



*A collaborative planning project between
California State Parks and
Santa Clara County Parks & Recreation Department*



Task Force Meeting #1 Meeting Summary

Time and Location:

October 16, 2007, 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Almaden Winery Community Center
5730 Chambertin Drive
San Jose, CA 95118

Attendance:

Task Force Members Present

Charlie Friedericks, member-at-large
R. Brian Gardiner, member-at-large
Rachael Gibson, Office of Supervisor Don Gage
Frank Giordano, Donor's Representative
Frances Grammer, Office of Assemblymember Jim Beall, Jr.
Stephanie Holm, Office of Councilmember Nancy Pyle (Alternate for Eric Krane)
Virginia Holtz, Board of Directors for Santa Clara County Open Space Authority
Rob Iverson, member-at-large
Laura Monczynski, member-at-large
Kevin O'Day, Santa Clara County Department of Agriculture & Environmental Management
Adina Pierce, VEP Community Association
Mike Potter, Office of Assemblymember Joe Coto
James C. Rowen, Santa Clara County Historical Heritage Commission
Erik Karstan Smith, City of San Jose Parks & Recreation Commission
Greg West, Santa Clara County Parks & Recreation Commission

Task Force Members Absent

Bruce Medlin, member-at-large
Khoa Vo, Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Commission

Members of the Public

Shiloh Ballard
Lani Ballard
Mary Bartlett, Clover Foundation
Lu Anne Behringer
Ursula Cabalzar, Newfoundland Club of Northern California
Michael Reyer, Newfoundland Club of Northern California
Eric Carruthers, Retired Principal Planner, Santa Clara County
Diana Disney, Equestrian non-profit
Louise Zechmeister
Dave Fadness, VEP Community Association
Aiko Fadness, VEP Community Association
Lou Ferguson

Barbara Friedericks
Craig Giordano (Alternate for Frank Giordano)
Rebecca Giordano
John Haggerty
Dan King
Jeanne Carbone Lewis, Times Community Newspapers
Kitty Monahan
David Noel, VEP Community Association
Linda Owens, VEP Community Association & Master Gardener
Marilyn Rodgers, VEP Community Association (Alternate Task Force Member for Adina Pierce)
Amor Santiago, The Health Trust
Deborah St. Julien

Project Team Members

Lisa Killough, Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department (SCCPRD) Director
Jane Mark, SCCPRD Project Manager
Jim O' Connor, SCCPRD Deputy Director of Operations & Maintenance
Matt Anderson, SCCPRD Chief Park Ranger
Tamara Clark-Shear, SCCPRD Public Information Officer
Dave Keck, CA State Parks, General Plan Unit
Eddie Guaracha, CA State Parks, Gavilan Sector of Monterey District

Consultants

Steve Hammond, WRT
Jacob Tobias, WRT
Brook Jensen, WRT
Sibella Kraus, SAGE

TAC Members

Gina Aning, City of San Jose Parks, Recreation & Neighborhood Services, Prusch Farm Park
Dave Giordano, Giordano Farms
Hans Toensfeldt, 4-H/Clover Foundation
Mike Kent, Master Gardeners Program Santa Clara County
Greg Van Wassenhove, Agriculture Commissioner for Santa Clara County
Ken Schreiber, Program Manager for Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan

OPENING REMARKS FROM COUNTY PARKS

Director Lisa Killough delivered the opening remarks, noting that the last time the SCCPRD planned a new park was in the 1960's. Walter Cottle Lester donated the property in 2003, and it will be his vision that will guide the plan for the park. Lisa thanked the Task Force members in advance for their commitment, noting that they were selected from many applicants. One of the purposes of the Task Force is for members to get to know each other and form relationships, and make the most of those relationships.

Jane Mark acknowledged the following partners in the planning process: CA State Parks, General Plan Unit, Monterey District and Gavilan District; funding partner Santa Clara County Open Space Authority (the remaining funding for the park is through the County's Park Charter Fund and Capital Improvement Program); WRT, planning consultants; Frank and David Giordano, who are working with the County on behalf of Mr. Lester; the SCCPRD in-house project team; County and State staff; and Open Space Authority staff.

Jane Mark noted that this is a participatory planning process. The Task Force serves as an advisory committee to the State and County Parks and Recreation Commissions, who will ultimately forward the plan to the State Commission and County Board of Supervisor for approval. SCCPRD received 43 applications from interested Task Force members. It was a difficult process to select members for a limited number of members-at-large seats on the Task Force. SCCPRD worked with Rachael Gibson, Policy Aide to Supervisor Don Gage of the County Board of Supervisors, on the final recommendations for the Task Force membership.

INTRODUCTIONS

The Task Force, Project Team and consultants introduced themselves.

At the beginning of the introductions, Dave Keck described the joint agreement between State Parks and SCCPRD. SCCPRD is taking the lead role in the planning process. The park will be classified as a State Park Unit, so the Master Plan will need to meet the State Parks General Plan requirements. The plan will be forwarded to the State Parks Commission for review and approval. Dave Keck noted that he has worked with WRT in the past and is confident in the planning team. State Parks is interested in the farming heritage of the Santa Clara Valley and in the educational component of the park.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Jane Mark provided a project background. The plan will have two roles, (1) as a Master Plan to be approved by the County Board of Supervisors, and (2) as a State Parks General Plan to be approved by State Parks and Recreation Commission. Also, the findings of the EIR will be certified by the County Board of Supervisors.

Jane Mark provided a brief history of the property, and described the 1996 “Preliminary Donor’s Vision” plan, which Mr. Lester developed with a professional landscape architecture firm, MPA Design. Many elements from the 1996 plan are captured in the State Parks’ 2003 “Sellers’s Vision” plan, which was included as part of the property transfer agreement. This 2003 “Seller’s Vision” is the starting point for all of our discussions. Copies of the 1996 and 2003 plans were included in the meeting packet distributed to the Task Force.

Also as part of the County and State’s acceptance of the 2003 property transfer agreement, the name of the park was formalized as “Martial Cottle Park.” The 2003 agreement includes deed restrictions on park use, such as: prohibition of high-intensity recreation; inclusion of passive recreational uses; that the park be a public historical agricultural park; and that commercial uses that related to agriculture will be permitted. The 2003 property transfer agreement was included in the meeting packet.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Jane Mark described the roles and responsibilities of the agencies and Task Force:

- SCCPRD is the lead agency and will coordinate the public participation and technical agency input, and the County will inform State Parks on all steps and outcomes.
- The Project Team includes the SCCPRD in-house staff, who will provide review and input on the planning process and draft documents.
- State Parks’ role will be as described by Dave Keck in the introductions.
- The Task Force is the advisory committee to the State and County Parks and Recreation Commissions. All Task Force members are invited to bring their diverse perspectives and views to the table. The Task Force members were selected to represent a wide range of public interests.
- The purpose of the Task Force is to:

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- Bring diverse ideas & perspectives of the community to the process
- Represent a wide range of public interests
- Work with the Project Team to develop park goals
- Work toward a consensus plan that embodies community goals and captures Donor's vision
- Report back to the community and serve as a conduit for ideas and concerns as the plan develops
- Role of the Task Force is to:
 - Provide input and give feedback to Project Team at critical stages in the process
 - Carefully consider and weigh all input against the goals and Donor's vision
 - Acknowledge and respect all ideas, which are essential to the consensus-building process

GROUND RULES

Jane Mark presented the following project Ground Rules:

Meetings

1. Start and end meeting on time
2. Be respectful of one another
3. Everyone participates
4. Be open
5. Listen actively
6. Help the Committee achieve desired outcomes
7. Stay focused on the topic
8. Communicate any issues of concern

Process

1. Respect the privacy of the Donor & Life Estate Area
2. Route communications thru County Staff & WRT

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Planning Framework

Steve Hammond described the “dual client” structure, including the SCCPRD and State Parks. The consultant team is made up of: WRT, Planning and design; Sustainable Agriculture Education (SAGE), who will be advising the planning team on the agricultural program for the park, and has extensive contacts in the agriculture community; LSA, the environmental consultants; and EPS, the land use economics consultants.

The project's organization chart was shared with the Task Force and included in the meeting packet.

Scope Overview

The project is divided into six phases as follow:

- Phase 1, Project Initiation, to be completed in October, 2007.
- Phase 2, Understanding the Site and Planning Context, to be completed by November, 2007.
- Phase 3, Defining the Vision, to be completed at the end of March, 2008.
- Phase 4, Design Development, to be completed in October, 2008.
- Phase 5, Preparing the Master Plan, to be completed in January, 2009.
- Phase 6, EIR, to be completed March, 2009.
- Approval of the plan is anticipated shortly after the adoption of the EIR.

All documents developed during this planning process will be posted on the SCCPRD's website.

Public Outreach

The following committees will be involved in the planning process, with the number of meetings indicated in parentheses:

- Project Team (10)
- Technical Advisory Committee (4)
- Task Force Committee (6)
- Community Workshops (3)
- CA State Parks Planning Policy & Program Committee
- EIR Scoping Meeting (1)
- County Parks and Recreation Commission (3)
- County Board of Supervisors (1)
- State Parks Commission (1)

Urban Agriculture and Recreation

Sibella Kraus presented an overview of the role of urban agriculture in the park master plan and within its regional context. Several needs are met by developing urban agriculture: to contain urban sprawl, to preserve agriculture near cities, to meet citizens' needs to connect with agriculture, and to improve public health. Maintaining agriculture is part of a broad sustainability picture, affecting climate change and other factors. Various models of small farmer incubation sites are available from Hawaii to Vermont. Agricultural parks can be all sorts of places; every one is unique. This is a remarkable, one of a kind site with a broad range of possible agricultural operations at a range of scales. This should not be just a historic park that is going to interpret a historical period, but a dynamic agricultural operation. Additionally, there is a public education component with interpretive programs and future involvement with senior centers, community centers and schools.

Site Overview

Steve Hammond presented an overview of the site, describing the site's context in an urban area; the land ownership map illustrating the State, County and Life Estate portions; the contents of the Life Estate area; the landscape and its views; and features of the property. Specific points included the following:

- Regarding the Canoas Creek, we learned at the first Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting that the Santa Clara Valley Water District is interested in exploring restoration opportunities for the creek, as long as the creek's flood protection capacity is maintained.
- Dead-end streets along the western edge of the park offers interesting perspectives into the site. Homes along the western edge enjoy the park scenery, but there will be adjacency issues to address.
- Soil characteristics, i.e. the varying fertility of the site, will influence park programming.
- Branham Lane and Snell Avenue are planned to be widened; we have discussed with the City of San Jose Public Works' representative on the TAC about working together to develop an appropriate street edge to complement the park facility.

Resource Inventory Overview

Steve Hammond reviewed the following points from the Draft Resources Inventory, which is currently under review by the Project Team and TAC.

- The map of County parks shows the relationship between the County's "necklace of parks" and Martial Cottle Park. Martial Cottle Park is situated in proximity to many of the County and City's parks in south San Jose.
- The neighborhood context map shows Martial Cottle Park framed by parks and trails on the east and west side of the valley: the Coyote Creek corridor and Guadalupe Creek Corridor.

This map raises the question of how Martial Cottle Park might potentially connect into the larger, regional urban open space network.

- The map also shows the well distributed parks and schools in the area. This City Council district is projected by the City to have a need for 300-350 acres in the near future. Although this park will not provide for active recreation, Martial Cottle park will serve a local function as well as serving its primary role as a regional County/State park.
- The map of agricultural facilities and programs shows the potential for Martial Cottle Park to locate 4-H programs, community gardens, and farmers' markets.

OPEN DISCUSSION

The meeting was opened to the Task Force to solicit their input on the park's goals and objectives and opportunities and issues, and to raise any comments and questions they may have regarding the project. The following summary organizes the Task Force's comments by topic.

Transit/Traffic/Circulation

San Jose is promoting walkable communities. Trails, transit, and connectivity to nearby trails and transit should be considered as part of the plan.

There is an opportunity to connect the park to the City's public transit network. One potential community concern may be traffic, access, and parking. Leveraging the public transit opportunity may be one solution to this concern.

The underpass at Highway 85 is an opportunity to connect to the neighborhood to the south. The fill that is obstructing the underpass can be removed. Mr. Lester owns property on the opposite side of Highway 85, which he has recently donated an access easement to the County to allow future connections to the park.

The two proposed roads (Chynoweth Avenue and Vista Park Drive) shown going through the property in the 1996 and 2003 vision plans are no longer part of the plan.

Urban Agriculture

There was general agreement that the agricultural component of the park should not only be a historical preservation, but also a demonstration of a functioning, profitable urban farm. It should demonstrate how an existing urban area can co-exist with existing agriculture. The plan should attempt to make the farm successful and profitable. It could provide an opportunity for young farmers to have a place to start. One Task Force committee member has gotten input from a number of farmers who would love to start a farm on this site. The local market is receptive and available, and it would be critical that a farmer would be excited about interchange with the community to create a successful farming operation. There are opportunities to make a farm profitable through the farm stand and value-added production.

In addition to the discussion of creating viable agriculture, opportunities to preserve agricultural traditions, especially for children to experience, was mentioned. Also the community has expressed desires for community gardens, farmers' markets, a farm stand, and a pick-your-own program.

The Department of Agriculture and Environmental Management deals on a regular basis with complaints regarding urban agriculture issues. Usually when there is a complaint, there has been no communication between the concerned parties and the grower. An educational and communication component would go a long way toward alleviating potential conflicts. This should ideally go beyond the planning process. Education of neighboring communities is very important and should be integrated with on-going operations of the park. These discussions will begin at the community meetings, where questions and concerns can be raised and discussed. SAGE will bring farm experts who have addressed these issues into the process.

One potential component of the agricultural operation is the expression of various cultural traditions. Cultures can express themselves in the crops grown and the farming practices employed.

The potential tie-in to local schools was discussed. There is a wealth of program opportunities such as field trips, food tastings, and pickings.

Recreation

The Hayes Neighborhood Association listed preservation of agricultural traditions, allowing for family outings, such as picnicking and lake activities, maintaining the open space and providing community gathering sites as part of their desired goals for the park. (See attached letter from the Hayes Neighborhood Association.)

Donor's Vision

A question was raised whether there is flexibility in reconfiguring the elements in the Donor's Vision Plan. Lisa Killough responded that Mr. Lester does have fairly specific ideas of the elements, and it remains to be seen what degree of flexibility there might be. The process will involve a continuing discussion with Mr. Lester. Steve Hammond stated that the planning process will examine the feasibility of the components in the Vision Plan. The feasibility analysis will be one aspect of determining whether there will need to be flexibility with programming the elements of the Vision Plan.

Environmental Impact Report

It was noted that the EIR process shouldn't be very drawn-out or contentious because the basic land use—agriculture—will not be changing. There will be issues to address, however. One main impact will be that visitation to the area will be increased, with the associated impacts related to traffic, noise, etc. A Task Force member suggested that issues related to mixing agriculture with residential areas such as noise and odors should be addressed as part of community meetings.

Management Plan

One challenge is developing a management plan to coordinate the many different potential facilities, including small farms, 4-H sites, community gardens, equestrian uses, etc. The State and County do not have expertise in many of these areas, so a management plan needs to be developed to address these management considerations.

Open Space and Natural Resources Preservation

Many on the Task Force expressed the desire to preserve open space and the beauty of the site. There was general agreement that one of the site's values is its views and openness.

Several Task Force members expressed the community's desire to preserve the existing wildlife in the park. There may be conflicts between wildlife preservation and agriculture. A wildlife management plan would need to consider this balance. One approach could be to engage sustainable farming techniques that require keeping pest species under control through natural means. Task Force members from the neighborhood stated that they do not have a significant problem with pests from the site.

It was mentioned that the SCVWD-owned triangle may provide an opportunity to incorporate a nursery for growing native plants for restoration projects.

Historical/Interpretive Component

Interesting local history could be reflected in the park, such as the Japanese farmers who farmed the site, and the experimentation techniques with citrus crops that they brought from Japan to the Santa Clara Valley.

The site's natural history could also be a component of the historical/interpretive program for the park.

Several Task Force Committee members agreed that it would be important to develop creative ways to present interpretation of nature, wildlife and the historical values of the Cottle family and farmers. Public art elements and other creative interpretive elements could be incorporated. Hands-on opportunities should be explored, not only interpretive plaques and signs, using ways other than words in a narrative form to connect people and children to the place.

One Task Force Committee member mentioned Margo McBane, an Oral History professor at San Jose State University, as a resource for creative ways of capturing living history and historical interpretation ideas. Other living history resources and local history experts should be sought to help with the interpretive component.

Security Issues

Security concerns were raised by Task Force Committee members and members of the public who live adjacent to or near the park property, namely that the park, once developed and open to the public, may become a gateway to the homes immediately adjacent to the park. Fencing around the park will be maintained as future park boundary controls are discussed and determined as part of this planning process

Maintenance Issues

Future park maintenance was brought up as a high priority. Maintenance costs for this park may be higher than for a typical County park given the Donor's Vision elements. Opportunities to enhance the maintenance program were discussed, including building relationships with private businesses and engaging County Parks Department's volunteer program and neighborhood association resources. Also, it was noted that revenue generated by the park might offset its higher maintenance costs.

PUBLIC COMMENT

After the Task Force Committee discussion, the floor was opened for public comment. The comments were as follow:

Dave Fadness

Mr. Fadness moved to the neighborhood in 1974 and knew Mr. Lester since 1975. Mr. Fadness feels a sense of urgency about this project because Mr. Lester expressed a desire to plant a berm around property with Oaks, to mature before he died, so that views from within the property would not include the adjacent development. Mr. Fadness would like these trees planted before Mr. Lester dies. Volunteers are waiting to plant those trees.

Kitty Monahan

Ms. Monahan expressed the desire to include someone from the equestrian community on the Task Force. Ms. Monahan stated that Mr. Lester is an advocate of some type of equestrian program. She also noted that Coyote Crest and Pacheco 4-H and the Grange Hall are not represented on the Task Force. Lisa Killough acknowledged that the County is fully aware of Mr. Lester's equestrian interests and will work directly with Mr. Lester on the development of the equestrian facilities that he envisioned for the park. Jane Mark responded that the TAC has a representative of 4-H. An equestrian representative can be invited to join the TAC.

Ursula Cabalzar

Ms. Cabalzar expressed the desire for a dog facility that may be located on the less fertile land, and that dog uses are not completely excluded from the park.

Linda Owens

Ms. Owens lives across the street from the park property. She is interested in health and fitness programming and would like to see a trail, something unpaved that is easy on the feet and to be Martial Cottle Park Master Plan

used by families, children and the elderly, around the perimeter. Greg West noted that the perimeter distance is 3.5 miles.

Virginia Holtz

Ms. Holtz expressed a desire to have landscaping be native to the area and drought tolerant.

Lou Ferguson

Mr. Ferguson is a park neighbor. He urged for the incorporation of solar and water conservation technologies as a demonstration of how technology has changed over the years. He also suggested that use of educational technology in farming, such as laying communications fiber optics for WIFI, should be incorporated into the site.

Eric Carruthers

Mr. Carruthers came in to the area in 1955, when agriculture filled the valley. Mr. Carruthers expressed support for preserving active agriculture on the land as an interpretation of the valley's history and an educational tool to promote the protection of agriculture elsewhere in the valley. Mr. Carruthers also described case studies in which farms are held and operated by land trusts, which function as ag parks even though they are not publicly owned or accessible.

Shiloh Ballard

Ms. Ballard is a neighbor in the Colony Green condominium on Chynoweth Ave. She desires connectivity not only to the light rail system outside of the park, but through the site instead of having to go all the way around the park. She would like there to be more than one point of access. She would like as little artificial and chemical inputs in the farming operations as possible. She mentioned the Agro-ecology program at U.C. Santa Cruz as a great resource.

Louise Zechmeister

Ms. Zechmeister supported the pastoral uses identified in the deed restrictions but expressed concern about profit and bureaucracy. She urged the committee and planning team to stick to the Donor's original plan and not try to change the deed.

NEXT STEPS

- The Resource Inventory will be posted on the SCCPRD's website, and electronic files will be shared with the Task Force if possible.
- The first Public Workshop will be held on November 15th, in this same room. The workshop will address opportunities and constraints and goals and objectives.
- The next Task Force meeting was scheduled for December 11th by consensus of the Task Force Committee. The location will be determined and distributed to the Task Force. There were suggestions to consider the Gunderson High School facility for future meetings, which Jane Mark will follow-up with Task Force member Rob Iverson.
- The Task Force Committee granted SCCPRD staff with permission to distribute the Task Force list with e-mail addresses and phone numbers to the public. The list will be posted on the project's web site.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:08 p.m.