

**Borrego Springs
Community Sponsor Group**

Park Lands Dedication Ordinance
Priority List Committee

Report & Recommendations

Submitted February 5, 2015

Summary

The Park Lands Dedication Ordinance Priority List Committee recommends:

- a.) that a PLDO Park should be sited in and connected to the Village Core, not outside it;
- b.) that it consist of only those unmet uses well-suited to Borrego Springs' unique climatic, demographic, and developmental needs as described below.
- c.) that a Maintenance District be established to fund it;
- d.) that DPR assume all management and maintenance responsibilities for it; and

Background

The following document identifies Park Lands Dedication Ordinance priorities for a County of San Diego park in Borrego Springs (the "Park") and has been developed for approval by the Borrego Springs Community Sponsor Group ("BSCSG") in response to a request for an update to the Park Lands Dedication Ordinance ("PLDO", "Ordinance") priorities list made to the BSCSG by Jill Bankston, Chief, Department of Parks and Recreation, County of San Diego on July 15, 2014.

The previous Priority List dates from FY 2012/2013. The items on that list focus on the development of Active Recreational Uses ("Uses") on a 16-acre site (APN 1980203400 and 1980203000) acquired by the county in 2001 for park development under the Ordinance. No Uses have been developed at the site to date due to the continuing lack of a responsible Management Entity for the proposed Park. Over \$250,000 is currently set aside and available for such development.

Subsequent to the acquisition of this site, the 2011 Borrego Springs Community Plan ("BSCP") has been approved, and the Borrego Village Association, with county funding and assistance, has studied how best to improve and enhance the economic vitality of Borrego Springs' Village Core, specifically through public facilities and works.

When the current Park parcels were purchased, the 1978 Community Plan then in effect envisioned a population of 45,000 for Borrego Springs. The current Community Plan is based on a planned population of 8,000. This is a significant reduction in the scale of the community, which should be taken into consideration in siting and planning a Park.

The BSCSG formed an ad-hoc committee at its October, 2014 regular meeting, consisting of members Judy Haldeman and Rich Caldwell, to consult with community members to research and prepare a response to Ms. Bankston for the BSCSG's review and consideration for adoption. Rich Caldwell reached out to the Borrego Village Association and Borrego Village Foundation for input and assistance in the development of this document.

The starting and ending point for the development of this Priority List is the Borrego Springs Community Plan, which addresses public works throughout. The Town Center Vitalization Master Plan and Palm Canyon Vitalization Project, adopted by the Borrego Village Association, also provide specific recommendations for achieving the goals and implementing the policies in the Community Plan.

As explained in the Community Plan, Borrego Springs faces significantly-different conditions and challenges than most other parts of the county in important areas that affect Park planning, use, funding, and maintenance:

Heat and Solar Radiation

Borrego Springs is a desert village, with significantly higher temperatures year-round, and summer time high temperatures of as much as 122°. Accompanying these higher temperatures are higher levels of solar radiation, further amplifying the effects of high heat. This combination affects the types of recreational activities preferred, and the times of day and seasons of year in which they take place. It also impacts pedestrian mobility and circulation among community elements.

Wind

Borrego Springs is a windy place, with routine winds of 15-20 mph, and routine gusts in the 40-50 mph range. In the last three years, multiple gusts of over 80 mph have been recorded, reaching as high as 90 mph.

Availability of Water

Borrego Springs depends entirely on an underground aquifer as its sole source of water for all purposes. There is no recycled or graywater available for irrigation or facilities maintenance purposes. Conservation of groundwater is a key objective of the Community Plan, and by extension, an important factor in Park siting and planning.

Demographics

Borregans are older than the rest of the county and country by 20 years on average. This is likely to continue to be the case, and means that Park Uses should be selected and prioritized with this important difference in mind.

Further, while the year-round population was 3,429 in 2010, seasonal visitors and tourists substantially increase that number during the October to May period, to an estimated peak of 8,000-10,000 people. The needs of both populations must be considered in Park siting and planning.

Unmet Needs for Active Recreational Uses

Borrego Springs already has many of the Uses contemplated under the Ordinance (see Plate #1). It makes the most sense to meet unmet needs and not duplicate existing facilities.

Patterns of Development / Lack of Management Entities and Funds

The Ordinance makes reference to “planned developments”, where residential development mostly advances through new subdivisions with homeowner associations, and does not contemplate the situation found in Borrego Springs. Here, residential development proceeds primarily by in-fill of previous subdivisions, with a high percentage of existing lots remaining undeveloped, creating a “sprawl” pattern of vacant residential lots. There are not likely to be any new planned developments within the planning horizon contemplated in the current Community Plan. Accordingly, the natural candidates for a Park maintenance entity, a homeowners or community association formed as part of a planned community, do not exist for the Park.

A follow on effect of the above is the continuing lack of any other candidate “Management Entities” willing to accept responsibility for ongoing maintenance of a Park. There are no homeowner associations, community associations, or similarly-invested stakeholder organizations that would traditionally fulfill such a role as contemplated in the Ordinance. Nor is there any natural source of private funding (e.g. association fees) that would otherwise be available to fund maintenance. This is particularly so for the existing Park site, which has no interested community stakeholders nearby or adjacent to it.

The original plan to develop the existing Park site was estimated to cost in excess of \$4 million to construct. After 13 years PLDO developer fees have amassed to \$250,000, falling far short of the amount needed to realize this vision, and are unlikely to increase substantially within the time horizon of the existing Community Plan.

Given that key elements of the vision for Borrego Springs set out in the Community Plan call for a “Pedestrian friendly downtown” and increased mixed-use density and improved mobility in the Village Core, this document reflects our sense of the community’s vision for a Park at this time.

#1 What Kind of Park Does Borrego Springs Need?

The priority of Active Recreational Uses is determined by a fundamental strategic question – what kind of Park does Borrego Springs really need?

An “In the Village” Park

Given the combination of issues cited above, a compact, densely-planned, all-ages, low water use, well-shaded, and wind-protected Park with unduplicated, year-round Uses appropriate to area demographics, sited within and connected to the Village Core, and scaled to the likely funds available is the desired option.

Compact, Densely-Planned

The desired Park Uses should occupy approximately .75 to 1.0 acres, and be “interwoven” to create a dense matrix. An appropriately-scaled urban park that fits community needs is achievable and preferable. Illustrative examples of such a park can be found on Plates #5, #8, & #9.

*People need parks. Good parks provide a place for rest and relaxation, but more importantly they are places for spontaneous social interaction. A well-designed park attracts people, makes them want to stay and encourages spontaneous interactions between them. Good seating is the most basic characteristic of a successful public park. People like to sit where they can see other people. At least 10 percent of the total open space should be devoted to seating – the more seating there is the better. Water is especially useful when people can touch it – being able to wade, splash or soak in water features adds greatly to their value. Even a small water feature such as a pond or fountain can be a focal point and help create a restorative environment.*¹

*To be successful urban park locations need high visibility, easy access and lots of pedestrian traffic. Urban parks should include facilities that are pedestrian-oriented and provide visual enhancement, a sense of identity and opportunities for social interactions, enjoyment of outdoor open space, small-scale recreation and performing or visual arts. A key aspect of the urban park paradigm is that they are always publicly accessible, regardless of ownership and are generally integrated into other public and private uses. Ideally, urban areas will contain a complement of urban park types in order to serve local leisure needs; support revitalization goals; support environmental and sustainability goals; and contribute to the areas’ sense of culture, liveliness and identity.*²

All Ages

The Park should attract and engage residents and visitors of all ages and demographics.

Low Water Use, Protected from Sun and Wind

The Park should model water conservation through desert-native landscaping and provide its users a respite from extremes of heat, solar radiation, and wind.

Visually Engaging

The Park should be highly visible from the street and include public art in dynamic and appealing ways.

Day-Long, Year-Round Uses

The Uses chosen for the Park should be practically suited to year-round enjoyment. The Park should include Dark-Sky Community-compliant lighting to safely facilitate evening Uses.

¹ [“Urban Parks: The Value of Small Urban Parks, Plazas and Other Outdoor Spaces”](#), Carl Scott Shafer and John Jacob, article

² [“Urban Parks Framework”](#), Fairfax County Park Authority, Fairfax County Virginia

Rationale

The unique set of circumstances prevailing in Borrego Springs, along with the desire stated in the BSCP to develop the Village Core as an interconnected, pedestrian-friendly environment combine to argue in favor of this approach. A park of this nature sited in the Village Core would contribute strongly to the community's economic vitalization effort.

#2 Needed Active Recreational Uses

An inventory of existing Uses was first taken to ensure that only needed Uses would be considered by the committee. The inventory is presented in Plate #1.

The committee recommends the following unmet Uses be considered for the Park:

Family Focus

- picnic area / BBQ
- performance amphitheater
- child supervision / conversation / board game [checkerboard inset table tops] seating areas surrounding youth waterplay feature area
- community gardening

Adult Focus

- bocce court
- quoits / horseshoes pitch
- activity slab – yoga, dance, tai chi
- shuffleboard court
- handicap-accessible walking path

Youth Focus

- waterplay feature [eg., popjet field]
- basketball backboard
- children's play structures (e.g., climbing rock)

Rationale

These Uses are currently unmet in Borrego Springs and meet the criteria identified by the committee.

#3 Park integration into the Village Core

Given the priorities expressed in #1, above, the location of a Park becomes as important as the Uses within it. The Park should be sited in the Village Core.

Existing Site

The existing Park site should be sold or exchanged to accumulate suitable other land sited within the Village Core. Residual funds from a sale/exchange should be applied to the development of suitable Uses on a new site.

Criteria for Sites

The committee developed eight criteria to identify and prioritize alternative Park sites:

- a.) location within the Village Core;
- b.) adjacency to and visibility / access from Palm Canyon Drive;
- c.) proximity to the center of the Village Core;
- d.) connectivity to existing/planned pedestrian circulation elements;
- e.) access to existing public parking;
- f.) public safety;
- g.) complementarity to and ability to leverage existing community investments;
and
- h.) currently undeveloped.

Possible alternative sites were ranked into 4 groups based on the degree to which each site satisfied the criteria. See Plate #3.

Palm Canyon Drive “Pocket Parks”

The Borrego Village Association, using donated funds and working with private landowners whose properties front Palm Canyon Drive in the Village Core, has created “pocket parks” consisting of landscaping, walking paths, and benches. We have an opportunity to leverage this existing effort and resource. See Plates #6 & #7.

Rationale

There is no pedestrian connectivity or circulation available to the existing County-owned site and it lies outside the Village Core. Developing a Park there would work against the community’s stated goal of creating a higher-density pedestrian-friendly Village Core. The size, at 16 acres, is too large to properly support Uses consistent with community needs and available PLDO funds. Finally, the existing site occupies land zoned for high-density residential uses that would be better suited to that use than to park use.

There are now large “gaps” of undeveloped land along Palm Canyon Drive in the midst of the Village Core area. Given the multiple challenges to commercial development in this area, and the general stasis in commercial development in Borrego Springs in the last 30+ years, siting major public facilities like the Park and library in this area would be

a huge contribution to our community's goal of creating a higher-density pedestrian-friendly Village Core.

Siting the Park here would also significantly increase its use, as it would be integrated into the Village Core, with other facilities nearby, readily visible to residents and tourists, and would further enhance economic development and tourism appeal of the Village Core.

Siting the Park in the Village Core adjacent to existing development (public and private) also increases the possibility of securing a "Management Entity" willing to take on park maintenance responsibility. In its current "greenfield" location outside the Village Core, no entity has expressed willingness to do so (see "Patterns of Development / Lack of Management Entities" above).

Further, a densely-planned, centrally-located Park should be more cost-efficient by reducing associated costs of circulation, connectivity, parking, and flood-mitigation.

Specifically, to implement a key element in the "Pedestrian friendly downtown" as set out in the Community Character Vision element and in Goals LU-4.1, CM-2.2, CM-2.3, CM-5.1, CM-5.2, and CM-9.1 and also in SS-EDV(f., g., i., j., and k.) of the BSCP and consistent with the Town Center Vitalization Master Plan and Palm Canyon Vitalization Project approved by the Borrego Village Association.

#4 Connectivity / Circulation

Description

The Park should be tightly connected to the Village Core and pedestrian circulation elements. It should also include bicycle racks to facilitate bicycle access.

Rationale

To implement a key element in the "Pedestrian friendly downtown" envisioned in the BSCP.

#5 Funding / Management

Maintenance District

A Borrego Springs Park Maintenance District should be established to provide continued stable funding from parcel fees sufficient to fund expected maintenance costs for the Park. Management Entity responsibility for the Park should be assumed by San Diego County DPR.

Rationale

Only the County of San Diego has the resources and powers necessary to solve this problem; if the County does not step in, another 13 years could well go by without securing a Management Entity for the Park. No Management Entity means no Park.

Annual maintenance costs for a Park could be in the \$50,000 range, based on park maintenance budgets provided to the committee by DPR. In light of the probable expense and the absence of an assured funding source, no Management Entity has stepped forward to assume responsibility for the Park in the 13 years since the current site was purchased. It seems unlikely that any group or entity, public or private, would agree to assume management responsibility without assured funding for it.

Supporting Visuals

Plate 1 – Existing Active Recreational Uses

Inventory of types and locations of existing and planned recreational facilities that qualify as Active Recreational Uses under the Park Lands Dedication Ordinance.

Plate 2 – Borrego Springs Village Core

Boundaries of the Village Core as identified in the BSCP and as further defined by the Economic Vitalization / Christmas Circle Special Study Areas Study Group of the Borrego Springs Community Sponsor Group.

Plate 3 –Criteria Applied to Possible Sites

Possible sites prioritized into groups 1 through 4 according to the degree to which they meet the criteria identified in “Criteria for Sites” above.

Plate 4 – Preferred Park Locations

Suggested Park locations within the group 1 sites identified in Plate 3, further applying criteria for sites.

Plate 5 – Similar Park Examples

Examples of three existing parks of similar size, uses, and degree of integration into the surrounding community.

Plate 6 – Park Concept / Site 1-1 / Existing Conditions

Shows opportunities for leveraging existing community investments in a group 1 possible Park location.

Plate 7 – Park Concept / Site 1-2 / Existing Conditions

Shows opportunities for leveraging existing community investments in another group 1 possible Park location.

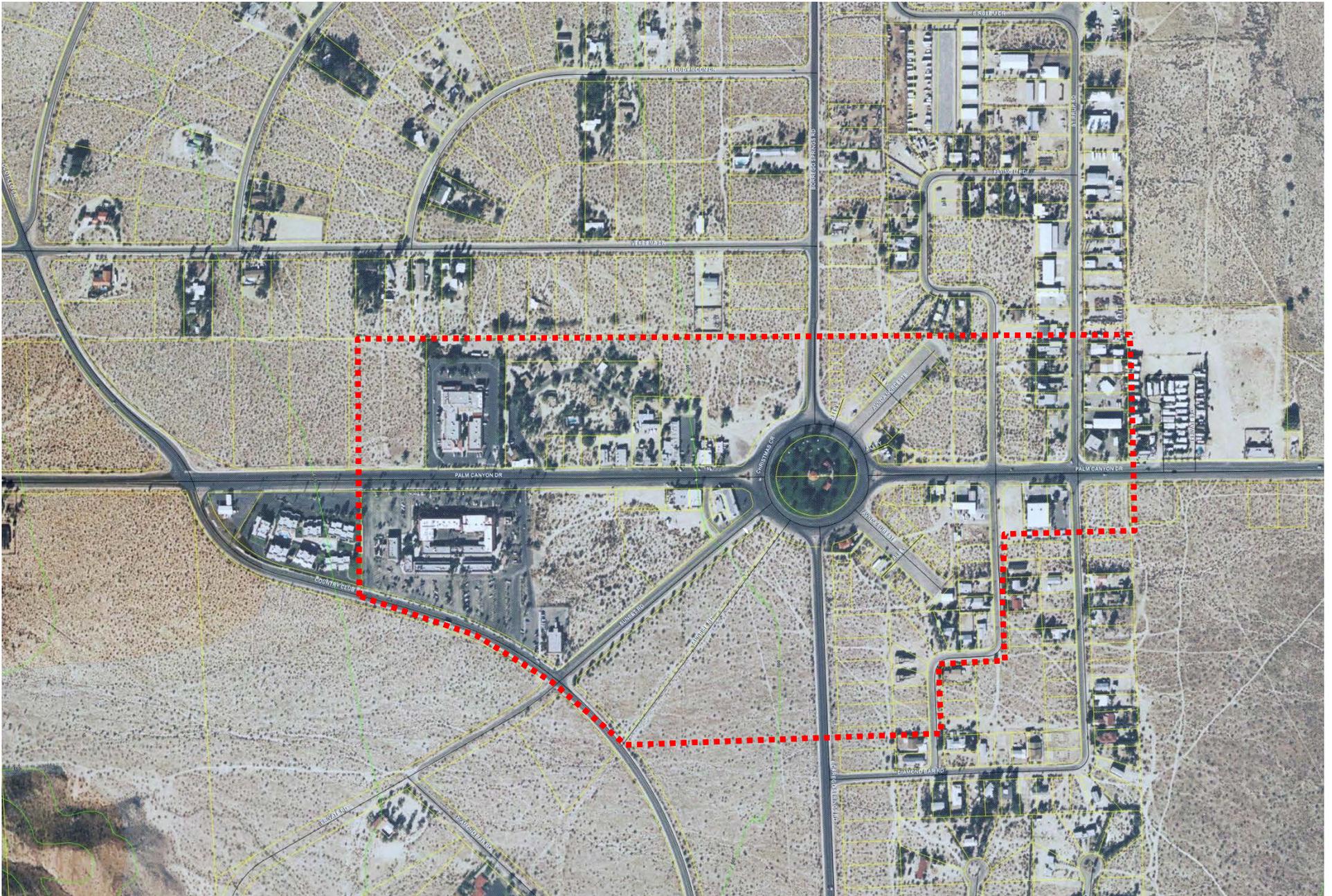
Plate 8 – Park Concept / Site 1-1 / Illustration

Concept illustration of Park as it might be implemented at Site 1-1, building on existing community investments.

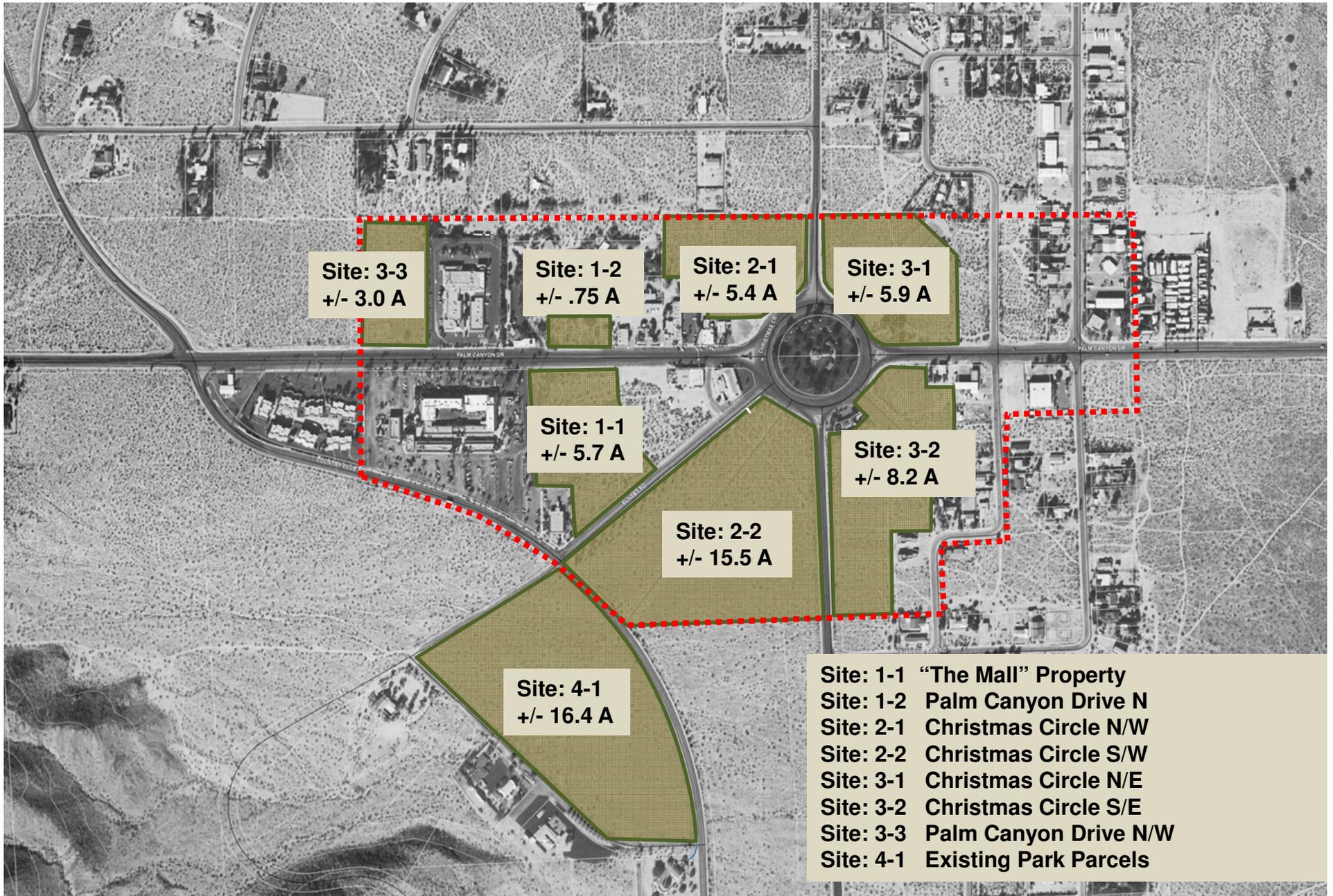
Plate 9 – Park Concept / Site 1-2 / Illustration

Concept illustration of Park as it might be implemented at Site 1-2, building on existing community investments.

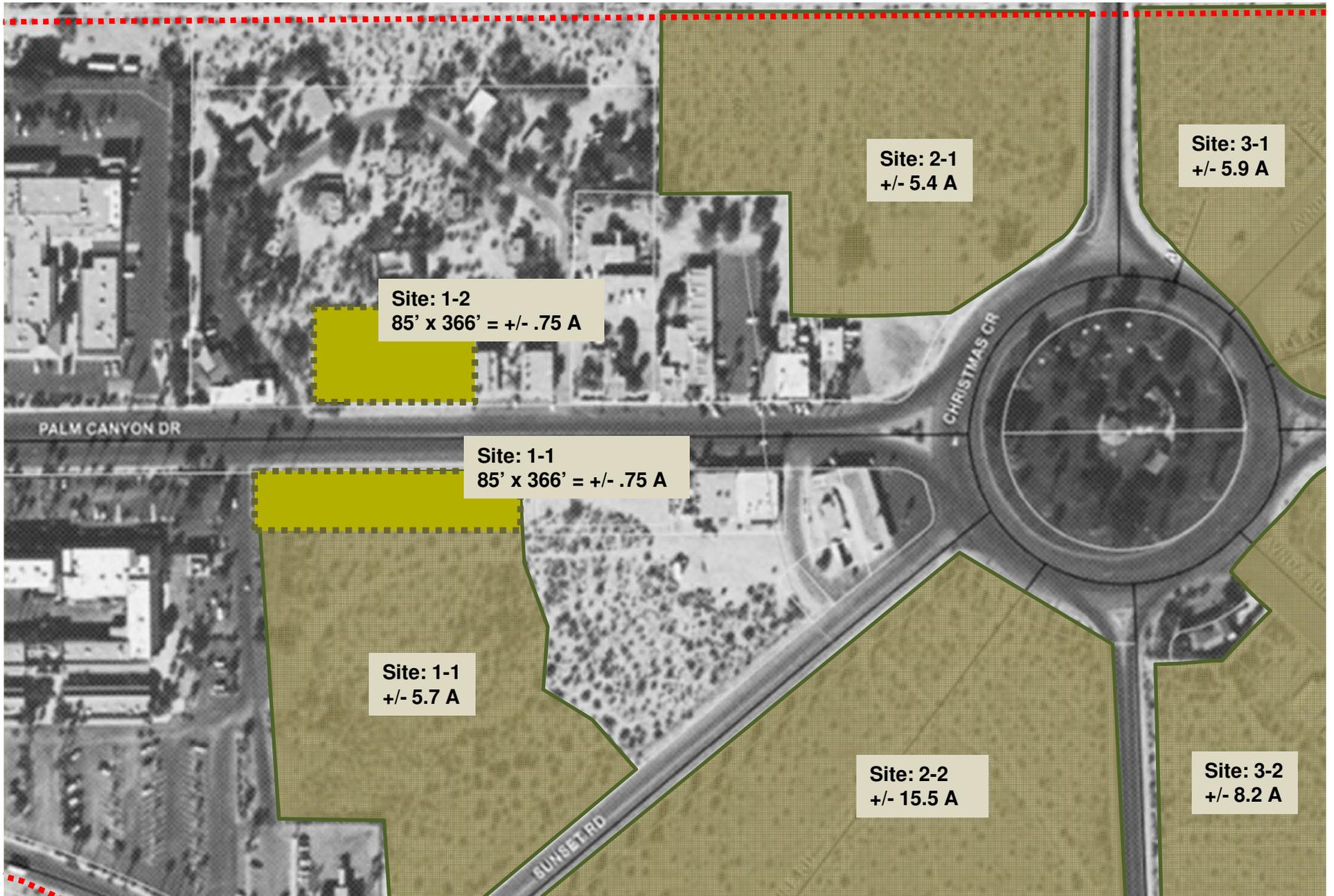
Submitted to the BSCSG on February 5, 2014 by committee members Judy Haldeman & Rich Caldwell, with heartfelt thanks to the Borrego Village Association, Borrego Village Foundation, Bob Blum, Richard Orne, and others who assisted in its preparation.



**Park Lands Dedication Ordinance Priority List Committee Report
Plate 2: Borrego Springs Village Core**



**Park Lands Dedication Ordinance Priority List Committee Report
Plate 3: Criteria Applied to Possible Sites**



Park Lands Dedication Ordinance Priority List Committee Report
Plate 4: Preferred Park Locations



**Shady Lane Park,
Coachella, CA**

- 1 Acre
- Intersection of Shady Lane and Avenue 52
- Tables
- Open Grass / Trees
- Drinking Fountain



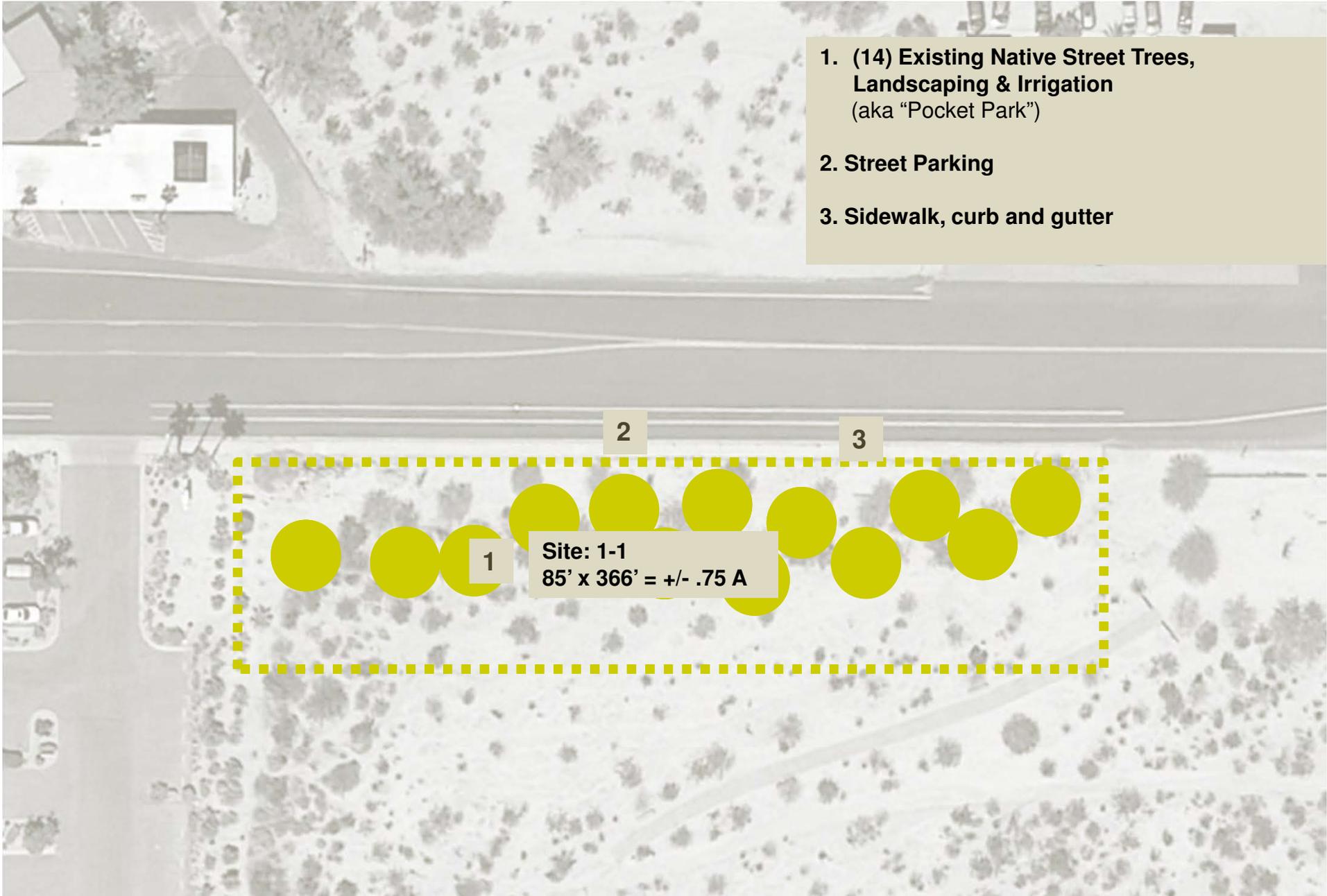
**Sierra Vista Park,
Coachella, CA**

- 2 Acres
- 50-570 Calle Mendoza
- Tables
- Open Grass / Trees
- Drinking Fountain
- Baseball / Softball
- Playground
- Basketball



**Rancho Las Flores Park,
Coachella, CA**

- 4 Acres Park,
(29 Acres overall)
- 48-400 Van Buren St
- Tables / Shade Structures
- Soccer Field
- Restroom
- Baseball / Softball
- Playground



1. (14) Existing Native Street Trees, Landscaping & Irrigation (aka "Pocket Park")

2. Street Parking

3. Sidewalk, curb and gutter

2

3

1

Site: 1-1
85' x 366' = +/- .75 A



1

Site: 1-2
138' x 233' = +/- .75 A

2

- 1. (6) Existing Native Street Trees.
No Irrigation**
- 2. Street Parking**

A. Family Focus

Picnic Area / BBQ, Performance Area, Benches, Shade Trees, Child Supervision Area, Checkerboard tables

B. Adult Focus

Bocce Court, Quoits / horseshoes, Benches, BBQ, Shuffleboard, Shade Trees, Activity Slab

C. Youth Focus

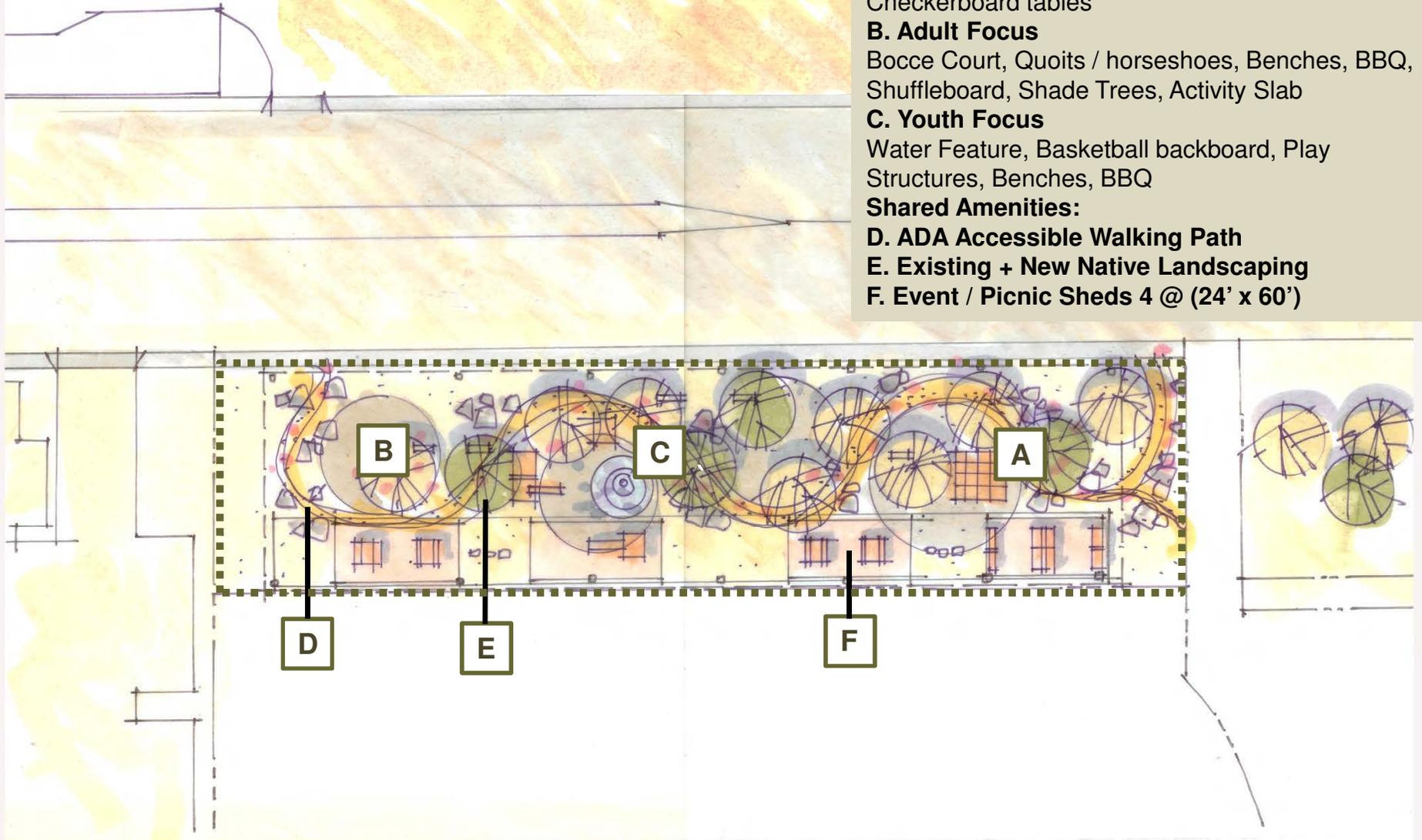
Water Feature, Basketball backboard, Play Structures, Benches, BBQ

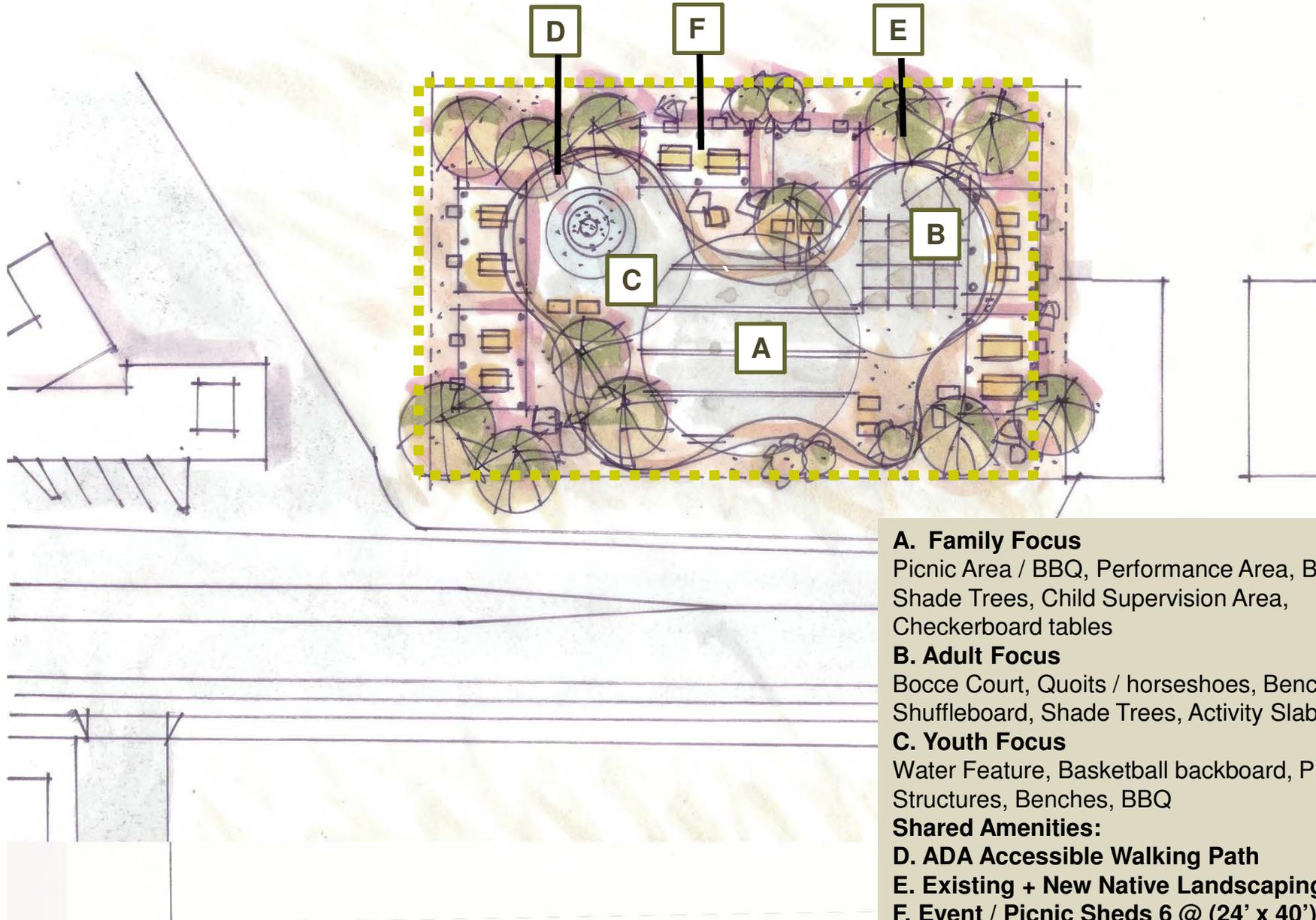
Shared Amenities:

D. ADA Accessible Walking Path

E. Existing + New Native Landscaping

F. Event / Picnic Sheds 4 @ (24' x 60')





A. Family Focus

Picnic Area / BBQ, Performance Area, Benches, Shade Trees, Child Supervision Area, Checkerboard tables

B. Adult Focus

Bocce Court, Quoits / horseshoes, Benches, BBQ, Shuffleboard, Shade Trees, Activity Slab

C. Youth Focus

Water Feature, Basketball backboard, Play Structures, Benches, BBQ

Shared Amenities:

D. ADA Accessible Walking Path

E. Existing + New Native Landscaping

F. Event / Picnic Sheds 6 @ (24' x 40')