



# LARSON PARK

## MASTER PLAN UPDATE



**SONOMA COUNTY  
REGIONAL PARKS**

03.25.2021



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## Introduction

Larson Park has been a well-used neighborhood park for decades, but has fallen into disrepair and needs significant renovations. Rather than initiating major maintenance projects to renovate individual park elements, Regional Parks worked with residents and other stakeholders to re-envision how Larson Park could best serve the current and future needs of the community.

As a neighborhood park, Larson Park has a locally unique mix and number of recreation elements which are more commonly found in larger community parks. Through the Master Planning process, it became clear the community is generally pleased with the balance and layout of current uses, and consistently communicated a desire to retain uses while modestly improving and upgrading the existing facilities and park amenities.

Equally important to improving the recreation elements is the community's desire to protect and enhance Larson Park's natural resource values. The riparian areas of Sonoma and Pequeño Creeks along the north and west boundaries lend a great deal to the character of the park and provide valuable natural open space and habitat within an otherwise developed residential area. Other key priorities expressed during the public participation process were improving the overall safety and sense of security in the park and considering ways to mitigate impacts to the adjacent neighbors during peak use times.

The resulting Master Plan provides a framework to advance design and engineering and will support fundraising for implementing specific improvement projects. In summary, the Master Plan proposes renovating nearly every park feature and describes modest enhancements to park amenities.

## Goals and Objectives of the Master Plan

### 1. Address Deferred Maintenance of Park Infrastructure

- Replace the existing park infrastructure as necessary including irrigation, drainage, vehicular and pedestrian circulation, signage and site furnishings.
- Replace the defunct restroom.

### 2. Improve Recreational Features

- Replace and/or renovate recreational features such as picnic areas, tennis courts, ball field, soccer field, basketball court and play area.
- Add new features where significant community support exists, such as proposed pickle ball courts.

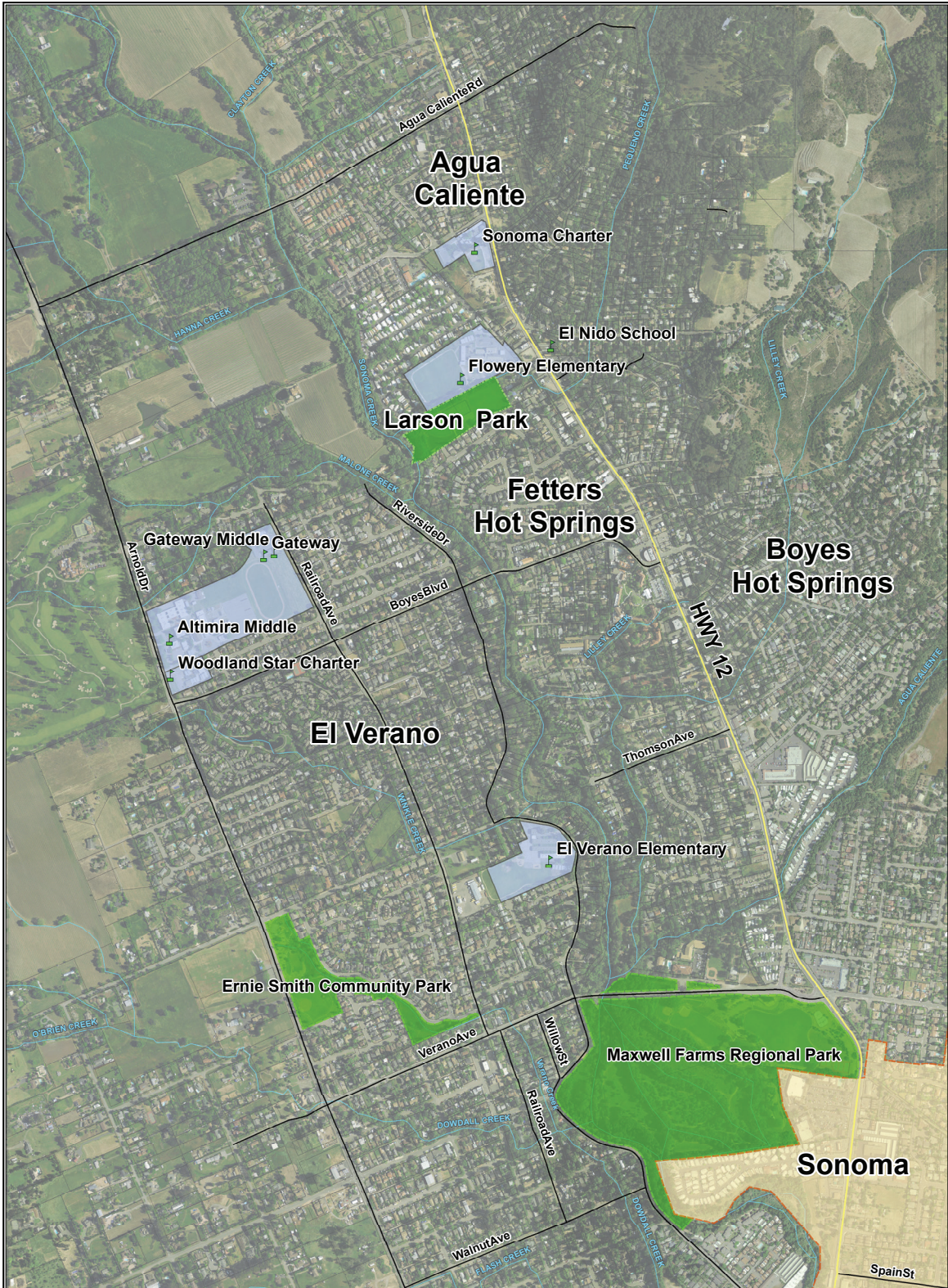
### 3. Enhance Safety and Community Connections

- Modify the entrance and parking layout to improve vehicular circulation.
- Create a separate pedestrian pathway linking both sides of the park to improve safety by eliminating the need for pedestrians to walk in the drive aisle.
- Expand the community garden and identify opportunities for community art throughout the park.
- Enhance visibility into and through the park.

### 4. Protect Natural Resources

- Limit improvements to the existing developed footprint to protect the riparian areas.
- Replace invasive species with native plants.
- Protect mature trees by minimizing impacts to the root zone.
- Design and install stormwater features to support infiltration and treatment of runoff within the park.

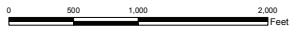




**Legend**

	Larson Park		Regional Parks
	Highway 12		Schools
	Streets		Creeks
	City of Sonoma		Parcel Boundaries

### Larson Park Site Location



Date: 3/28/2018 Service Layer Credits: USGS, County of Sonoma





## Project Background

### History of the Property

The park was originally developed and maintained by the Valley of the Moon Recreation and Park District. In 1987 the District was dissolved because the existing tax base was unable to support the ongoing operational budget of the District primarily due to the high costs of maintaining active recreation facilities, such as those found at Larson Park. After the District was dissolved a County Service Area (CSA) was formed to support the local parks previously operated by the District. Subsequently, Sonoma County Regional Parks has been administering the CSA, and managing the park. Sonoma County Regional Parks now manages these facilities including Larson Park with funding from the CSA.

### Site and Neighborhood Context

Larson Park consists of two assessor parcels (158-056-021 and 158-056-059) totaling approximately 7.5 acres. Larson Park is located at 329 De Chene Avenue in Fetters Hot Springs, part of an unincorporated area of Sonoma County referred to as “The Springs” which includes Agua Caliente and Boyes Hot Springs. The park is situated in a residential neighborhood approximately 0.15 miles to the west of Highway 12, and is within Sonoma County Supervisorial District 1. (See Figure 1. Site Location Map)

Vehicular access is provided at the southwest corner of the park from De Chene Avenue, a public residential street. There are three formal points of bicycle and pedestrian access to the park. The first is adjacent to the vehicular entrance at De Chene Avenue, and consists of an accessible path of travel and a Class 1 bike path. The second is the Central Sonoma Valley Trail, a Class 1 Trail, which enters the park from Flowery School on a bridge over Pequeño Creek. The third enters the park from the western Flowery Elementary School play fields over Pequeño Creek on a bridge.

The demographic makeup of The Springs is that of a diverse community both in ethnic composition, age, and economic status. According to the 2010 U.S. Census the total population of the three census tracts that comprise this geographic area is 16,314. The percentage of the total population age 65 or older ranges from 8.8% to 15.1%. The percentage of the population under the age of 18 ranges 16.2% to 27.7%. The single largest age group are those ages 25 to 44 years and the median age of all three areas ranges from 31.4 to 43.4. The Hispanic population ranges from 27.7% to 68.1% and the percentage of population that speaks a language other than English ranges from 36.8% to 68.1%. Median household income ranges from a low of \$22,450 to a high of \$36,359. This places all three areas well below the 2015 Sonoma County median household income of \$66,500, and is generally considered one of the densest and underprivileged areas in the unincorporated Sonoma County.

### Adjacent Land Uses and Zoning

Residential neighborhoods with a mix of R-1 Low Density and R-2 Medium Density Housing border the park on the south and east sides. Sonoma Creek forms the border to west, separating the park from vineyards and residences. Pequeño Creek separates the park from Flowery Elementary school along the northern border. The nearby Highway 12 corridor consists of commercial zoning with a mix of Limited Commercial District (LC), and Administrative and Office (CO) uses where Highway 12 Development Guidelines as well as the Springs Redevelopment Plan apply.





The Sonoma County 2020 General Plan Land Use map designates Larson Park as Public/Quasi Public (PQP) zoned as a Public Facility (PF). The park includes area within a Riparian Corridor Combining Zone (RC50), a Floodplain Combining District (F2), and the Valley Oak Habitat Combining District (VOH). No changes are proposed in the land use designation or zoning of the park in this Master Plan process.

## Regulatory Setting and Policy Framework

In addition to the objectives and policies in the Sonoma County 2020 General Plan, there are multiple existing federal, State, County and Regional Parks regulations that will need to be referred to when implementing the Master Plan. All site improvement activities will be conducted consistent with all applicable laws, codes, regulations and permit requirements. Various project components will be subject to permits from regulatory agencies.

The Sonoma County 2020 General Plan Land Use map designates both parcels that comprise the Park as Public/Quasi Public (PQP), and zoned as a Public Facility (PF). This master plan proposes no changes in the land use designation or zoning of the Park. In addition, the area along Sonoma Creek falls within the FEMA 100 year floodplain, and other parts of the park are designated as within a Riparian Corridor Combining Zone (RC50), a Floodplain Combining District (F2) and Valley Oak Habitat Combining District (VOH). Specific development restrictions apply in the flood and riparian zones subject to the RC50 and F2 designations and the VOH designation requires mitigation if Valley Oaks over 60” in diameter are removed. No Valley Oaks over 60” are proposed to be removed as part of this master plan and new improvements are not proposed in the floodplain.

This master plan is subject to approval by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors. Site features requiring engineering and utility hook ups will require building permits and will be subject to review by Permit Sonoma and must comply with the most current version of The California Building Standards Code (Cal. Code Regs., Title 24) and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The site is adjacent to Sonoma Creek, which is known to contain species listed as threatened or endangered including Chinook salmon, steelhead and California fresh water shrimp and Pequeño Creek an ephemeral stream that acts as the northern boundary for the park. Construction activities performed in these riparian areas would be subject to review and possible permitting with the following agencies:

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Section 404 of the Clean Water Act)
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Streambed Alteration Agreement)
- Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Permit Sonoma

Additionally site construction activities will be subject to storm water management permits:

- Regional Water Quality Control Board (Water Quality Certification or Waste Discharge Requirements)
- State Water Resources Control Board (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Construction Activity).

Sonoma County Regional Parks oversees the day to day operations and long term planning for the park. All maintenance activities will be required to comply with Sonoma County Code and the current Regional Parks Spraying Policy.



**Existing ball field**



**Existing tennis courts**



**Existing basketball court**

## Existing Site Features and Uses

The well-used existing infrastructure and recreational facilities are reaching or have reached the end of their useful life, and now replacement and major upgrades are needed. The existing site features are as follows.

### Existing Infrastructure

- Parking - a total of 54 parking spaces (52 standard stalls and 2 accessible ADA stalls).
- 1 public restroom and concession building currently used for maintenance storage.
- 1 portable toilet surrounded by a wood framed structure.
- Utilities - water, electrical and sewer services.
- Storm water system - several inlet structures with direct discharge into Pequeño and Sonoma Creeks.
- 1 pedestrian trail bridge over Pequeño Creek (northwest corner of the site).
- 1 multi-use (pedestrian and bicycle) bridge over Pequeño Creek (northeast corner of the site).
- Perimeter fencing - 6 foot high chain link with barbed wire along the southern edge of the park and 6 foot high chain link fencing along the eastern edge of the park.
- Regulatory signage

### Existing Recreational Facilities

- 1 Ball Field - approximately 38,600 square feet
- 1 Soccer Field - approximately 70,200 square feet
- 4 Fenced Tennis Courts - approximately 30,300 square feet
- 1 Full Basketball Court - approximately 3,500 square feet
- 2 Ball Walls - approximately 35' long x 8' tall
- 1 Playground Area - approximately 6,300 sf with one accessible ADA picnic table.
- 1 Picnic Area - approximately 2,400 sf containing 2 standard picnic tables one accessible ADA picnic table.
- A Community Garden Area - approximately 4,000 sf
- Class 1 Bike Path - 980 linear foot segment of the Central Sonoma Valley Trail, that extends north through Flowery School and a mixed use developed area.





Existing facilities map

Larson Park | Sonoma, California

### User Groups

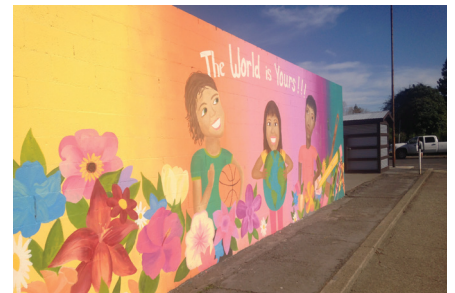
The majority of users are residents from the Springs and El Verano communities, however organized user groups include members beyond the local community. Active recreational use of the fields and courts has long been an important aspect of Larson Park, with programming by organized sports leagues and associations. Due to the declining condition of these facilities, use levels by both organized groups and individuals has declined in recent years. In addition to active recreation, the park has supported other more community oriented uses such as the creation of the community garden, hosting of a farmers market, and as a venue for educational programming by local schools and non-profit groups.



Existing community garden



Farmers market, 2017



Existing mural wall

## Sports Leagues

The ball field is primarily used by Sonoma Valley Little League for weekday evening practices from February through June. Currently the field is not used for games.

The soccer field has most recently been used by the Inter-American Adult Soccer League for games on Sundays and by the Sonoma Valley Youth Soccer Association for weekday evening practices. Field use between these two organizations generally runs from March through November.

Individual players use the tennis courts. The Sonoma Valley Tennis Association no longer uses the tennis courts for league play, using the courts at Maxwell Farms Regional Park. The tennis courts at Larson Park have become a venue for the rapidly growing sport of pickleball with a club of pickleball players laying out temporary lines over the existing tennis courts to facilitate their game. Pickleball club games typically occur on Sunday mornings.

## Community Garden

The Community Garden was developed in 2010 by the Springs Community Alliance. In 2011 the garden site was cleared and irrigation installed. In 2012, twenty individual planter boxes were installed and a fence was constructed to protect the garden, and currently, 25 local families cultivate fresh organic vegetables in the garden. The local community organization Nuestra Voz administered the garden through a license agreement with Regional Parks until 2020. At Regional Parks is currently recruiting a new non-profit partner to lead the project.

The garden has two entry gates and adequate access to sun, water, and support amenities. There are however, several common invasive plant species found at the garden that need to be monitored including *Foeniculum vulgare* (fennel), *Mentha spicata* (spearmint) and *Verbascum sp.* (common mullein).

## Informal Use Patterns

According to survey responses and based on park observations, dog walking appears to be the most common informal uses of the park. Other informal uses reported and observed include: playground use by young children and their families, picnicking, tennis, pickleball, various informal activities on the soccer field between game times, basketball and other activities on the open court area such as young children riding bikes and scooters, and people using the ball walls either for hitting tennis balls or kicking soccer balls.

The area along Sonoma Creek is also a popular attraction. In the warmer months when there is adequate flow, kids and families can be found wading and swimming in the pools on both the upstream and downstream ends of the existing dam structure. Wildlife observation is a year round activity, and during the school year the creek area serves as an outdoor classroom destination for nearby elementary schools.

## Farmers Market

In 2017 Community Events Farmers Markets, through a special use permit with Regional Parks hosted The Springs Community Farmers Market. The Farmers Market was held every Sunday from July 1st through the first few weeks in September 4 pm to 7 pm. According to vendor information provided by Agricultural Community Events Farmers Markets, the market averaged about 20 individual vendors with products including fresh produce, arts and crafts, and prepared foods. Average attendance was estimated at 300 people on the opening day of the market with attendance estimated at between 50 to 100 people in each of the following weeks. In April of 2018 Community Events Farmers Markets chose not to continue hosting the event citing lack of attendance as the primary reason. It is unclear what accounted for the decline in attendance, and it is anticipated that master plan improvements would accommodate the return of a farmers market in the future.

## Local Schools and Non-Profits

Larson Park is an important educational resource for local schools and after school programs. Woodland Star Charter School kindergarten classes visit the park on a regular basis. The primary educational destination is the creek environment, where children are able to explore and observe the natural world. The class sizes typically consist of 20 to 25 kids ages 5-6. Flowery Star Aces after School Program, a “nature education” program run by the Boys and Girls Club of Sonoma Valley, uses the site every few months as a part of its curriculum. These groups consist of approximately 30 kids ages 7-8 and the outings range from 1 to 2 hours in length.

## Environmental Setting and Creek Environments

### Sonoma Creek

An approximately 250 foot long section of Sonoma Creek acts as the site boundary to the west. The channel in this reach is approximately 100 feet wide from top of bank to top of bank with areas of significant erosion along both banks. The over story canopy provides shade to the majority of the channel in this section and consists of mature native tree species including Oak, Cottonwood, Alder, Bay and Willow species. The understory consists of patches of native vegetation (primarily rushes and sedges) with large stands of non-native species including Hedera helix (English ivy), Rubus discolor (Himalayan blackberry), Vinca major (periwinkle) as well as a variety of other non-native woody perennial plant species and annual grasses. The creek has known populations of, and provides critical habitat for Chinook salmon, Steelhead trout and Fresh Water Shrimp - all of which are federally listed species. The flood plain has large stands of Carex barbarea (sedge) that could be used as a propagule source for future revegetation of other areas. There are also large stands of native willow species that could serve as a harvest source for future revegetation and or bank stabilization activities.

### Pequeño Creek

An approximately 1000 foot long section of Pequeño Creek acts as the site boundary to the north. The creek is seasonal in nature and the channel is approximately 25 feet wide from top of bank to top of bank. The channel is incised and the banks show areas of erosion particularly at the toe. The over story canopy provides shade to the majority of the channel and consists of mature native tree species including Oaks, Cottonwoods, Buckeyes, Bay and Willow species. The understory consists of patches of native vegetation with large stands of non-native species including cotoneaster, broom, Hedera helix (English ivy), Rubus discolor (Himalayan blackberry, Vinca major (periwinkle) as well as various non-native, annual grasses. At the western end of the channel there is a large concrete spillway structure approximately 30 feet from the confluence with Sonoma Creek.



*Existing pedestrian bridge, west*



*Pequeno Creek spillway*



*Sonoma Creek dam structure*

## Opportunities and Constraints

### Working within the Existing Development Footprint

The overriding response from the community during the public outreach process was to retain the overall layout and programmatic elements of the Park. Thus, the majority of the proposed improvements in the resulting Master Plan involve renovating and improving the existing facilities within essentially the same development envelope. As such, disturbance to the site, including impacts to the riparian areas, will be avoided.

### Neighboring Property Owners

One of the primary concerns expressed by adjacent and nearby neighbors of the park is the impacts during soccer field use, particularly on weekends. Some of the concerns expressed include increased noise levels as well as increased vehicular and pedestrian traffic associated with these organized sports events. In addition, neighbors cited participants entering their yards in order to retrieve stray balls that had gone over the fence, and people urinating along the fence line.

In many cases neighboring property owners have constructed various forms of wood privacy fencing on their side of the property line adjacent to the chain link fencing on the park side. The two fence lines present both potential points of conflict and opportunities to address specific issues through a mutually beneficial fence renovation program. This may include raising the fence where appropriate to prevent balls from entering the adjacent yards, and considering a cohesive design and material palette. Fence renovations and replacement would be coordinated with the removal of toxic and invasive plants (ivy, arundo, privet, and oleander) and the planting of a consistent vegetated buffer along both the east and south property lines. The style and materials of the fencing, and specific species for the vegetation buffer will be selected during the design development phase with input from the community and neighboring property owners. The addition of full service centrally located restrooms will serve to eliminate the urination issue.

### Stream Bank Erosion and Restoration

Stream bank erosion at the outfall of the concrete swale lining Pequeño Creek in the northwest corner of the site was identified as a problem dating as far back as 1999. In an attempt to address this issue, Regional Parks first submitted a permit application proposing to repair the eroding bank. The project never came to fruition due primarily to the conflicting habitat needs of salmonids and fresh water shrimp, both of which are federally listed species. During the process National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Marine Fisheries Service responded by making the removal of the Sonoma Creek dam a condition of approval. However, the dam and the surrounding creek environs serve as fresh water shrimp habitat and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife are charged with protecting this habitat and could not agree to dam removal.

Restoration opportunities exist to use site specific native species to revegetate the understories of Pequeño Creek along the entire reach within Regional Parks property as well as the area of the riparian corridor along Sonoma Creek that is within the 100 year flood plain bench and the ordinary high water mark. Native plant restoration could be accomplished using volunteer events over time at a relatively low cost.



## Proposed Master Plan Improvements

Proposed improvements at Larson Park consist primarily of upgrading, replacing or renovating nearly all of the existing facilities. The park uses and general layout under the proposed Master Plan remain very similar to that of the existing park. The only new uses include four dedicated pickleball courts to be developed in place of one of the tennis courts, leaving three tennis courts instead of four, the provision of a new restroom building, and adding a new picnic area. Several of the existing uses to be modestly expanded include the play area, soccer field, community garden, and the picnic area on west side of the park that will become a reservable group area. The ball field will be renovated within its approximate existing footprint. A full description of all the specific improvements can be found in Appendix B that has a table comparing existing and proposed elements.

### Infrastructure Improvements

#### Improved Parking and Vehicular Circulation

The overall parking layout and vehicular circulation is enhanced in the Master Plan. The proposed improvements will enhance vehicular flow through the parking areas, decrease pedestrian and vehicular conflicts, and introduce a centrally located drop-off and pick-up area just inside the park entrance. Improvements to pedestrian pathways and other park improvements will result in the elimination of 2-3 parking stalls.

#### Improved Pedestrian Circulation

To reduce potential conflicts between vehicular traffic and pedestrians, the Master Plan proposes a distinct pedestrian pathway from the west side of the park to the east side will be developed. The path will consist of a grade separated paved path of travel around the ball field outfield fence to the central park area. To improve the overall pedestrian circulation and access throughout the park, the plan calls for improving the informal trails to provide an enhanced and safer outer loop experience. Access to and from the north will be maintained with the small existing bridge over the west end of Pequeño Creek along with the existing pedestrian and bicycle bridge in the northeast corner built in 2017 as part of the Central Sonoma Valley Trail project. Along with improved pedestrian pathways, a clear system of wayfinding signs will be installed.

#### New Restroom Facilities

The existing portable restroom will be replaced with a new, centrally located prefabricated restroom. The new facility will include running water, flush toilets, and will be fully accessible. The unit will be selected to be vandal resistant.

#### Renovated Maintenance Building

The former restroom and concession building located in the southwest corner near the park entry will receive minor cosmetic and structural upgrades and continue to serve as a park maintenance and equipment storage facility.

**Proposed Master Plan (see appendix A for enlarged plan)**

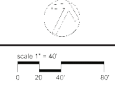


- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. GROUP PICNIC AREA W/ LARGE GRILL (RESERVABLE) | 11. SMALL PICNIC AREA W/ TABLES AND SHADE STRUCTURE |
| 2. COMMUNITY GARDEN                              | 12. SCHOOL AGE PLAY AREA, AGES 5-12                 |
| 3. PARK MAINTENANCE AND EQUIPMENT STORAGE        | 13. SMALL KIDS PLAY AREA, AGES 3-5                  |
| 4. BASEBALL FIELD                                | 14. SOCCER FIELD                                    |
| 5. RESTROOM                                      | 15. PATHWAY, FIRM AND STABLE AGGREGATE SURFACE      |
| 6. SMALL PICNIC AREA W/ TABLES                   | 16. EXISTING INFORMAL TRAIL                         |
| 7. TENNIS COURTS (3)                             | 17. DROP-OFF/PICK-UP ZONE                           |
| 8. PICKLE BALL COURTS (4)                        | 18. EXISTING FOOTBRIDGE TO REMAIN                   |
| 9. BALL WALLS                                    | 19. EXISTING MULTI-USE BRIDGE TO REMAIN             |
| 10. BASKETBALL COURT                             |   |

- EXISTING TREES 
- PROPOSED TREES 
- CREEK CENTERLINE 



**Larson Regional Park - Master Plan**



**Site Drainage and Storm Water Management**

The improvement plans will incorporate strategies to reduce overall storm water discharge from the site and into the adjacent creeks. The approach will include an appropriate mix of best management practices such as bio-infiltration zones, and permeable paving to manage and treat storm water within the park site according to the applicable water quality guidelines. A Storm water Pollution Prevention Plan will be created as part of the construction and permitting process.

**Recreational Facilities Improvements**

The existing active recreation elements are important and well used features in the park, and the community is strongly in favor of retaining nearly the same mix of fields, courts, and play areas. The proposed Master Plan addresses concerns of deferred maintenance by incorporating renovation of all the recreation facilities, and where possible, specific features such as the soccer field and play area will be expanded. A noteworthy change is reducing the four tennis courts by one tennis court to accommodate four new dedicated pickleball courts. This activity has strong community support, and is dramatically growing in popularity relative to tennis and many other court games.

**Renovated Soccer Field**

The improvements to the soccer field will consist of replacing the existing natural turf field and irrigation system. The Master Plan layout provides approximately 15 feet of additional field play area from baseline to baseline between the property line fence and the tennis/pickle ball fence. The overall field size is 315 feet by 210 feet. The minimum dimensions for high school league play according to the American Amateur Soccer League is 300 feet by 150 feet. The soccer field renovation is expected to drastically reduce existing maintenance needs.



## Renovated Baseball Field

The baseball field remains a well-used and important field for the Sonoma Valley Little League organization and for informal play by the neighborhood families and kids. However, the overall condition of the field surfacing, fencing, and associated amenities have deteriorated and are at the end of their useful life. While the layout and dimensions of the field will remain unchanged, the Master Plan includes renovating all aspects of the field facility including minor surface grading to improve drainage patterns, amending the existing soil as needed, installing new sod, irrigation and infield surfacing. Outfield and foul line fencing will also be replaced as well as the backstop, dugout fencing, player and spectator seating and drinking fountains. The field renovation is expected to drastically reduce existing maintenance needs.

## Tennis Courts and New Pickle Ball Courts

Due to a lack of adequate sub-surface drainage causing failure of the subgrade, the tennis courts have deteriorated to a point where the existing playing surfaces and associated fencing will need to be demolished and rebuilt. The overall footprint of the courts will be shifted slightly to the north, closer to the edge of the existing paved area north of the fence. Three tennis courts will be re-built with each court laid out slightly closer together. This maintains the regulation dimensions for each court and the required minimum separation between courts as described by the American Sports Builders Association. Four dedicated pickleball courts are proposed adjacent to the three tennis courts. Two ball walls are proposed for the south end of courts 2 and 3. The walls will be usable from the north side inside the tennis court area and the south side outside of the court fencing.

## Renovated Basketball Court

The basketball court is a central feature in the park and well-used for pick-up basketball games and “shoot-arounds,” and also as a flexible area for families and kids to ride bikes and scooters. In the Master Plan the court is shifted slightly to the west and enlarged. The resurfaced and striped larger basketball court will measure 5 feet longer from base line to base line, upgrading it to a typical middle school court. The height of the baskets will be 10 feet, and the striping layout will follow convention for the foul line, key and three point line.

## Play Area and Equipment

The Master Plan proposes the development of a new enlarged play area, and replacement of the existing small and outdated play structure with larger and more interesting pieces of play equipment to increase the play value. The size of the play area will be increased from 2,000 square feet to approximately 7,500 square feet with two areas - one for children ages 2-5 and the other for school aged children 5 and up. The expanded and upgraded play area will feature new ADA compliant surfacing and adjacent seating for parents to relax and supervise their children. Fencing and landscape planting areas with trees will provide separation from the parking area and shade. The play area theme, design and specific play equipment to be installed will be considered with the community during the design development phase of the project.

## Community Garden Improvements

The overall layout and form of the community garden will be retained. The footprint of the garden will be slightly expanded at the entry area in combination with a new pathway. The pathway will connect the picnic area on the west side of the park, cross the front of the garden, and connect to the other areas of the park. The final size of the expanded garden will be approximately 4,600 square feet, an increase of approximately 300 square feet. The expanded area inside the entry will provide a space for gathering and educational activities, as well as additional gardening space. New fencing and entry gates will provide an opportunity for community inspired art.

Garden improvements will also include the removal of the invasive plant species listed previously. A list of unsuitable plant species will be developed in both English and Spanish and distributed to garden administrators and individual community garden users.

## New Group Picnic Area

The group picnic area on the west side of the park is an underutilized space. The area sits above Sonoma Creek in the shade of towering redwood trees and currently offers only two picnic tables. Proposed renovations include developing this area into a reservable group picnic area with a central grill, serving tables, additional picnic tables and proposes an arbor structure. The layout will allow informal use by individuals and small groups, while accommodating reserved use by groups up to 50 people. The surfacing will consist of a permeable, aggregate surfacing with sections of concrete paving to provide necessary accessibility.

## Small Picnic Area with Shade Structure

This proposed picnic area located along the bike path is not reservable and intended as an informal area for gathering and picnicking. It is centrally located near the soccer field, play area, basketball, and tennis courts. Defined by raised planters and shade trees, the area features a distinct permeable paving surface, and picnic tables and shade structure and will accommodate individuals and small groups up to 25 people.

## Site Furnishings

Site furnishings such as park benches, trash and recycling receptacles, bike racks, and drinking fountains will be suitably located throughout the renovated park. In addition to the two designated picnic areas, four additional picnic tables are planned for an area south of the tennis courts, between the baseball field and ball wall zone. The tables will sit beneath four new shade trees providing a small gathering space. Additional minor furnishings may be added as appropriate.

## Signage and Lighting

A park regulatory sign will be centrally located, and signs will be placed at specific park features, such as ball field and courts, to describe rules for those features. Wayfinding and accessibility signs will also be placed throughout the park. Lighting, other than a low level of security lighting mounted to the new restroom building, is not included in the Master Plan in order to reduce light pollution and impacts to the riparian areas.

## Landscaping and Trees

To reduce ongoing maintenance costs and conserve water, ornamental landscaping is kept to a minimum in the Master Plan. New trees are added for shade and to reduce the heat island effect of the site's hardscaped surfaces. A small landscaped median at the front entry is proposed to enhance the park's entry aesthetics. Another landscaped area is proposed to create a buffer between the outfield fence of the ball field and the entry drive and parking area. This will include a row of trees along the new pathway connecting the two sides of the park. Plant species will be selected for low and moderate water use and grouped together in zones with similar requirements. The irrigation system will be designed and installed to meet the efficiency criteria per the County's Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance.

## Creek Environments

The mature trees along the creek corridors are significant to the character of the park, providing shade, habitat and water quality benefits. The plan prioritizes the preservation of these trees and the natural resource values of the creek environments. As such, the proposed site element locations maintain the existing, established setbacks and no new pavement or permanent structures will be placed closer to the creeks than what currently exists. The Master Plan limits development within the floodplains of the creeks to informal trail improvements and amenities. The Master Plan

supports preparing a riparian enhancement plan along the two creeks. Regional Parks has partnered with non-profit groups on similar projects welcomes partnering to prepare a riparian enhancement plan balancing natural resource values with safety concerns.

## Community Engagement and Art

Following Master Plan approval, Regional Parks anticipates additional community engagement to inform more detailed designs for park features such as the play area and site furnishings. Art installations such as murals and sculptures could be included in the renovated park. Art could also be integrated into design details for paving, fencing, and other structures where appropriate. Developing the art program will be an important part of the design process.

Opportunities for community-based art installations include but are not limited to the following:

- Community garden art and/or creation of an artistic front fence and entry gate design
- Artistic panels integrated into the outfield fencing of the ball field
- Murals (ball walls and potentially the restroom walls)
- Play area fencing and creative play equipment.
- Artistic details integrated into paving, walls and shade structures
- Interpretive installations, TBD

## Operations and Maintenance

All operations and maintenance of the renovated park site will be conducted according to policies and guidelines established by Sonoma County Regional Parks. Funding for the maintenance and operation of the park is provided through the CSA parcel tax, supplemented by County General Fund, and parks membership revenue. The park renovations will result in a decreased maintenance cost to operate the park.

### Site and Landscape Management

All maintenance activities will comply with Sonoma County Regional Parks policies and guidelines including the current Integrated Pest Management policy. Irrigation for landscape and turf areas will comply with the Sonoma County Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance.

In general, all of the trees on the site are in good health. Regional Parks' staff will perform corrective pruning to improve structural integrity as required for the health of the trees and the safety of park users. Construction activities will be generally limited to outside the drip line of the existing trees, and renovation designs will seek to minimize foot traffic around large mature trees, particularly oaks, in order to reduce soil compaction that could have an adverse effect on the root systems.

Where the Master Plan proposes new trees, species will be selected that are appropriate for the site and growing conditions. Any tree species proposed to be planted at the park, other than native species used specifically for habitat restoration purposes, shall be sustainable and suitable for very low, low or moderate water use as described in the most recent Water Use Classification of Landscape Species (WUCOLS) Manual.

## Natural Resources and Creek Environments

Restoration planting and vegetation management in the creek corridors that addresses the existing invasive species are proposed as the most cost effective and least disruptive means of addressing some of the natural resource conservation goals. More extensive work, such as efforts requiring permitting agency approval, is not included in the proposed Master Plan. Regional Parks welcomes collaborating with non-profits organizations to address stream bank stabilization and channel erosion issues.

## Allowable Uses and Rules

In general, the fields and facilities are available on a first come first served basis. In the case of the sports fields, organizations that have use permits and are in good standing with Regional Parks in terms of past performance, will be given priority. The group picnic area will be reservable for groups of 25 people or more. Park use will continue to be limited to daylight hours only, and all Regional Park policies, rules and guidelines will apply.

