



# County of San Mateo

## Inter-Departmental Correspondence

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**Department:** PARKS

**File #:** 19-1028

Board Meeting Date: 11/5/2019

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**Special Notice / Hearing:** None  
**Vote Required:** Majority

**To:** Honorable Board of Supervisors

**From:** Peggy Jensen, Interim Parks Director

**Subject:** Flood County Park Landscape Plan and Final Revised Environmental Impact Report

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Recommendation regarding Flood County Park Landscape Plan's Final Revised Environmental Impact Report and Errata:

- A) Open public hearing
- B) Close public hearing
- C) Adopt a resolution authorizing:
  - 1. The certification of the Flood County Park Landscape Plan's Final Revised Environmental Impact Report and Errata; and
  - 2. Adoption of California Environmental Quality Act Findings of Facts and a Statement of Overriding Consideration; and
  - 3. Adoption of the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan; and
  - 4. Approval of the Flood County Park Landscape Plan.

**BACKGROUND:**

Flood County Park ("Flood") is located in the City of Menlo Park, and includes a playground, volleyball courts, baseball and softball fields, picnic sites, tennis courts, and adobe buildings built by the Public Works Administration. The park serves as a primary recreation resource for many residents of Menlo Park, North Fair Oaks, East Palo Alto, and Redwood City. It is also frequented by visitors from outside the south county area.

In 2014, the San Mateo County Parks Department (“Department”) assessed the condition of Flood’s facilities, and determined that a complete park overhaul was warranted. This led to the creation of the Re-imagine Flood Park project.

To determine how the park could best serve the public and what features were most desired, the Department conducted an extensive public engagement process that lasted eight months. More than 500 individuals participated in six workshops, including residents from Menlo Park, North Fair Oaks, East Palo Alto, Redwood City, and Atherton. Members of the Siena Youth Center and Sheriff’s Activities League, and representatives from the Menlo Legends Baseball Club, local high schools, youth soccer advocates, Little League Baseball, volleyball groups, and the UC Berkeley Master Gardeners of San Mateo and San Francisco participated as well. The Department also received 220 responses from on-line and in-person surveys. Lastly, the Department coordinated with the City of Menlo Park and the North Fair Oaks Community Council to gather feedback regarding the project and disseminate project updates. With information gathered throughout this process, the proposed Landscape Plan (Attachment A) was prepared.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **1. LANDSCAPE PLAN**

Through public workshops held from May 2015 to December 2015, community priorities for Flood were identified and incorporated into the Landscape Plan. The Landscape Plan includes rehabilitation of the existing baseball field, and installation of a new multi-use soccer and lacrosse field. The existing tennis courts would be relocated to accommodate field improvements, and the pétanque court would be removed to allow for field improvements and additional parking spaces. A promenade would traverse the center of the park from the parking lot to new all abilities playgrounds for children ages 2-5 and ages 5-12. Additional proposed improvements include a pump track, a demonstration garden, an adventure play area, a basketball court, a gathering meadow, and renovated picnic and reservation sites. The existing quantity of picnic and reservation sites will remain the same. As requested by members of the public, the Department will assess preservation of mature trees and existing adobe buildings, with the exception of one adobe restroom that is likely structurally unsalvageable.

### **2. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

#### **A. DRAFT AND FINAL EIR**

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”), the Department released a Notice of Preparation (“NOP”) of an Environmental Impact Report (“EIR”) for the project. A 30-day public review/comment period was opened, and the County received 20 comment letters responding to the NOP. Seventeen additional comments were received at an EIR Scoping Session. Feedback focused on preserving the aesthetics of Flood and protecting biological and cultural resources. Concerns regarding noise impacts and localized traffic congestion were also voiced.

As required by CEQA, the September 2017 Draft EIR analyzed potential project impacts associated with: aesthetics, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hydrology and water quality, noise, and traffic. To evaluate potential impacts that could result from use of the improvements proposed in the Landscape Plan, consultants used projections for long term growth in Menlo Park and Atherton and projected 2021 near term traffic conditions and projected 2040 long term traffic conditions.

During the September 2017 Draft EIR’s public review/comment period, the County received 79 comment letters. All comments were responded to in the May 2018 Final EIR. The comments

included concerns about noise, proximity of playfields to houses, potential loss of mature trees, localized parking and traffic impacts, and air quality. The Department also received a letter from the City of Menlo Park seeking to discuss, and possibly collaborate on traffic flow impacts and mitigation measures.

The September 2017 Draft EIR projected that of the 10 potential environmental impacts identified, most would be less than significant or reduced to a less-than-significant level through mitigating measures. As determined by the May 2018 Final EIR, traffic congestion at the intersection of Bay Road and Ringwood Avenue would be the only impact unable to be mitigated in a feasible manner, and required a Statement of Overriding Consideration to certify the EIR.

## B. REVISED EIR

Members of the public expressed concerns regarding the May 2018 Final EIR's 1) projected growth in park usage resulting from the proposed Landscape Plan, and 2) projected noise levels generated on-site from concurrent park events. Department staff thought these concerns warranted further consideration, and tasked the project consultant with conducting additional analysis. The Draft Revised EIR (Attachment B) projects visitor use data in a more conservative manner than in the May 2018 Final EIR, and analyzes the projected impacts of concurrent events based on forecasted peak usage. Peak usage represents the maximum number of visitors that could reasonably use park facilities concurrently with baseball games, soccer matches, and peak use of playgrounds, picnic sites, and other facilities occurring simultaneously. The data reflects peak use and not daily use. Visitor data was secured from the cities of Redwood City, Belmont, and San Mateo to reflect use patterns that could be similar to Flood.

In accordance with CEQA, the Department released a NOP of a Revised EIR for the project. A 30-day public review/comment period was opened, and the County received 12 comment letters. The Revised EIR entails changes to the executive summary, introduction and environmental setting, air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, noise, traffic, and project alternatives chapters. The County recirculated these chapters for public review and comments. Because of changes in the CEQA guidelines, new wildfire and energy chapters were added and circulated. All other issues were adequately addressed in the May 2018 Final EIR.

The Draft Revised EIR was circulated for a 45-day public review/comment period in August and September of this year. Sixteen written comments were submitted, and are responded to in the Final Revised EIR. A public meeting to receive comments was also held at the Fair Oaks Community Center on September 17, 2019, and 11 comments were received. A response to each comment is included in the Final Revised EIR (Attachment C). All impacts and mitigation measures identified in the Final Revised EIR can be found in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (Resolution, Exhibit B)

While the Draft Revised EIR identified potential impacts that may result from use of the proposed improvements, most of the impacts would be less than significant or mitigated to a less than significant level. One primary impact is increased noise from sporting events. This impact can be mitigated by prohibiting air horns, requiring permits for sound amplification equipment, and limiting athletic practices and games to 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. is. Another potential impact, traffic and circulation impacts caused by queuing at the park's pay station, can be mitigated by a change in parking collection procedures.

A subsequent count of parking spaces at Flood was completed on October 2, 2019, and confirmed a total of 320 parking spaces. As stated in the Draft Revised EIR, the projected maximum parking

demand during peak summer days under the Landscape Plan is 344 parking spaces. To address the deficit in parking spaces, the Landscape Plan has been revised to add 49 parking spaces. This has been accomplished by converting a portion of the pétanque court to parking and reconfiguring the existing lot. This count exceeds the peak parking demand of 344 parking spaces by 25 parking spaces. The Landscape Plan will comply with all Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. This change to the project requires an Errata (Attachment D).

Two significant and unavoidable impacts were identified that will require a Findings of Facts and a Statement of Overriding Consideration to certify the Final Revised EIR (Resolution, Exhibit A). These include:

- 1) Traffic congestion at the intersection of Bay Road/Ringwood Avenue. The Landscape Plan will have a significant and unavoidable impact on traffic delay at the intersection of Bay Road and Ringwood Avenue. The County finds that it is infeasible to mitigate this impact to a less-than-significant level due to physical and jurisdictional constraints at the affected intersection.
- 2) Anticipated increase in traffic noise on Ringwood Avenue during projected Saturday peak use (Noon to 4 p.m.). The Landscape Plan will have a significant and unavoidable impact on traffic noise. However, restricting weekend use of athletic fields at Flood County Park to reduce traffic noise would not fulfill the project objective to meet demand for active recreation facilities in San Mateo County.

The Final Revised EIR includes responses to comments that were submitted regarding the Draft Revised EIR, additional mitigation measures, and an Errata to clarify minor revisions that do not raise any significant impacts. California Environmental Quality Act Findings of Facts and a Statement of Overriding Consideration have also been prepared. A summary of all identified impacts, mitigation measures, and residual impacts after mitigation can be found in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan, which is incorporated in the Final Revised EIR.

#### PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

At the August 5, 2018, San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Commission meeting, the Commission received a presentation and public comment regarding the Landscape Plan and May 2018 Final EIR. Following extensive public testimony, the Commission voted 4-0 to recommend that the Board of Supervisors: 1) approve the Flood Park Landscape Plan, 2) certify the May 2018 Final EIR, and 3) adopt California Environmental Quality Act Findings of Facts and a Statement of Overriding Consideration.

#### NEXT STEPS FOR PUBLIC OUTREACH

Should your Board certify the Final Revised EIR, the Department will issue a Request for Proposals seeking a design firm to develop detailed project designs, plans, and specifications for the Landscape Plan. The design phase will include a robust public engagement process to determine specific park features, including location and dimensions.

County Counsel has reviewed and approved the resolution and Final Revised EIR as to form and content.

#### FISCAL IMPACT

Appropriations for the design phase are included in the Department's FY 2019-20 Recommended Adopted Budget. The Department will collaborate with the San Mateo County Parks Foundation to raise additional funds as anticipated construction costs may exceed current budgeted amounts.