

CHAPTER 2

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project under consideration in this Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) includes the Nipomo Community Park Master Plan (NCPMP). San Luis Obispo County Parks (County Parks) proposes to implement the NCPMP (proposed project), which would result in the phased construction of recreation facilities and related infrastructure over a 20-year timeframe. A description of the project location, project history, and project elements are provided within this chapter in the sections below.

2.1 GENERAL BACKGROUND

2.1.1 Project Location

The project site is located in the unincorporated community of Nipomo, within San Luis Obispo County, California (refer to Figure 2-1). The proposed project consists of two connected park areas, Nipomo Community Park (NCP), including the Nipomo Native Garden, and Mesa Meadows (refer to Figure 2-2). The project site is located northwest of the Pomeroy Road / West Tefft Street intersection, approximately 1 mile west of U.S. Highway 101 (US 101).

NCP is an approximately 137-acre angular parcel bounded by Pomeroy Road and West Tefft Street to the east, Osage Street to the west, and the Tejas Street neighborhood to the south. The approximately 22-acre Mesa Meadows open space area is located within two parcels adjacent to, and immediately southwest of, NCP, on the northwest corner of Mesa Road and Osage Road. The total park and open space area is approximately 159 acres, comprised of four parcels (Assessor Parcel Numbers [APNs] 091-313-049, 091-313-050, 092-121-085, and 092-121-086) (refer to Figures 2-3 and 2-4).

2.1.2 Project Background

The park was initially developed in the 1970s, and additional improvements were constructed in the 1980s. The Mesa Meadows open space area was accepted by the County of San Luis Obispo (County) on November 7, 2000. The area within Mesa Meadows was donated in fee to the County as open-space, which limits the County use to passive land uses only. The Mesa Meadows Landscape and Amenity Plan (2002) was approved in association with the residents living in the Mesa Meadows subdivision.

2.1.3 Initial Scoping

In 2003, the County commissioned an environmental constraints analysis report (Morro Group 2004). The constraints analysis identified sensitive resources within the NCP and Mesa Meadows. The report included the existing setting; a summary of potentially proposed recreation and infrastructure; and project-specific technical studies and focused surveys for aesthetics, biological resources, noise, and traffic. The report also assessed potential constraints due to cultural resources, geology and soils, drainage, erosion, sedimentation, flooding, public utilities and services, land use, and planning.

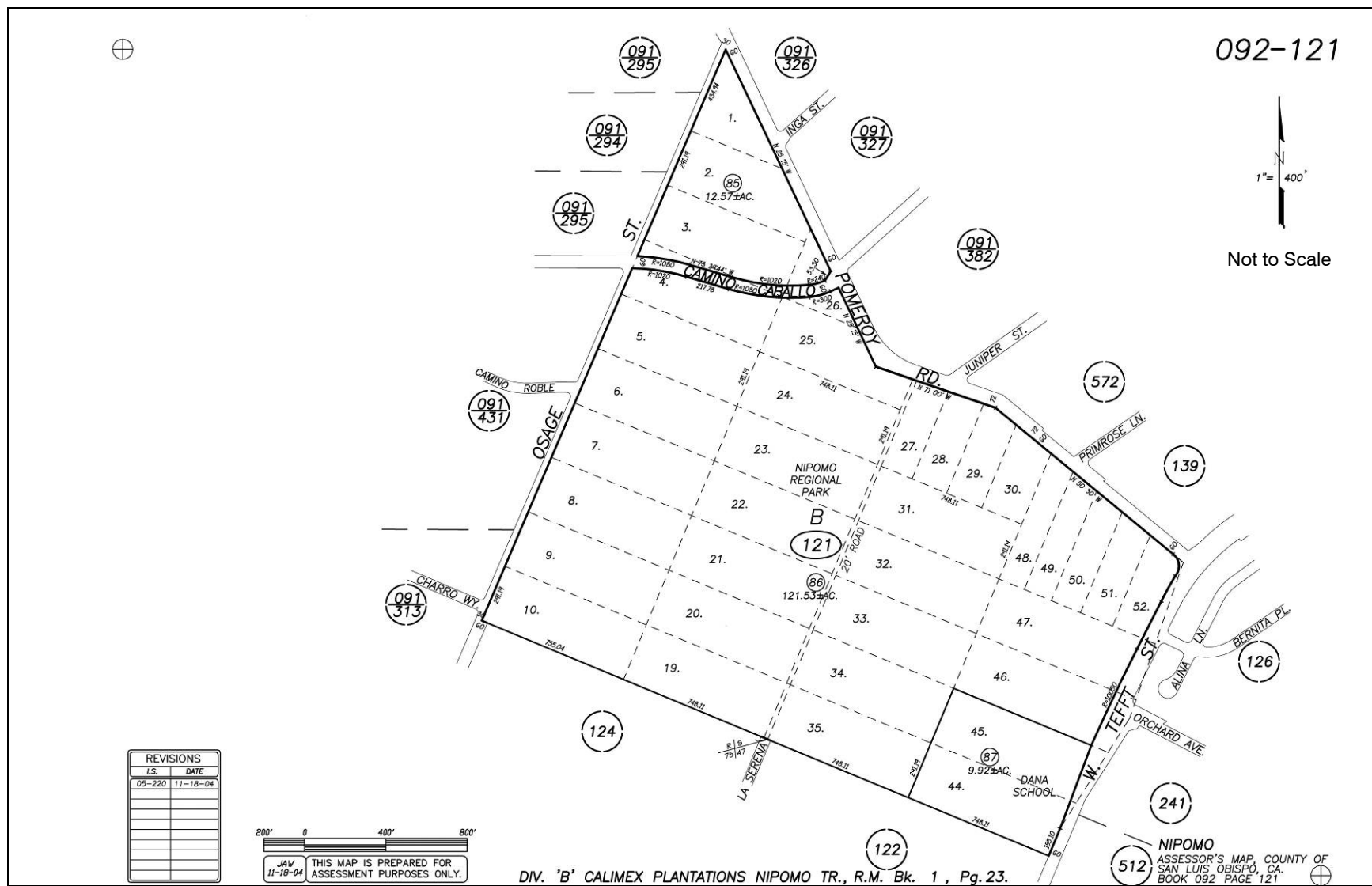
Figure 2-1. Regional Location Map



Figure 2-2. Project Vicinity Map

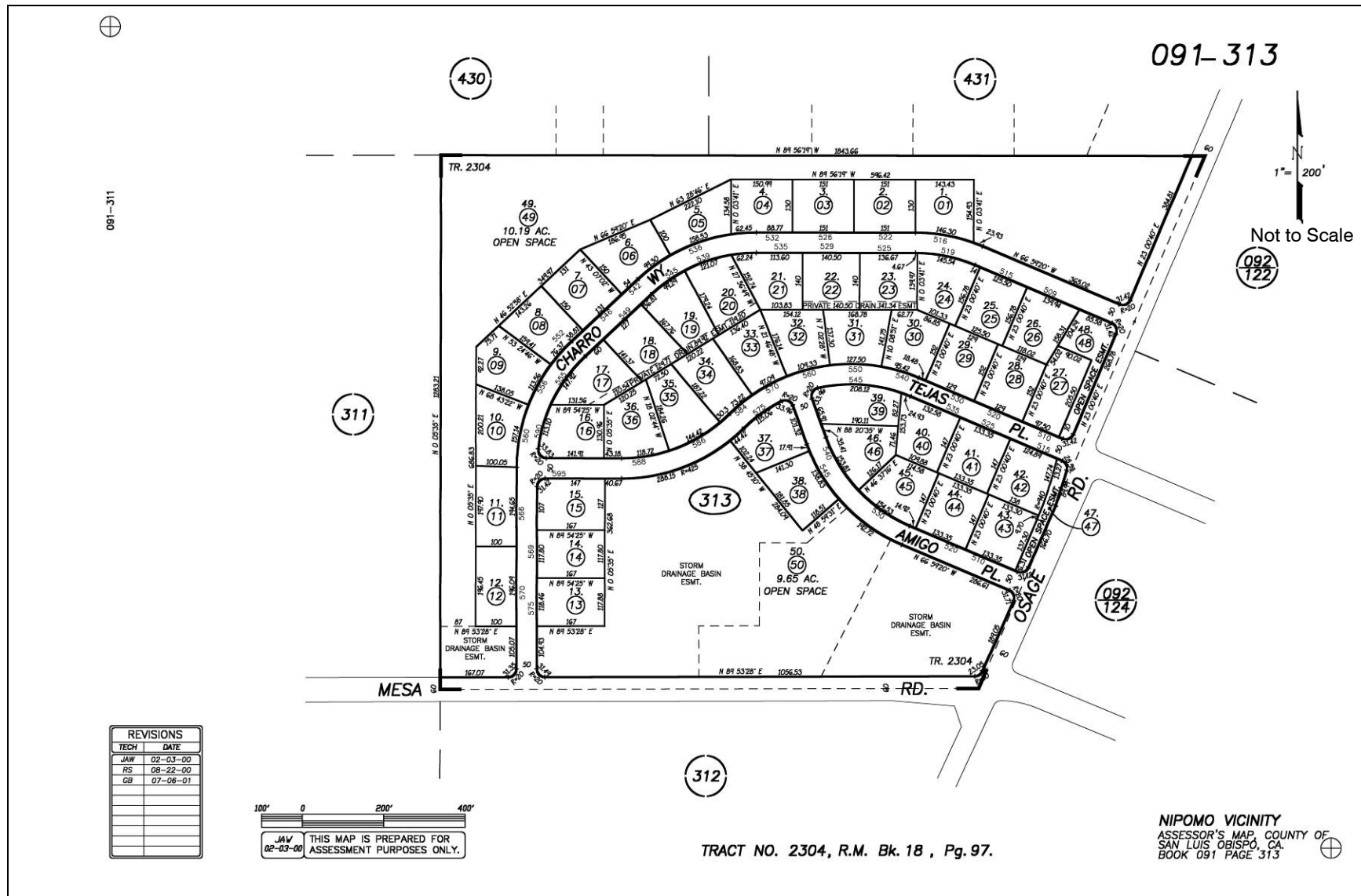


Figure 2-3. Assessor's Parcel Map



Source: County of San Luis Obispo

Figure 2-4. Assessor's Parcel Map



Source: County of San Luis Obispo

In addition to the environmental constraints analysis, the County commissioned a public survey to identify public opinions regarding NCP and what additions or improvements are needed (Kocher 2004). The survey was mailed out in January 2004 to 3,000 randomly selected households in the communities of Nipomo and Oceano; 522 survey responses were returned by mail. In addition to the mail survey, 51 surveys were conducted onsite at NCP, resulting in a total of 573 responses/returned surveys. The two-page survey included questions on existing recreation, proposed recreation, park funding, unmet recreation needs, and demographic characteristics of the survey respondents. The survey found that, for the recreation opportunities currently provided, people wanted more walking trails, park restrooms, playgrounds, picnic areas, parking, and sports fields. When asked what new recreation facilities they wanted, a majority favored a community recreation center, swimming pool, amphitheater, and skateboard park. The County retained a design firm, Firma, to prepare a draft park master plan (Firma 2004). Firma reviewed the project survey results, attended public workshops, and ultimately prepared plans for NCP's master plan.

2.1.4 Public Workshops and Scoping Meetings

To obtain public input, four public workshops were conducted. The workshops were arranged in two sets. The purpose of the first two workshops was to obtain input regarding what people would like to see in the park and obtain input regarding potential concerns. These workshops, held at the Nipomo Community Services District (NCSD) on March 3 and 4, 2004, included an exercise to let groups of participants draw ideas on a park plan. The facilities with the highest degree of consensus included:

- Preserve existing park facilities
- Preserve existing oaks and open space
- Retain existing multi-use trails
- New community center / recreation building
- Additional sports fields
- Multi-use path around park perimeter
- Equestrian staging area and multi use arena
- Enhance safety at both park entrances

The second set of workshops, held on May 5 and 6, 2004, presented three Concept Plans. These plans were developed based on the survey results, public input received at the March 2004 workshops, and data from the constraints analysis. These Concept Plans included a range of park development intensities as well as options for the locations of some key elements. At the May 2004 workshops there was no overall consensus regarding any one of the concept plans or the precise location of recreation elements.

On July 12, 2004, County Parks staff and the Nipomo Community Advisory Council (NCAC) held a noticed public meeting at the Nipomo High School Auditorium to present information from the constraints analysis, the project's public survey, take public testimony, and obtain community and NCAC input on the NCPMP Concept Plans. Over 100 residents attended the meeting, and diverse viewpoints were expressed, including a majority of persons requesting additional development within the park. The NCAC recommended that the County move forward with environmental review on the more intense Concept Plan, based on the fact that it is easier to take items out of a master plan than put them in later. NCAC also requested that the County review a second alternative that moved some of the larger components (such as a

community center) to West Tefft Street versus the park's interior. The NCAC requested that the County return to the community for additional input upon completion of the environmental document. In late 2004, Firma completed two Draft NCPMP drawings based on NCAC input. The drawings included two alternatives as requested by the NCAC.

2.1.5 Initial Study

In January 2005, the County's consultant started preparation of the project's environmental document (i.e., the California Environmental Quality Act initial study), including the submittal of referrals to agencies and advisory groups. The NCAC held a special meeting on March 24, 2005, to respond to the referral. County Parks staff did not attend this meeting, nor was the County's noticing list used. At the March 2005 meeting, the NCAC objected to the designs being analyzed in the project's environmental document and proposed a "rural friendly" design alternative. In 2006, a draft initial study was completed by the County's consultant. County staff coordinated with the South County Advisory Council (SCAC, previously identified as the NCAC) and held public meetings in Nipomo on August 14 and 21, 2006, to obtain input on the draft initial study. A majority of public comments included requests that the park remain rural with new recreation largely located elsewhere. On August 21, 2006, the majority of the SCAC supported the idea that the park should remain largely rural.

On March 22, 2007, County staff presented the project to the County Parks and Recreation Commission for input. Numerous members of the public attended this meeting and expressed various views regarding future park development. Based on County staff's input that it is easier to take items out of the park master plan once environmental review is complete than to add items later, the Parks and Recreation Commission directed staff to complete the environmental review for the two proposed alternatives (as described in the draft initial study) and then bring the item back to the Commission for further discussion. In September 2007, the County issued a draft initial study (#ED05-225) for the NCPMP for public review. The initial study reviewed two alternative projects. The two alternative park master plans were similar, with the exception of the location of major facilities such as the community center. No un-mitigable impacts were identified in the initial study. Public comments received regarding the initial study raised issues regarding:

- aesthetics, including night lighting;
- biological resources, including impacts to oak trees;
- hazardous materials related to the site's previous use;
- noise from proposed facilities;
- adequacy of public services, such as fire and sheriff;
- land use;
- adequacy of public services for proposed facilities;
- traffic and circulation;
- adequacy of wastewater facilities to serve the proposed park development; and,
- water use.

Some of the letters received in response to the draft initial study raised concern whether the initial study was adequate, indicating that an EIR should be completed for the project. On November 13, 2007, County Parks staff met with the County Environmental Coordinator and other Department of Planning and Building staff involved with the NCPMP to discuss the

comments received on the draft initial study. On November 26, 2007, the Environmental Coordinator recommended that an EIR be prepared for the NCPMP.

2.1.6 Project Changes Since 2007

Since the release of the Master Plan, Master Plan Alternative, and 2007 Initial Study document, County Parks has amended the project description as follows:

- All Osage Street improvements, including an adjacent trail, are now included in the Master Plan design.
- Modifications were made to proposed trail locations, including a paved trail adjacent to Osage Street.
- The Alternative Master Plan identified in the 2007 Initial Study (which moved some of the larger recreation facilities such as a community center to West Tefft Street) will be assessed in the Alternatives chapter of the EIR.
- The existing, temporary pre-school is identified as an existing, temporary use.
- Conceptual architectural drawings are provided for the proposed community center.

2.2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The primary goal of the NCPMP is to establish the long-range plan for NCP and Mesa Meadows. The objectives of the NCPMP are to:

- provide a range of passive and active facilities and use areas to meet the recreational needs of the community;
- maintain and upgrade existing recreational and community facilities and amenities;
- effectively manage current and projected levels of park uses;
- provide amenities that are aesthetically consistent with the regional character of the area;
- provide a community recreation center within the unincorporated community of Nipomo;
- incorporate infrastructure and circulation improvements to meet existing and estimated future (2025) motor vehicle transportation warrants;
- apply adaptive management strategies, including the use of improved technology, to address new planning and management issues as they arise;
- consider and support active citizen input in the decision-making process; and,
- periodically review and update the NCPMP through a public review process (approximately 15-year intervals), including consideration of the changing needs of the community when evaluating existing and potential new amenities.

2.3 PROPOSED PROJECT

The proposed project under consideration in this Program EIR includes the proposed NCPMP (refer to Figure 2-5). The plan includes a variety of recreational opportunities, including the expansion of existing facilities, the addition of new facilities to the park, active recreational uses including multi-use sports fields, passive recreational uses and open space, and improvements to infrastructure. Table 2-1 shows the existing and proposed acreage of land use-types within the park, and the percentage of the park area for each identified use. Table 2-2 lists all the proposed NCPMP facilities and their approximate respective land areas, along with the existing facilities and areas to be substantially left undeveloped.

2.3.1 Existing Facilities

Existing major amenities in the park include: four sports fields accommodating baseball, soccer, and football (5.3 acres), including one lighted field; four lighted tennis courts (0.6 acre); a 0.7-acre dog park; 6,534-square foot playground; group and individual picnic areas (9,433 square feet); the 12-acre Nipomo Native Garden, including trails and planted areas; open play area (9.3 acres); 1.1 acres of paved trails/walkways; and 4.3 acres of dirt and spur trails. Infrastructure within the park includes: 1.2 acres of drainage improvements, including basins; 2 acres of roads; 3.1 acres of parking; 3,155 square feet of restrooms and a maintenance building (consisting of a shop, office, and restroom); two host sites (1,284 square feet); and an air quality monitoring station. In addition, the 7,134-square foot Nipomo Library is located within the park and is accessed from West Tefft Street. An existing, temporary pre-school and fenced outdoor play area occupies approximately 4,050 square feet within the park. The pre-school is proposed to remain until a new pre-school is approved onsite, or elsewhere in the community of Nipomo. Existing development can be seen on an aerial photo of the project site (refer to Figure 2-6).

Existing recreation and infrastructure cover approximately 15 acres, or approximately 11%, of the park. The remaining 130-acre area (including Mesa Meadows) is generally a natural area consisting of oak woodland and coastal scrub, annual and ruderal grassland, and trails. Public recreation at Mesa Meadows includes a roughly 1-mile Class I bicycle path and contiguous equestrian trail. The site also contains native and non-native vegetation. The trail system at Mesa Meadows connects into the trail system of NCP.

2.3.2 Proposed Facilities

The NCPMP proposes approximately 15.96 acres of new recreational uses within the NCP area, 3.96 acres of new open play area (turf), and 7.57 acres of new infrastructure. Approximately 27.5 acres of existing undeveloped area and dirt trails would be converted to accommodate these new uses (refer to Table 2-1). The proposed project includes the expansion of the following existing uses: 4,000-square foot expansion of the library near West Tefft Street; an additional 8,276 square feet of playground, including a play structure and open play area near Osage Street and Camino Caballo; 19,000-square foot expansion of the off-leash dog park; an additional 14,400 square feet of tennis courts; an additional 3 acres of paved and unpaved trails/walkways including a separate equestrian trail; restoration of spur trails; and an additional 4 acres of open play area (turf). In addition, the NCPMP includes an additional 10 acres of multi-use sports fields. The type of sports to be accommodated would be determined at the time the need for added fields arises. The maximum intensity of use

would likely be youth soccer. The area could accommodate about six youth soccer fields. The fields are proposed to be lighted.

Proposed new amenities include a skate park or community pool (10,000 square feet) near West Tefft Street. Additional new facilities would be located near the center of the park, including: a 5,227-square foot amphitheater (gazebo/informal stage), basketball courts (10,000 square feet), handball courts (4,000 square feet), horseshoe pits (1,800 square feet), and an 8,400-square foot swimming pool and deck (if not constructed near West Tefft Street). A paved walkway (11,280 square feet) is proposed along Osage Street. The NCPMP includes a 36,000-square foot community center/gymnasium to be located within the park.

The total area for the proposed community center/gymnasium and associated improvements would be approximately 2 acres. A conceptual schematic of the community center is shown in Figure 2-7.

Table 2-1. Master Plan Existing and Proposed Use Types

Use Type	Existing		Proposed		Total	
	Acres	Percentage	Acres	Percentage	Acres	Percentage
Recreation Area & Designated Trails	8.2	5.2	15.96	10.0	24.2	15.2
Open Space & Trails (dirt)	135	84.8	-27.49	-17.3	107.5	67.5
Open Play Area Turf	9.2	5.76	3.96	2.5	13.1	8.2
Infrastructure	6.7	4.2	7.57	4.8	14.3	9.0
TOTAL	159.17	100			159.17	100

2.3.3 Access and Parking

2.3.3.1 Access

There are two motor vehicle entrances to NCP. One entrance is located on Pomeroy Road, offset and east of Juniper Street. The second motor vehicle entrance is located on West Tefft Street, adjacent to the Nipomo Library, offset and south of Orchard Avenue. The West Tefft Street and Orchard Street intersection is currently signalized, and a pedestrian crosswalk is located across West Tefft Street. Pedestrian, bicyclist, and equestrian trail access into NCP is located off of Osage Street (near Charro Way), Camino Caballo (near Osage Street), and at the northern terminus of La Serena Way. NCP is accessible from a number of collector and local streets including: Camino Caballo, Mesa Road, Osage Road, and Tejas Place. The trail system within Mesa Meadows is accessible from Charro Way, Tejas Place, and Amigo Place; this trail system connects with the NCP trail system immediately east of the Charro Way and Osage Street intersection (refer to Figure 2-5).

Figure 2-5. Nipomo Community Park Master Plan



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Major road improvements proposed for the NCPMP include: the re-alignment of existing park entrances on West Tefft Street and Pomeroy Road; installation of a traffic signal at the re-aligned Pomeroy Road/Juniper Street intersection; construction of a westbound left turn pocket and eastbound right turn pocket on Pomeroy Road; and improvements to Osage Road, including road widening for consistency with County road standard A-1(d) (two 11-foot wide travel lanes, with 6-foot shoulders on each side, for a total width of 34 feet), and construction of a trail within the road right-of-way. The project includes construction of a 6-foot wide, paved, multi-use trail and parallel equestrian trail creating a loop around the park.

The County General Services Agency will coordinate with the County Public Works Department prior to preparation of construction plans for road improvements in order to confirm that road improvements will meet the standards applicable at the time of actual development. In addition, there may be opportunities to incorporate design features that would avoid or minimize ground disturbance, and associated impacts to mature oak trees, drainage infrastructure, and the community.

The NCPMP does not include a specific phasing plan because amenities would be constructed as funds are available. The Public Works Department was consulted to assess the appropriate timing for implementation of road improvements. The Public Works Department determined that major road improvements would be required prior to construction and operation of any high-traffic generating facility, including the permanent pre-school and administration building, sports fields, community center, amphitheater, swimming pool, and skate park (Richard Marshall; March 7, 2006). Proposed uses that would not generate a substantial amount of new trips may be constructed prior to implementation of access and road improvements, such as open turf areas, playgrounds, dog park, handball courts, tennis courts, basketball courts, internal roads, parking areas group picnic areas, trails, restrooms, and stormwater improvements.

2.3.3.2 Internal Circulation and Parking

Internal vehicular access within the park is provided by a loop road, which connects the West Tefft Street and Pomeroy Road park entrances. Additional paved access is provided for the existing ballpark area. An additional paved loop road is proposed to provide access to proposed facilities and parking areas in the center of NCP.

The park currently provides 325 parking spaces within several parking lots located within the southeastern portion of the park. The parking area for the Nipomo Native Garden, located adjacent to Osage Street, includes 10 automobile spaces and two bus spaces. The proposed NCPMP includes an additional 386 to 422 spaces, including seven equestrian pull-through spaces (refer to Table 2-2).

2.3.4 Park Programs and Operational Activities

In addition to the proposed facilities discussed above, the following activities and facilities are proposed as part of the NCPMP: removal of diseased trees and replacement tree planting program; utility infrastructure additions and maintenance; and a cellular communication repeater station. Tree removal would be required to accommodate access improvements at Pomeroy Road and Juniper Street, and Osage Road widening and pathway improvements.

Figure 2-6. Existing Uses

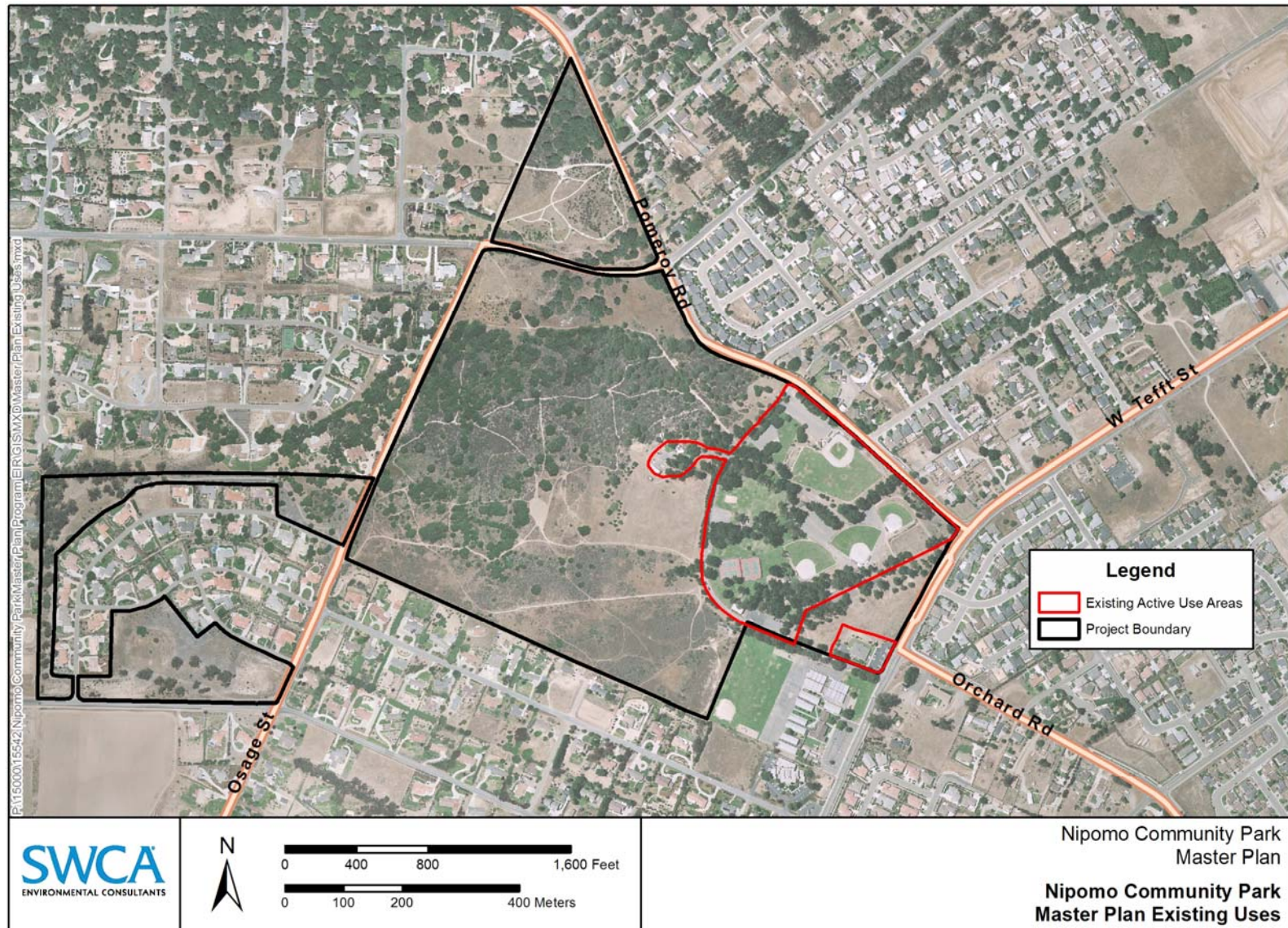


Table 2-2. Master Plan Existing and Proposed Amenities

Facilities	Existing (sf)	Proposed (sf)	Total (sf)
<i>Recreation Area</i>			
Amphitheaters	0	5,227	5,227
Basketball Courts	0	10,000	10,000
Playgrounds	6,534	8,276	14,810
Community Center	0	36,000	36,000
Dog Parks	31,988	19,000	50,988
Group Picnic Areas	9,433	0	9,433
Handball Courts	0	4,000	4,000
Horseshoe Pits	0	1,800	1,800
Skate Park	0	10,000	10,000
Sports Fields (Turf)	231,633	439,520	671,153
Swimming Pool/Deck	0	8,400	8,400
Tennis Courts	26,404	14,400	40,804
Trails/Walkways (paved/unpaved)	50,724	127,373	178,097
Osage Street Walkway (paved)	0	11,280	11,280
Volleyball Court	0	0	0
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>356,716</i>	<i>695,276</i>	<i>1,051,992</i>
<i>Open Space</i>			
Open Space (undeveloped)	5,689,881	-1,113,510	4,576,371
Open Play Area (Turf)	399,805	172,498	572,303
Trails (dirt)	190,200	-84,276	105,924
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i><u>6,279,886</u></i>	<i><u>-1,025,288</u></i>	<i><u>5,254,598</u></i>
<i>Infrastructure</i>			
Basins	54,900	108,900	163,800
Library Building	7,134	4,000	11,134
Parking	137,166 (325 spaces)	183,388 (422 spaces)	320,554 (747 spaces)
Pre-school	4,050 (temporary)	0	4,050 (permanent)
Two Host Sites	1,284	0	1,284
Restrooms/Maintenance Buildings	3,155	1,490	4,645
Roads	89,036	32,234	121,270
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i><u>296,725</u></i>	<i><u>330,012</u></i>	<i><u>626,737</u></i>

Figure 2-7. Community Center Conceptual Schematic



2.3.4.1 Replacement Tree Planting Program

Many of the existing park trees are Monterey pine (*Pinus radiata*); this species is highly susceptible to devastating disease including pine pitch canker. The replacement tree planting program includes regular evaluation of trees, and subsequent maintenance, removal (if the tree is dead and/or a hazard to public safety), and replacement depending on the monitored health of the tree. Pre-emptive replacement of trees prior to removal may be implemented. Proposed replacement trees may include: Coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), California sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*), California pepper (*Schinus molle*), Coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*), and Monterey cypress (*Callitropsis macrocarpa*).

2.3.4.2 Utility Infrastructure Additions and Maintenance

Water Supply

Water service is currently supplied to NCP through a contractual Water Service Agreement (WSA) executed between the NCSD and the County (recorded May 29, 1984). The WSA states that the NCSD will provide water to the park for the purposes of irrigation, sanitation, and miscellaneous uses. In 2004, the NCSD constructed a waterline through the park adjacent to Dana Elementary School, within a 5-foot wide easement executed between the County and the NCSD. The width of this utility easement is approximately 20 feet from the southern edge of the property. Water is delivered to the park via a 3-inch water main that is located within the right-of-way on Pomeroy Road. The County proposes to continue receiving water from the NCSD to serve the park, potentially including the use of recycled water.

The Mesa Meadows subdivision (Tract 2304) is served by the NCSD. Water mains are located along Osage Street, Charro Way, Tejas Place, and Amigo Place.

Wastewater

Wastewater disposal for the park is currently treated by individual septic systems for four existing restroom facilities. The project includes two additional restroom facilities to serve park visitors. Effluent disposal and treatment could be accomplished by two methods: septic tanks and leachfield systems, or fiberglass holding tanks that are regularly pumped and maintained. The Mesa Meadows subdivision (Tract 2304) is served by onsite, individual septic systems.

Stormwater Management

The project site currently receives stormwater flow from adjacent developed areas, which is directed into existing onsite stormwater basins (1.2 acres). Existing drainage improvements in the northeast area of the park include small drainage channels, v-shaped concrete swales, culverts, and unlined infiltration basins. Collected stormwater percolates into the soil within the basins. An earthen drainage channel located along the northern property line accommodates stormwater flows originating from the parking lot along the Pomeroy Road frontage. The earthen drainage channel then flows southwest and empties onto a rock riprap energy dissipater into an unlined retention basin constructed at the West Tefft Street and Pomeroy Road intersection. The retention basin also receives storm flows via three 12-inch culverts: one that conveys stormwater from underneath Pomeroy Road from a low-lying area across the street at the intersection of West Tefft Street and Pomeroy Road, a storm drain on the park side of West Tefft Street, and a culvert that flows underneath West Tefft Street originating from bordering residential developments to the east of the park.

An engineered drainage system is located within Mesa Meadows, including multiple 24-inch corrugated metal culverts designed to convey stormwater runoff from the residential development into four infiltration basins located adjacent to Mesa Road. The basins discharge stormwater via percolation into the sandy topsoil.

The proposed project includes the following drainage improvements to manage stormwater flow during rain events: (1) construct a new basin in the center of the southern half of the park, and (2) install a drainage pipe along Pomeroy Road within the existing drainage swale.

2.3.4.3 Cellular Communication Repeater Station

A repeater station is a combination of a receiver and a transmitter that receives a weak or low-level signal and retransmits it at a higher level or higher power, so that the signal can cover longer distances without degradation. These facilities require a power source for operation. One repeater station is currently located at NCP on an existing light pole that illuminates the field. A second repeater station was approved by the County Department of Planning and Building in 2009 and is located in the same vicinity as the existing station.

2.4 MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

2.4.1 Project Phasing and Funding

The Master Plan does not establish a phasing plan, although the estimated timeframe for completion is 20 years. Once a master park plan is adopted, County Parks staff will go back to the community to determine priorities. The timing, type, and extent of infrastructure extensions, offsite improvements such as traffic signals, and earthwork would depend upon the type and extent of the first new facilities to be implemented. Conversely, the choice of which facilities to implement first, second, or third may be influenced by the cost of infrastructure and earthwork that must accompany the recreation facilities.

The overall cost to construct the Master Plan is shown in Appendix A (Master Plan). The cost for each element is based on conceptual design characteristics; therefore, the cost for any particular element could go up or down once the more detailed design is developed.

It is possible that the Nipomo community, a concessionaire, and/or a community organization may be a partner in the development of the community recreation buildings planned for the park. The cost to construct these facilities is identified as a separate item on the construction cost breakdown (2003 dollars) in Appendix A (Master Plan).

2.4.2 Master Plan Amendment

The Master Plan is intended to guide development of the park to an envisioned “build out” some undetermined years in the future. While the purpose of a Master Plan is to guide decisions over a number of years, it is recognized that as time passes community needs and priorities may change and the Master Plan may need updating and revising. The Master Plan should be updated at 15-year intervals to ensure that it remains viable and relevant as a guide for meeting the park and recreation needs of the community. The Master Plan may be amended at any point along the way if new ideas or pressing needs warrant a change in the Plan. The process for amending the Master Plan would involve community workshops, SCAC and County Parks and Recreation Commission input, and review and approval by the County Board of Supervisors.