is ideal for 8 to 10 year olds. Rosita Park offers a full soccer field and full baseball diamond, but cannot support both at the same time as the soccer field runs through the outfield of the baseball diamond. Grant Park contains a soccer field that can only support age groups under 14. Although Heritage Oaks Park does not contain a formal sports field, it is used as an informal practice area.



A potential solution for the lack of athletic fields is to explore a joint venture with the various school districts within the City. Such an agreement would help to improve maintenance of school fields and to coordinate scheduling between Los Altos Recreation Department teams and other organized teams.

Recommendation

- Work with the school districts to provide a single entity in charge of scheduling and maintenance of fields



Citywide Goals



CREEKS IN PARKS

Several Los Altos parks are enhanced by creeks that flow within the park. Adobe Creek flows through Shoup Park and Redwood Grove, and Permanente Creek flows through Heritage Oaks Park. These creeks provide a wonderful, natural element to the City. In 2009, the City contracted with ACTERRA to provide habitat restoration along Adobe Creek in Redwood Grove. As part of this work, ACTERRA and its volunteers have worked to restore the creek bank in Redwood Grove. In order to preserve and maintain the creeks, the City should work to restore and preserve the creek banks in all City parks.

Recommendations

- Continue habitat rehabilitation and creek bank restoration in Redwood Grove
- Begin efforts to preserve creek banks in Shoup and Heritage Oaks Parks





OTHER OPEN SPACE

The City owns a number of parcels throughout the City which are not dedicated parkland but can be classified as open space. These are usually parcels that are remnants of subdivisions and are usually too small for any sort of development. There are a few parcels which are larger and include:

- Woodland Library
- Springer Road and El Monte Avenue
- Green Oaks Lane and Bendigo Drive
- Heritage apricot orchard located at the Los Altos Civic Center

Recommendation

- Look for opportunities to acquire open space parcels as properties subdivide



El Retiro Property

Due to the rural nature of the City, there are examples of open space on private property. The largest such open space is located on the El Retiro property off of Manresa Lane. This property is a 51-acre property broken into four areas in 1984 when the owner desired



Citywide Goals

to develop a portion of the property. The entire property was limited to 40 dwelling units. A density bonus provision allowed that a minimum of 10 acres be dedicated as private open space in exchange for 10 additional dwelling units. The owner used this bonus and dedicated 10 acres as private, open space. The agreement further allows an additional density bonus in which the 10 acres become public, open space and property of the City.



Recommendation

- Remain cognizant of the agreement for the Open Space Easement on the El Retiro property

Aspirations

Other citywide goals can be seen as more aspirational in nature. The City may currently not be in a position to carry out recommendations for these topics and as such should work toward certain goals and aspirations.

DOG PARK

An off-leash dog park in Los Altos has been a topic of discussion for years. A CIP was created in 2009 for construction of a dog park. That project was funded but placed on hold until a site was selected.

The difficulty in building a dog park is that such parks typically generate a strong, negative reaction by immediate neighbors. Currently, there is not overwhelming support for building a dog park in the City. In a survey conducted in 2010 by Godbe Research for this plan, a dog park was rated “Very Important” or “Somewhat Important” as a facility they would like to have available in Los Altos by 53% of respondents (45% of respondents answered “Not Important”).

As of 2011, dogs are allowed, on-leash, in all Los Altos Parks and dogs and owners are frequently seen in the parks. Whether or not a dog park is built, the City should continue to allow dogs on-leash in all City parks.



In planning for a dog park, certain criteria should be met before designing such a park. At a minimum, a site should include:

- Sufficient room for off-leash activities for dogs of all sizes (at least one-half acre)
- Sufficient parking for park use
- Sufficient buffer between the park and surrounding residential areas to mitigate impact from the park on homes
- Access to water (drinking fountain or spigot)



None of the parks in Los Altos, as presently constituted, meet all of these criteria. As such, a site outside of the current park system that includes all of the above criteria should be identified before funds are allocated for a dog park. A dog park should include the following within the design:

- A 4' to 6' fence surrounding the dog area
- Adequate drainage
- Nearby parking
- Clear and well-placed signs for park rules
- Shade and water for both dogs and owners

- Seating located away from perimeter fence
- Covered trashcans/waste disposal stations

Recommendation

- Continue to allow dogs on-leash in all City parks

Aspiration

- Strive to identify a location in Los Altos for an off-leash dog park



Citywide Goals

SKATE PARK

Historically, the City operated a temporary skate facility at the Hillview Community Center during the summer months between 1996 and 2003. The facility was closed in 2003 due to the poor condition of the temporary equipment. Previous members of the Youth Commission have advocated constructing a skate park in Los Altos for a number of years. Recently, individual Youth Commissioners have suggested installing skateable art in locations throughout the City.



A skate park was included in the early planning for the Civic Center Master Plan, but received a low ranking on the community survey and was thus removed from the Master Plan. A skate park was included in the survey for the Parks Plan and once again received a low ranking. However, it is important to note that both surveys were conducted among voting community members and as such did not target likely users of a skate park or facility.

One of the focus groups interviewed during the public outreach portion of this Plan was made up of teenagers. They indicated that middle school-aged teens were more likely to skateboard than older teens and stated that although they personally did not skate, they knew teens who did and who would use a skate park or facility.

A CIP was created for a skate park and money allocated for design and construction in FY2012-2013.



The primary issue to be resolved with a skate park is location. Generally residents do not want a skate park near their home or business. In planning for a skate park, certain criteria should be met before the design phase. At a minimum, a site should meet the following:

- Located in a highly visible location (that is easily monitored)
- Separated from residential areas
- Located near food (as recommended by the Teen Focus Group)
- Easily accessible by public transportation or easily reached by pedestrians or other modes of transportation

Recommendation

- Survey potential users of a skate park to determine demand (specifically middle school-aged children)
- Follow criteria for placement of a skate park within Los Altos

Aspiration

- Explore installation of skateable art in locations throughout the City
- Explore placement of skate elements on school property



RESTROOMS

As of 2011, Shoup, Hillview, McKenzie, Heritage Oaks, Marymeade, Grant and Rosita Parks all have flush restrooms. Redwood Grove has temporary restrooms that have been provided by the City. Montclair Park occasionally will have portable restrooms placed in the park by sports groups. These are not allowed by the City and are removed upon notification. Montclair, Village and Lincoln Parks do not have restroom facilities provided by the City.

Because constructing restrooms in parks is costly, the following criteria should be met for placement of restrooms in City Parks:



Citywide Goals

- Park should include a program or activity (i.e., a playground, sports field, tennis courts or picnic area)
- Proximity and ease of access to highly public centers (i.e., shopping centers or community centers)
- Park should have sufficient room to provide for restrooms

As presently used, Village Park and Lincoln Park do not merit the installation of restrooms. Should the nature of these parks change, restrooms should be considered. Prioritization for placement of restrooms should be as follows:

1. Montclair Park
2. Village Park
3. Lincoln Park

Recommendation

- Follow criteria for placement of restrooms within City parks

Aspiration

- Provide restrooms in all active parks.

DOWNTOWN

Another opportunity is to add a park, plaza, commons or dedicated open area in the downtown or expand and renovate the existing Community Plaza (see page 8). Currently, the only public, open space in the downtown triangle is the Community Plaza. As described in the Parks Assessment chapter, the Community Plaza is currently underutilized as a public gathering space and is further limited by its size and location.

One option to consider is potentially closing a low-traffic street or parking plaza and creating a dedicated park or open area downtown with amenities such as playground and picnic area. Such a park should include public restrooms.

Aspiration

- Consider the viability of creating open space downtown.
- Provide public restrooms in Downtown (either in a Park or Open Space).





FUNDING

A funding strategy is necessary to implement the various action items listed in this Plan. As part of this process, it is important to identify the existing and potential funding sources to determine a funding strategy. All cost and funding elements should be evaluated and updated periodically to reflect current values and economic climate of the region. Existing funding sources should be reviewed and validated for effectiveness. New funding sources should be identified and explored.

It should be kept in mind that funding for operations and maintenance (O&M) is as critical as funding for facilities and park development. O&M funding includes equipment, program staff salaries, public safety, administration and maintenance – such as tree trimming, sod replacement, painting buildings, repair of roofs and irrigation systems, sealing parking lots, etc. Limiting O&M funding may well cause greater capital costs in the future for repairs and replacement.



GENERAL FUND

Los Altos supports park maintenance and recreation activities through the General Fund. This fund accounts for all financial resources necessary to carry out basic governmental activities of the City that are not accounted for in other funds. The General Fund provides resources to departments which are responsible for various aspects of the City’s parks and facilities acquisition, development and maintenance.

Maintenance Costs

Maintenance costs are not capital costs, but must be factored into any budget planning. This is one of Los Altos’ challenges as with many communities. Providing park land for residents is only one part of the challenge. Continuing to keep parks safe and attractive to residents is equally important as providing an adequate number of parks. This balancing act can be a difficult task. Parks should be safe and enjoyable for residents and the City of Los Altos should focus its efforts on continuing to improve the maintenance of its parks and keep maintenance as a key part of the planning process.



Funding



CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT COSTS

Renovation of Existing Parks

To meet the current and future needs as stated in the above sections as well as address the issues related to the aging infrastructure of the parks, the City will need to anticipate and budget for the costs associated with capital improvements and maintenance. These costs include upgrades to existing parks, construction of new facilities on existing park land owned or leased by the City, and the purchase and construction of new facilities on future park land acquisitions.

Both present and future regulatory requirements will have a significant impact

on new as well as O&M of existing facilities. Key current requirements include:

- **Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Compliance**

The Federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and State Title 24 mandate disabled access to public facilities. Los Altos parks vary in their accessibility and need for upgrades.

- **Consumer Product Safety Commission Recommendation Compliance**

As required by Senate Bill No. 2733, it is mandatory that all playgrounds follow the standards for playground safety by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). The City must continue to perform annual reviews by a certified playground inspector.

Current and scheduled park renovation projects are funded from two main sources: the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and the Park In-Lieu Fund.

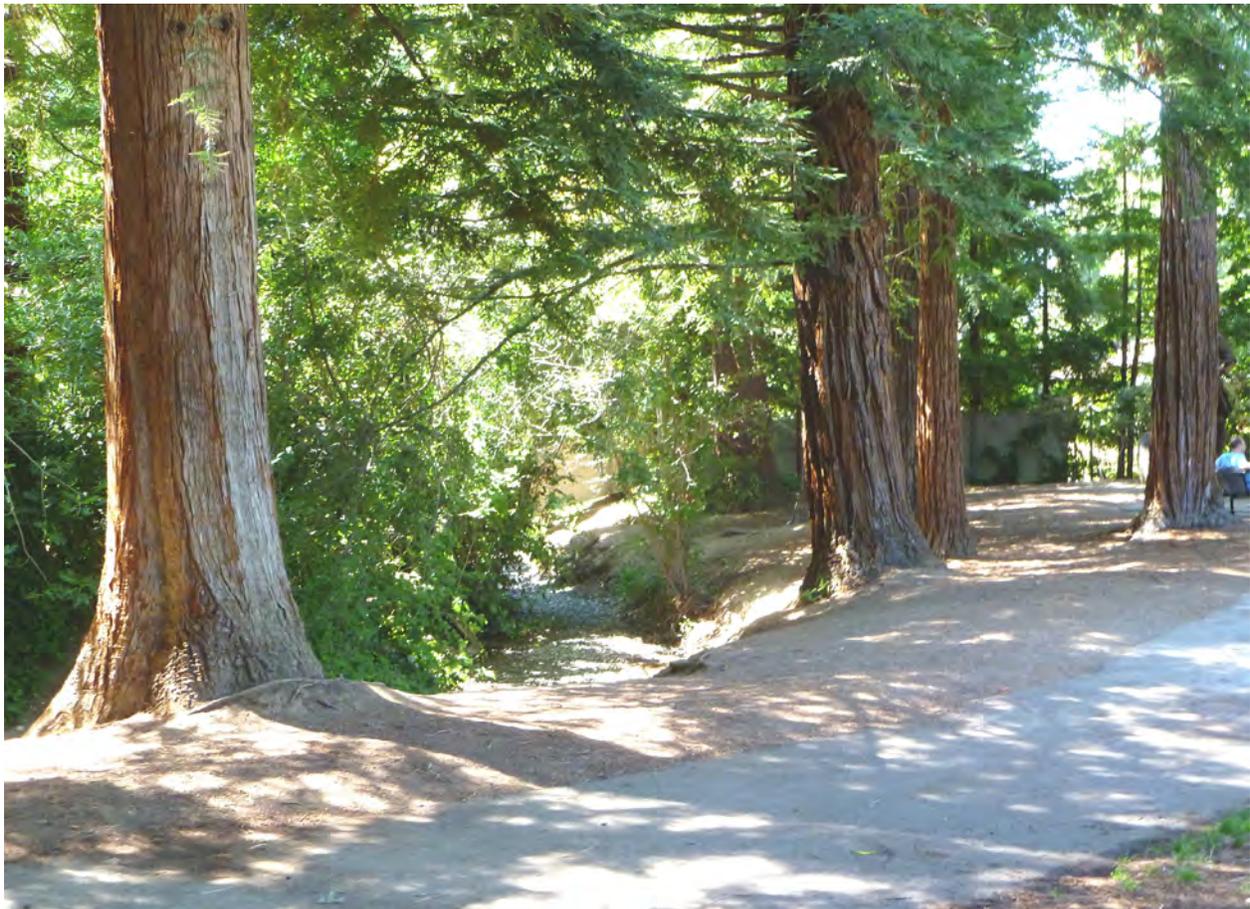




FUNDING PRINCIPLES

The three basic principles that should guide future decisions regarding financing mechanisms are as follows:

1. Costs for new infrastructure and public amenities should be the responsibility of developers, property owners, and where appropriate, the public.
2. Sources of both capital and on-going maintenance revenue should be considered as a part of any financing strategy to ensure that all improvements can be maintained without placing an undue burden on the City.
3. Whenever possible, Park In-Lieu Funds or other restricted funding sources should be expended prior to utilization of unrestricted General Funds or Capital Improvement Funds for construction projects.



FUNDING IMPLEMENTATION GOALS AND STRATEGIES

It is critical to develop a sustainable funding mechanism for maintenance and operation of Los Altos parks and park facilities. Park land and facility expenditures should be supported



Funding

within the context of the City's fiscal plan to meet the City's desired park land level of service as established in the General Plan.

Park land and facility expenditures should be supported within the context of the City's short and long-term fiscal plan and forecasts.

- Expand facility resources and programming which are designed to maximize cost recovery especially as they relate to fee-based and program specific activities.

Pursue special funding for unique facilities, landscape and maintenance needs.

- Create Mello-Roos assessment districts for unique facilities. (Mello-Roos districts are a form of financing that can be used by cities to finance major improvements and services within the city. Two-thirds of the voters in the area must vote in favor of becoming a Mello-Roos district.)
- Provide opportunities to create assessment districts for unique facilities, landscape or maintenance needs.

Promote the acquisition and development of new parks and facilities.

- Continue to require park dedication, public open space, and/or fees in-lieu of, for all new subdivisions and multi-family residential developments in Los Altos.
- Explore opportunities to preserve open space through easements and transference of development rights.
- Use bond and tax measures to fund major park and facility improvement and acquisition projects.
- Research and pursue available grant funding opportunities.
- Pursue opportunities for future land acquisitions through easements and land gifts.





Develop relationships with other organizations and agencies to meet unmet needs.

- Explore opportunities to work with other agencies through joint-use agreements to implement park improvements.
- Explore opportunities to work with private or service clubs for sponsorships of park improvements.

ALTERNATIVE FUNDING SOURCES

The City of Los Altos currently utilizes three different funding sources: Park In-Lieu Fees, CIP and General Funds. There are a number of other funding opportunities available to the City as it considers funding for future park development, renovation, acquisition and maintenance. Additional funding sources available include:

- Land Dedication
- Development Agreements – Turnkey Park Dedication
- Pay As You Go Facilities Construction
- User Fees
- Cooperative Funding Agreements
- Sale of Public Lands
- Debt Financing/Bonds



Funding

- Measure C – Mello-Roos Community Facilities Act of 1982
- General Taxes
- Creation of Local Trusts or Philanthropic Organizations
- Park Sponsorships
- Donations
- Grants

Some of the items on this list may not be viable options for the City currently, but may become so in the future. As such the City should remain aware of different funding options.

Individual projects lend themselves more to one funding source over another. Consideration of a project's characteristics, location and community impacts should be taken into consideration when determining possible funding sources.





PARK MAINTENANCE

The Maintenance Services Department has established park service levels that meet or exceed industry standards of care, aesthetics and appearance. Department operations include:

- General Maintenance
- Turf Management
- Irrigation
- Lighting
- Custodial
- Landscaping

Approximately 25% of the Maintenance Services budget is dedicated to park maintenance.

Maintenance Services staff work within allocated resources to implement best management practices to provide Los Altos residents with beautiful parks.



A properly managed and implemented maintenance program is vital to the longevity of any park improvement, increases public safety, and creates enjoyable experiences for the public through their use. Currently, the Maintenance Services Department supplements staff maintenance efforts with contract services for custodial maintenance, tennis court washing, tree maintenance and other services. The combination of efforts between trained City staff and contract services keeps the parks and facilities clean and attractive. It is critical to identify the operation and maintenance costs associated with a proposed facility improvement or City policy that significantly affect operating costs. Once costs are identified, the funds must be



Park Maintenance

realized and incorporated into the budget to not deter from established maintenance standards in other areas.

REGULATIONS

Park maintenance operations have to comply with various different regulatory agency requirements. Compliance usually involves documentation, record keeping, training, continuing education and commitment by staff. Key regulations include:



- General safe working standards (CalOSHA)
- Pesticide applications, posting and reporting (California Department of Pesticide Regulations and Santa Clara County Department of Agriculture)
- Integrated Management Policy implementation (City Policy and required by State Water Resource Board)
- Cleaning and percolation tests on bioswales (State Water Resource Board)
- Annual backflow testing (California Department of Public Health)
- Water efficient landscape standards (California Department of Water Resources)

There have been an increased number of regulations enacted in recent years and the trend is there are more to come. Many of these regulations have a direct fiscal impact to the Maintenance Services Department for compliance. It is important to adhere to these regulations and fund applicable programs appropriately. More stringent regulations are anticipated to arise in the areas of storm water protection, chemical and pesticide use, and irrigation management.

Recommendations

- Maintain standards of maintenance as required by regulatory agencies
- Continue to comply with American with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements as they relate to maintenance



PRIORITIES

The goals and recommendations set forth in this Plan can be initially divided into three categories: on-going, one-time and aspirational. The on-going actions are those actions that the City is consistently undertaking (ex. maintenance of parks). These actions are not as defined or visible as many one-time projects, but are vital to providing a first-class park system. One-time recommendations are those projects which are undertaken and completed (ex. a park renovation). These projects are typically capital projects and can provide greater changes to the parks. One-time recommendations can be further broken out into categories of short- and long-term and can be prioritized in a more linear fashion than on-going recommendations. Aspirational goals are precisely that: aspirational in nature.



ON-GOING RECOMMENDATIONS

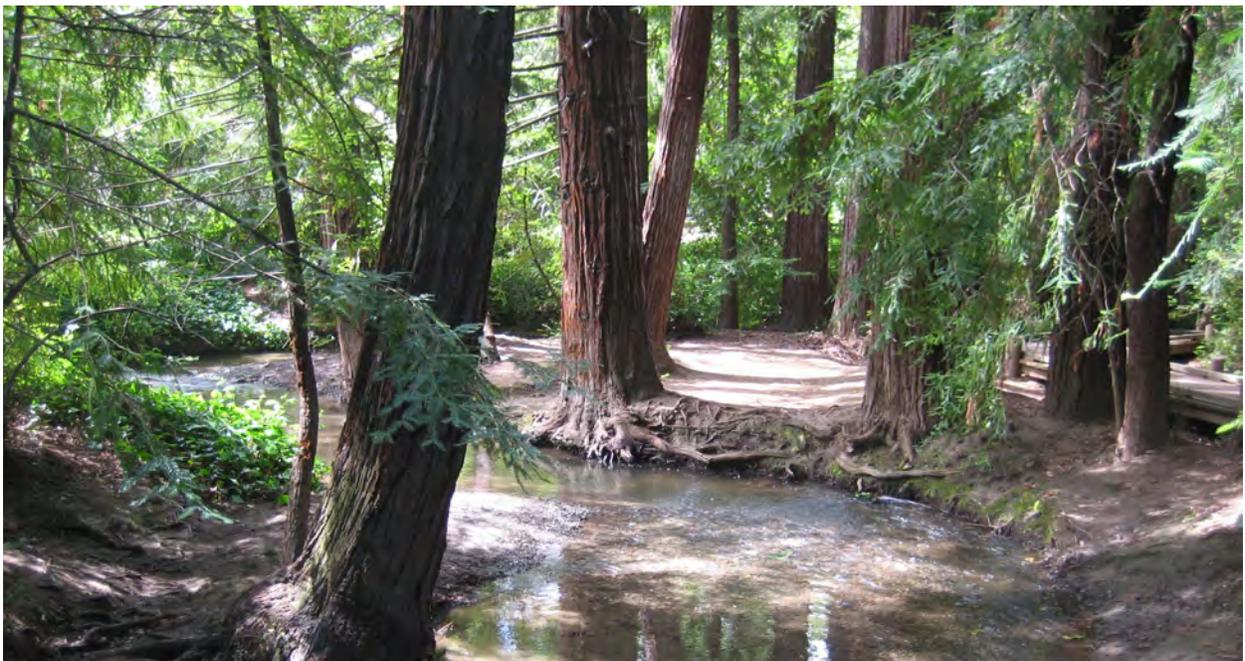
The following are those on-going recommendations set forth in this Plan. They are not prioritized as they are recommendations that the City should strive to follow in order to maintain such a great park system.

- Maintain the south portion of Heritage Oaks Park as undeveloped open space (see page 10 for more details)
- Continue habitat restoration in Redwood Grove (pages 16 and 26)
- Look for opportunities to enlarge Redwood Grove (page 16)
- Address use of facilities in Redwood Grove (page 16)
- Maintain Rosita Park according to City standards (page 18)
- Look for opportunities to provide additional parking at Shoup Park (page 19)
- Explore potential activities for Village Park (page 20)
- Rent the San Antonio Club for functions (page 21)
- Maintain current parks as dedicated parkland (page 24)



Priorities

- Look for opportunities to provide 60 acres of parkland citywide (page 24)
- Look for opportunities to expand existing parks (page 24)
- Continue to require park in-lieu payments (page 24)
- Maintain current pathways and trails (page 24)
- Consider pathways when designing new parks or park renovations (page 24)
- Support the completion of the Stevens Creek Trail (page 24)
- Work with the school districts to provide for scheduling and maintenance of athletic fields (page 25)
- Look for opportunities to acquire open space (page 27)
- Remain cognizant of the Open Space Easement on the El Retiro property (page 28)
- Continue to allow dogs on-leash (page 29)
- Follow criteria for placement of a skate park (page 31)
- Follow established criteria for placement of restrooms in City parks (page 32)
- Maintain standards of maintenance (page 40)
- Continue complying with ADA requirements as related to maintenance (page 40)





ONE-TIME RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are one-time recommendations set forth in this Plan. They are divided into two categories: Short-term (those projects which can be handled by the City in a timely manner and with little use of resources) and Long-term (those projects which will most likely require a CIP or more use of resources). In both categories recommendations are listed according to priority.



Short-term

1. Complete the pathway from Redwood Grove to Shoup Park (see pages 16 and 19 for more details)
2. Create a long-term agreement for use of Montclair Park (page 15)
3. Move tennis backboard in McKenzie Park (page 14)
4. Survey potential users of a skate park (page 31)
5. Move Walter Singer Bust from Community Plaza (page 8)
6. Begin efforts to preserve creek banks in Shoup and Heritage Oaks Parks (page 26)
7. Augment the landscaping along the Hetch Hetchy Right-of-Way (page 22)
8. Consider installing parking spaces along Portland Avenue at Heritage Oaks Park (page 10)



Priorities

Long-term

1. Provide a park in north Los Altos (page 24)*
2. Obtain the title for Lincoln Park (page 12)
3. Create a CIP for Redwood Grove to address creek bank restoration, replacement of the boardwalk and installation of permanent restrooms (page 16)
4. Make a decision on the future of Halsey House and Caretaker House in Redwood Grove (page 16)
5. Repurpose the 647 North San Antonio Road site into a neighborhood park (page 21)
6. Proceed with the Renovation CIP, installing new landscaping and expanding parking for Marymeade Park (page 13)
7. Proceed with the McKenzie Park Renovation CIP (page 14)
8. Proceed with the Renovation CIP, shaded seating and Jogging Trail CIP for Grant Park (page 9)
9. Proceed with the Renovation CIP and shaded seating for Heritage Oaks Park (page 10)
10. Proceed with the Renovation CIP, Tennis Court Lighting CIP, landscaping and restroom for Montclair Park (page 15)
11. Proceed with the Community Plaza Renovation CIP including an iconic feature (page 8)

*Due to the need to identify a location for a park in north Los Altos, projects which receive a lower priority should be considered first until a location can be identified and acquired.



One recommendation was not included in either the Short-term nor Long-term categories. That recommendation is for Hillview Park and is to proceed with the Community Center Master Plan (see page 11). This recommendation is dependent upon Council action to proceed with a bond measure to finance the project. As such, the timing of the recommendation is dependent upon when the City Council decides it is time to proceed with the project and therefore all other recommendations should be considered independently of any recommendations for Hillview Park.



ASPIRATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the aspirational recommendations set forth in this Plan. They may or may not be feasible, but are goals the City should aspire to attain. They are listed according to priority.

1. Consider the viability of open space downtown (see page 32 for more detail)
2. Provide restrooms in all active parks (page 32)
3. Provide public restrooms in Downtown (page 32)
4. Explore placement of skate elements on school property (page 31)
5. Explore installation of skateable art (page 31)
6. Strive to identify a location for an off-leash dog park (page 29)





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APPENDICES

Appendix A

- Phone Survey conducted by Godbe Research during August 2010 and detailed results
- Focus Groups conducted by Royston, Hanamoto, Alley and Abey (RHAA) during August 2010 detailed results
- Community Workshop held August 26, 2010 by RHAA detailed results

Appendix B

- Existing Joint Use Agreements for Blach Intermediate School gymnasium, Egan Junior High School gymnasium and Montclair Park



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