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Parks and Recreation Master Plan Adopted

By Cathy Tyson

It took two long hard years of meetings and study, but in the end the Parks, Trails and Recreation (PTR) Commission along with city staff put together a Master Plan to meet the needs of Lafayette citizens. Adopted in late November of 2009, it provides a framework for finding suitable sites and looks at costs for development and maintenance. "Currently, the city needs to acquire an additional 44 acres of parkland to meet its General Plan goal of 5 acres/1,000 people," stated the Lafayette Park and Recreation Facilities Master Plan. It's clear that as the population grows so must available parkland.

There are currently 91.3 acres of city-owned park and recreation facilities that are categorized into four types: neighborhood parks, community parks, the Community Center and downtown parks. They range in size from the compact .3 acre Plaza Park at the corner of Moraga Road and Mt. Diablo Boulevard

to the spacious 68 acres of Lafayette Community Park. Although that sounds large, in order to preserve riparian habitat, oak woodland and more, 70% of the Community Park will remain in its natural state.

After gathering extensive input from the public and analyzing the results, a priority list was developed based on community need and the location of existing parks. A public workshop was held, press releases were generated, a survey was completed and local neighborhood groups hosted a series of presentations by PTR Commissioners. Bottom line, 90% of survey respondents wanted the City to provide more parks, with the number one preference being additional sports fields, and secondly neighborhood parks.

The Park and Recreation Facilities Master Plan came to the conclusion that parkland should be developed to provide the following facilities:

- A new sports field facility to accommodate soccer, lacrosse, softball and/or baseball

commodate soccer, lacrosse, softball and/or baseball

- One or two active or passive neighborhood parks, to be located in Northeast Lafayette or West Lafayette

- Downtown parks to be identified in the separate Downtown Specific Plan
- A bike park to accommodate motocross (BMX) and mountain bicyclists
- An off-leash dog park with separate areas for large and small dogs
- A nature park to support nature education and appreciation

The Master Plan spells out exactly the minimum acreage required along with facility options, minimum width, length and slope and whether or not parking and restrooms are required – making it easier to look at parcels that may become available in the future.

For more information about funding for parks and to read the complete Master Plan, go to www.lovelafayette.org and click on Master Plan.

What's going on with the Bike Park?

By Cathy Tyson

Although a site is being examined as a potential location for a bike park, planning for it and actually having it complete and open to the public can be two entirely different things. "For several years, local youths have been building unauthorized bike jumps along Las Trampas Creek and other sensitive areas in the Community Park. Following a request from an organized group of bike enthusiasts, the Parks, Trails and Recreation (PTR) Director and PTR Commission thought it was important to address this environmental harm and simultaneously enhance the recreation opportunities in the Park by providing an area for bike riders to enjoy their sport in a clearly designated area within the Community Park," said PTR Director Jennifer Russell in a statement.

Back in November of 2008, the PTR Commission passed a motion to approve going forward with Phase I of the *Bike Park Project* – this includes design of the park and

submission of a recommendation for funds to start the design phase of the project.

In April of 2009, after input from the community and a design consultant, the PTR Commission approved a proposed design. In June of 2009 the proposed site was staked and a visual impact study was conducted, notices were posted in the park for three weeks and a consultant was hired to do an environmental habitat assessment of the area.

In October of 2009 there was a PTR Commission meeting to learn about the results of the habitat assessment. As it turns out, there is the potential presence of a special wildlife species. Biologists from Condor Country Consulting discussed the findings and possible mitigation measures.

"The bike park design is undergoing rigorous environmental review," said Russell. "That review has identified a documented sighting in 1994 in Las Trampas Creek of

a California Red-legged Frog, a protected species under the Federal Endangered Species Act. As a result, additional environmental analysis is being conducted to ensure that the bike park's effects will be mitigated and special permits are being sought through the Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife Service and California Fish and Game before construction can be authorized. Mitigations are being developed so that special plant and wildlife species are protected."

A biological survey is scheduled for the coming spring, and an environmental consulting firm has been selected to review drainage changes in the creek that may affect permitting requirements with the Army Corps of Engineers. Parks Trails and Recreation Director Jennifer Russell invites questions or comments via her e-mail address: jrussell@ci.lafayette.ca.us or go to www.lafayettebikepark.com for more information.

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