



Meeting Date: April 30, 2009

TOWN OF MORAGA

STAFF REPORT

To: Parks and Recreation Commission
From: Jay Ingram, Parks and Recreation Director
Subject: April Agenda Items

Unfinished Business

A) Multi-Generational Community Center/Moraga Center Specific Plan Request

- 1) Provide a recommendation to the Moraga Planning Commission regarding:
 - a) size and location of the proposed multi-generational community center
 - b) potential for a neighborhood park, or something similar
 - c) potential trail

Background

The Park and Recreation Commission had a public meeting on April 21, 2009 to discuss the recreational elements within the Moraga Center Specific Plan (MCSP) area. Approximately one hour of discussion was held resulting in a continued discussion to April 30, 2009.

While nothing was voted upon, there appeared to be a general consensus that site B would be a preferred location for a multi-generational facility. It was requested that the meeting on the 30th include a whiteboard for the commission to present different scenarios. It was also suggested that the Commission set up some sort of decision tree to help facilitate an eventual recommendation.

Staff recommends that the Commission re-visit the recently accepted Parks and Recreation Master Plan for complete details. Provided below is the recommendations from the Master Plan Document.

MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter of the Master Plan outlines a series of recommendations designed to enhance the Moraga parks and recreation system. These recommendations include new parks and facilities, improvements to existing parks and facilities, and system-wide

improvements. All recommendations reflect both the findings of the public involvement process and data analysis. Summaries of public involvement activities can be found in Appendix B. Appendix C contains a synopsis of the Plan's technical analysis.

In addition, the recommendations below are designed to match the policies contained in parks and recreation element of the Moraga General Plan. In accordance with the General Plan, the Master Plan recommendations maximize the use of existing community assets, encourage the development of high quality parks and facilities, improve accessibility for all residents, and foster physical and programmatic connectivity.

When implemented, these recommendations will help the Town achieve its vision:

*Moraga Parks & Recreation will build a healthier community,
protect the natural environment, and support a high
quality of life for all residents.*

The recommended park and recreation system will ensure that each resident in Moraga has access to a variety of recreation opportunities. Developed parks should be situated for easy access by bicycle, foot, or car. In addition, it is recommended that each major region of the Town contain protected natural areas that provide opportunities for trail-related and nature-related activities. To make this concept a reality, the Plan recommends the preservation and development of two new neighborhood parks, one special use area, and acres of open space.

This Plan also recommends developing recreation facilities not currently provided in Moraga, such as an off-leash dog park. It proposes a new 30,000 multi-generational community center to meet the Town's need for indoor activity areas, meeting rooms, and gymnasiums. It suggests the development of additional sports fields to provide much needed athletic space. New trails are recommended to create transportation alternatives, provide recreation opportunities, and connect residents to the regional open space network. In sum, the Plan proposes new facilities that encourage active, healthy lifestyles by supporting the activities that residents participate in most.

In addition to recommending new parks and recreation facilities, the Master Plan suggest improvements to existing parks and facilities. These upgrades are designed to protect existing investments, enhance user safety and ADA accessibility, maximize maintenance efficiencies, and better support recreation activities. Major improvements are proposed at Moraga Commons and Rancho Laguna to enhance recreation activities at these significant sites. The Plan incorporates improvements to the Hacienda de las Flores and Mulholland Preserve as well. These will enable the Town to chart a direction for Hacienda uses and restore natural resources at Mulholland Preserve.

The Master Plan also suggests that the Town pursue several projects to improve the parks and recreation system as a whole. The most significant of these are an ADA Transition Plan to improve access for people with disabilities and a Maintenance Plan to define a maintenance level of service for each park type.

Finally, the Plan also includes a series of park and recreation projects that will be undertaken either in partnership or solely by other entities in Moraga. While these projects may or may not require capital outlay on the part of Town's Parks and Recreation Department, these projects are critical to the community's parks and recreation system. Potential private open space dedications, for example, will be essential in helping the Town meet its parkland needs, as will partnerships with schools and other public agencies.

PROPOSED RECREATION FACILITIES

Through the course of the planning process, Moraga residents identified a number of recreation needs which can be accommodated through the development of new recreation facilities.

Multi-Generational Community Center

This plan recommends that the Town pursue the development of a major multi-generational community center within town. In accordance with regional and national trends, the new community center should be designed at 30,000 s.f. This will allow the Department to house offices, gymnasiums, meeting rooms, and programming space in the building. The multi-generational community center should be a highly visible, state-of-the-art facility that acts as a magnet and gathering place for community activities. As such, it should be cited along a major arterial in a central location in town. The multi-generational community center should include:

- Four basketball courts, designed to serve as the primary courts for league use in the community;
- Multi-purpose classrooms and meeting space;
- Specialized activity areas, such as dance studios, stages, youth/teen rooms, and space for programs for older adults;
- Places for large group gatherings; and
- Social gathering space, such as a coffee shop or lounge.

Trails

This Plan recommends the development of a series of trails that form a network of alternative transportation and recreation opportunities and access to major community destinations. While some of these trails may fall to the Town to develop, trail projects may also be accomplished as a condition of approval for new development. Per the General Plan, the Town may require developers to provide appropriate provisions for parkland dedication, trails, trail easement, and/or in-lieu of fees as part of the planning and development process.

EXISTING RECREATION FACILITIES

This Plan also recommends a series of improvements to existing recreation facilities in Moraga. These improvements are designed to make better use of the Town's existing assets.

Hacienda de las Flores

With its new commercial kitchen, landscaping, and historic architecture, the Hacienda de las Flores has great potential for rentals and special events. Recognizing this potential, the Town has formed a committee to study and make recommendations on the Hacienda's future use. In keeping with this effort, this plan suggests that the Town develop a business plan for the Hacienda de las Flores.

School Facilities

The Town and its schools have a longstanding partnership to provide recreation facilities. In order to improve both this partnership and school recreation facilities, the Master Plan recommends the following:

- Partner with the Moraga School District to consider reconfiguring the fields at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School to increase capacity.
- Establish an annual fund to implement other facility improvements at schools in Moraga.

PROPOSED PARKS

This Plan recommends the acquisition and development of two neighborhood parks and a special use area to meet the needs of the community. The Plan also recognizes the need to balance future development by preserving natural areas.

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks are proposed to serve two underserved areas as identified in Appendix C. These sites create a potential for joint stormwater detention, trail, and park development. All neighborhood parks should take into account the design guidelines in Appendix D, with facilities appropriate for the park size.

Special Use Area

The Plan recommends the development of a small special use area in a central location in town. The special use area should be planned in accordance with the design guidelines in Appendix D, and could serve as the site for the proposed gym and multi-generational community center.

EXISTING PARKS

This plan also recommends improvements and renovations to existing parks in Moraga.

Hacienda de las Flores

The Hacienda de las Flores is a 8.9 acre park in the northern Moraga and the Town's only special use area. The site includes a short nature trail, very small amphitheater, botanical garden, and four buildings which house the Town offices and provide recreation program space. Recommendations for this site include:

- Renovate turf.
- Implement ADA accessibility improvements.
- Complete other park renovations as recommended by the Hacienda Committee.

- Expand bike amenities.
- Improve existing trails.

Moraga Commons

Moraga Commons is the Town's main community park, sitting on 40.2 acres in the heart of the Town. At present, the Commons houses a sizable amphitheater, play equipment, a disc golf course, skate park, basketball courts, a volleyball court, and a perimeter trail, which has been included in the park acreage. Recommendations for this site include:

- Consider the development a new site master plan, which may include the following elements:
 - Develop a logical entrance with signage consistent with all Moraga parks.
 - Create a map of the site which also serves as a public art piece.
 - Expand bike amenities.
 - Renovate restrooms.
 - Renovate and provide new picnic areas, including picnic tables for a variety of group sizes and a covered picnic shelter.
 - Restore Laguna Creek to provide an improved overlook, improved creekside picnic area, and dry creek bed that serves as a natural sand and water play area
 - Develop a community-scale play area.
 - Provide ADA accessible seating and an accessible path of travel in front of the amphitheater.
 - Consider relocating bocce court and horseshoe pits to a more central area near other small-scale sports facilities.
 - Consider providing a gazebo for viewing sports activities.
 - Develop a dog park in the 'back 40.'

Mulholland Preserve

The Mulholland Open Space Preserve is the Town's only natural area. Mulholland Preserve spans 250 acres adjacent to Orinda on the Town's west side and used by the public primarily for walking, hiking, and running. 99 acres are also leased as agricultural land. Recommendations for this site include:

- Remove invasive species.
- Restore natural areas.
- Develop trails and amenities as permitted by the Moraga Open Space Ordinance and with consideration of environmental impacts.

Rancho Laguna

Rancho Laguna occupies a 8.4 acre site at the southern end of Moraga and currently houses a playground, large turf area, picnic areas, and a volleyball court.

Recommendations for this site include:

- Consider developing a new site master plan, including the following elements:
 - Create monument entrance signage consistent with all Moraga parks.
 - Expand bike amenities.
 - Renovate restrooms.
 - Create a new, central ADA accessible play area that incorporates historical, cultural, environmental, and age-specific elements.
 - Develop a central plaza area and use as amphitheater.
 - Consider multi-use, synthetic turf sports fields in the existing turf areas.
 - Renovate and provide new picnic areas, including picnic tables for a variety of group sizes and a covered picnic shelter.
 - Provide small scale sports activities, such as sand volleyball and basketball, adjacent to picnic areas.
 - Renovate the creekside as a natural area with restored vegetation, ADA accessible pathways, interpretive signage, and benches.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

During the process of updating the Park and Recreation Master Plan, residents identified several other areas where the Town can improve, strengthen, and further develop its services. This section provides both strategies and specific recommendations for partnerships, plans and assessments, park and facility planning, and financing system improvements.

Partnerships

Collaboration among service providers has become increasingly important in meeting community needs for facilities, programs, and services. Specific recommendations for the Town of Moraga include:

- Facilitate collaboration among area recreation providers, including East Bay Regional Parks (EBRPD), East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD), local school districts, Lafayette, Orinda, Contra Costa County, and other public and private agencies to improve services and maximize efficiency.
- Continue cultivating positive, strong relationships with current partners.
- Maintain and improve the Joint Facilities Committee partnership in order to provide Moraga residents with sufficient high quality sports facilities.
- Strengthen facility use agreements with local school districts for the scheduling of gymnasiums and sports fields.
- Coordinate with local school districts for joint implementation of sport field improvements in exchange for field use.

- Partner with businesses to provide services and amenities, such as vendors in parks.
- Partner with developers to acquire land for parks, natural areas, trails, and recreation facilities.
- Pursue and maintain partnerships with public, private, and non-profit organizations to acquire, develop, and maintain parks, open space, and recreation facilities that reflect the objectives and goals of this plan, such as community centers and athletic fields.

Town Plans and Assessments

The Town should conduct and develop the following plans and assessments to support the provision of parks and facilities:

- Develop a Natural Area Management Plan.
- Develop an ADA Transition Plan.
- Develop a Maintenance Plan to define and establish the a maintenance level of service for each park type.

Park and Facility Planning

Specific recommendations affecting the park and facility planning include:

- Resolve the issue of school field use, scheduling, and maintenance.
- Evaluate how well potential acquisitions support the goals and guidelines identified in this Plan.
- Conduct a feasibility study prior to design and development of all new major facilities.

Financing

The following recommendations pertain to the Department's financial resources:

- Maximize donations, grants, and partnerships to increase the resources available for parks and recreation.
- Encourage donations of land, facilities, equipment, services, and gifts that are consistent with goals and objectives of the Park and Recreation Master Plan and benefit the larger community.
- Explore opportunities to add revenue-generating facilities to parks where appropriate.
- Re-evaluate annually the priority and timeline for the implementation of projects within the park system as part of the development of the annual parks and recreation capital improvement budget.
- Re-assess the priorities of capital projects when updating the long-range park and recreation capital improvement plan every five years.
- Create a "replacement fund" to be able to act on needed maintenance and/or replacement of damaged or unsafe facilities, equipment, and other assets.

OTHER PROJECTS

In addition to projects that will be implemented by the Town of Moraga through the Parks and Recreation Department, this Plan identifies a number of new projects that will

be undertaken by other entities. When completed, these projects will contribute to the community's park and recreation system. At this time, these anticipated projects include both developers' open space dedications and projects to be carried out under the Public Works Department.

Private Open Space/Natural Areas

The Moraga Open Space Ordinance (MOSO), adopted by the Town in 1986, ensures that a significant amount of land in Moraga remains protected as open space. This protected land is usually held privately, but often contains provisions for public access. For example, in many cases public trails are planned for privately-held open space areas. This is the case with the Palos Colorados development, for instance, where 4.5 miles of trails are planned through 386 acres of open space. Though these assets will be privately owned, public access will be permitted.

Corporation Yard

The Town anticipates developing a new corporation yard in the next several years to replace the existing facility at the Hacienda de las Flores. Moving the existing facility will allow easier public access to Hacienda buildings and create additional space for event parking at the site. The development the new Corporation Yard will fall under the auspices of the Public Works Department.

Discussion

As Park and Recreation Commissioners you are empowered by the Town of Moraga Municipal Code to give advice and provide recommendations on recreation facilities and planning.

In preparation for this meeting, please study the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Use this document as a guide to make decisions/recommendations. If you agree with the Master Plan recommendations or not is really up to each individual. Let's discuss, draft out options, and come up with suggestions for the Planning Commission to forward with their recommendations to the Town Council.

Once this staff report was completed the transportation consultant provided some additional important information. In discussions with the traffic consultant on the MCSP, an additional mitigation measure has been brought to our attention. In order for the Town to place a 30,000 sq. ft. facility in the MCSP, we would need to provide a shuttle that would assist with traffic during the PM commute times. This shuttle would most likely run between Moraga and the BART station. The "breaking point" for shuttle service mitigation is 16,000 sq. ft. Once a facility in the MCSP is above 16,000 sq. ft. a shuttle service needs to be provided during PM commute times.

Fiscal Impact

Suggestions in this recommendation are conceptual in nature and do not require a financial analysis.

Alternatives

- 1) Provide a recommendation to the Planning Commission (attachment A)
- 2) Take no action, not providing a recommendation to the Planning Commission

Recommendation

Provide a recommendation on the requested recreational elements within the MCSP area.

Attachment A – Draft letter to Planning Commission