

City of Santa Clara Central Park Master Plan Update Guiding Principles

May 22, 2018



**City of
Santa Clara**
The Center of What's Possible

Background

The City of Santa Clara's 52-acre Central Park is the City's only "community park". Designed in the early 1960's when the City's population was under 60,000, it was built out in several phases with federal, state and local funding. Since 2000, there have been various projects proposed that would improve, enlarge, or replace various park and recreational assets and facilities in the park, including the Library, International Swim Center (ISC), Community Recreation Center (CRC), Lawn Bowls, Tennis Center, Park Maintenance Yard, Arbor Center and Playground, and a Creek Spur Trail. By 2010, the City population had grown to over 116,000. In 2013, Council adopted a goal to enhance community sports and recreational assets, including replacement of the International Swim Center. In September 2016, after exhaustive community input, engineering, design and environmental study, the City approved a project that would co-locate the ISC with the CRC on Kiely Blvd. In 2017, a study of the community recreation and aquatics center project delivery and funding options was initiated.

The need to address improvements to a number of the recreational assets, coupled with the community growth and evolving recreational needs, provides an opportunity to reimagine the design of Central Park through an update of the Master Plan.

Gates & Associates was hired to work with the Parks & Recreation Department and community to create a coherent vision and guide for Central Park's future improvements by establishing a set of principles,

community supported priorities, and appropriate professional design criteria. The Plan would help answer questions and address issues such as how the City should:

- Repurpose the existing 3-acre site of the ISC
- Maximize green space within the Park
- Improve access, circulation and parking
- Design or include new park facilities and recreation elements that serve all ages, abilities and interests.

Guiding principles are meant to be used as a lens, be mutually supportive, and implemented together.

Process

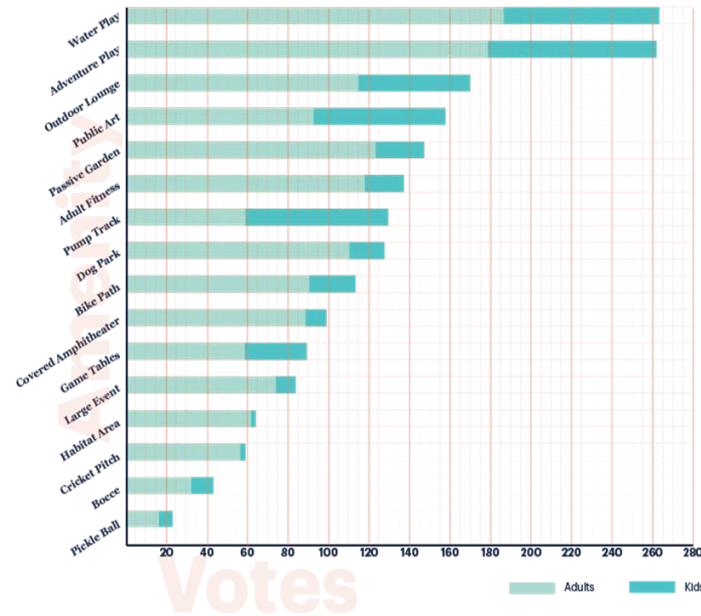
The first step in the Master Plan process was to gain an understanding the community's overarching needs and priorities for a reimagined Central Park. What are the anchors - the basic consistent elements which must be embraced in any future improvements or modifications? By clearly identifying these parameters, a cohesive vision can be achieved for the incremental evolution of Central Park.

A thorough analysis of existing studies and data was undertaken, as well as a robust community input process which included:

- Hosting of community input meetings and events
- Conducting an online survey,
- Interviewing stakeholders, and
- Soliciting Commission input.

Through the engagement process, the community had opportunities to identify how they use and interact with Central Park and its elements, what functions well, or not, and which park amenities are priorities to keep or add (see appendix). Through this process of engagement and analysis for the Central Park Master Plan Update, twelve "Guiding Principles" emerged. Any future development in the Central Park will need to embrace all twelve (12) principles and demonstrate how they are achieved.

What do we want to see?



Principle # 1

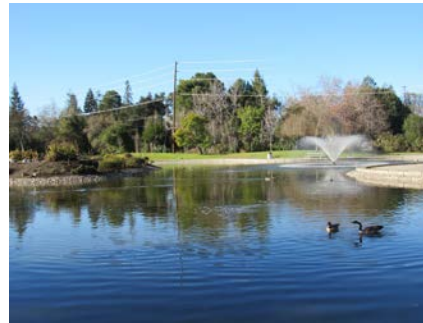
Honor the legacy, history and blend of passive and active recreational uses in Central Park.

Central Park is a beloved community asset. The balanced blend of passive and active recreational uses provides a shared home for the diverse needs of the Santa Clara residents. During the outreach process, four iconic elements were consistently identified as important components of the Central Park legacy:

- The Lake
- The Pavilion
- The Arbor Center
- The Veterans Memorial

These icons should be preserved in the evolution of Central Park. However, iconic preservation does not mean untouchable.

- The Pavilion needs major renovations (upgrades to plumbing, sound system, drainage, sanitary sewer, site furnishings and planting) while retaining its iconic design character.
- Addressing water fowl pollution in the lake may require reconfiguration of edges, as well as a new filtration system. A new vault could be located behind the Pavilion.
- Add additional use amenities near the Pavilion and Arbor Center to maximize usability iconic elements should be integrated more fully with other park uses to enhance interaction with and appreciation of these beloved features.



Lake



Pavilion



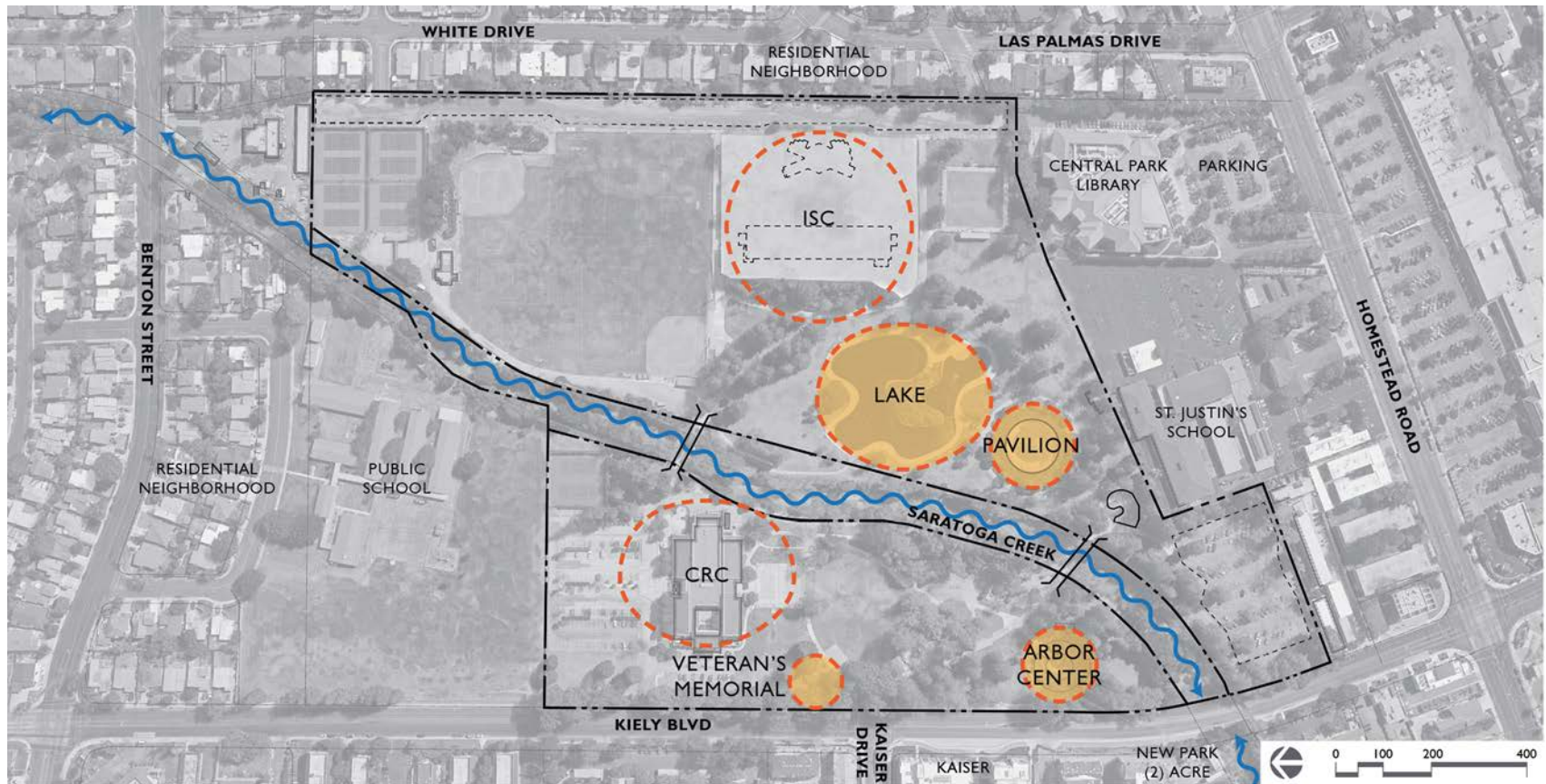
Veterans Memorial



Arbor Center

Honor the Legacy

Existing Icons



Principle # 2

Provide public visibility for park amenities, trails and green open space.

This principle is codified in the City's General Plan. Its application has a special significance for Central Park. As the community has grown, the primary public interface with the park has shifted to Kiely Blvd. Central Park is integral to Santa Clara's community identity and the community impression of Central Park is strongly influenced by the views from Kiely Blvd.

Implementation

- Park presence on Kiely Blvd should reflect Santa Clara's friendly small town character and highlight views of green open space.
- The Kiely Blvd. frontage should be designed as a welcoming front door to Central Park.
- Major use destinations within the Park, such as the Community Center and Swim Center, should relate to Kiely frontage.
- Retain view of trees and open space from Kiely Blvd.

Principle # 3

Provide context sensitivity to local community, minimizing impacts on neighbors.

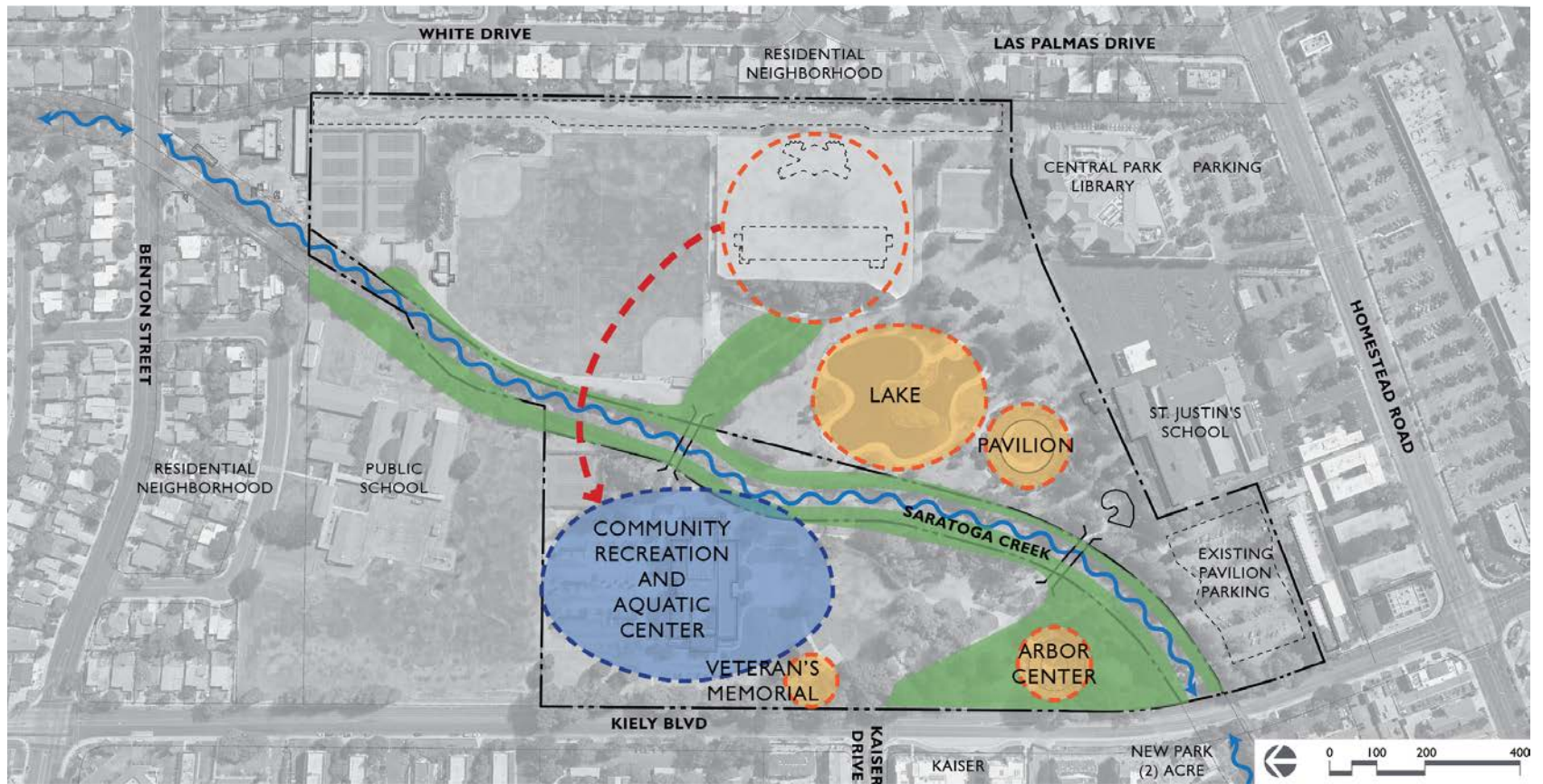
As the community has grown, Central Park is required to accommodate greater recreational demand and diversity of uses. Traffic and parking impact surrounding neighborhoods. The intensification of park use also has a noise impact.

While parking is at a premium to accommodate the additional use, a proposal to develop above ground structured parking raised the potential for adverse impacts on neighboring residential parcels and school safety.

Implementation

- Mitigate potential traffic parking and noise impacts on adjacent uses. Where possible locate traffic generating uses away from residents.
- Provide additional on-site parking to accommodate users.
- Provide buffers and transitions to separate high intensity uses from residential neighbors.
- Consider scale and height relationships to adjacent properties when locating structures.
- Parking areas should be designed to visually blend with the setting.

Provide Public Visibility; Protect Neighborhood; Preserve Green Space



Principle # 4

Preserve Green Space.

As Santa Clara has developed, there is an increasing demand and limited land to meet the community's recreation needs. Access to green space has become a high priority for the community.

Implementation

- Maximize green space by consolidating and stacking uses.
- If green space is impacted to accommodate new or renewed facilities, it should be recaptured at another location within the park.
- As opportunities occur, consider acquiring adjacent parcels to add parkland to enlarge Central Park.



Principle # 5

Provide connectivity with adjacent uses and **accessibility** for the greater community.

Integration of Central Park with the urban fabric (built environment), and other parks in the City's system promotes park use, allows for extended park experiences, age friendly access, and mutual benefits.

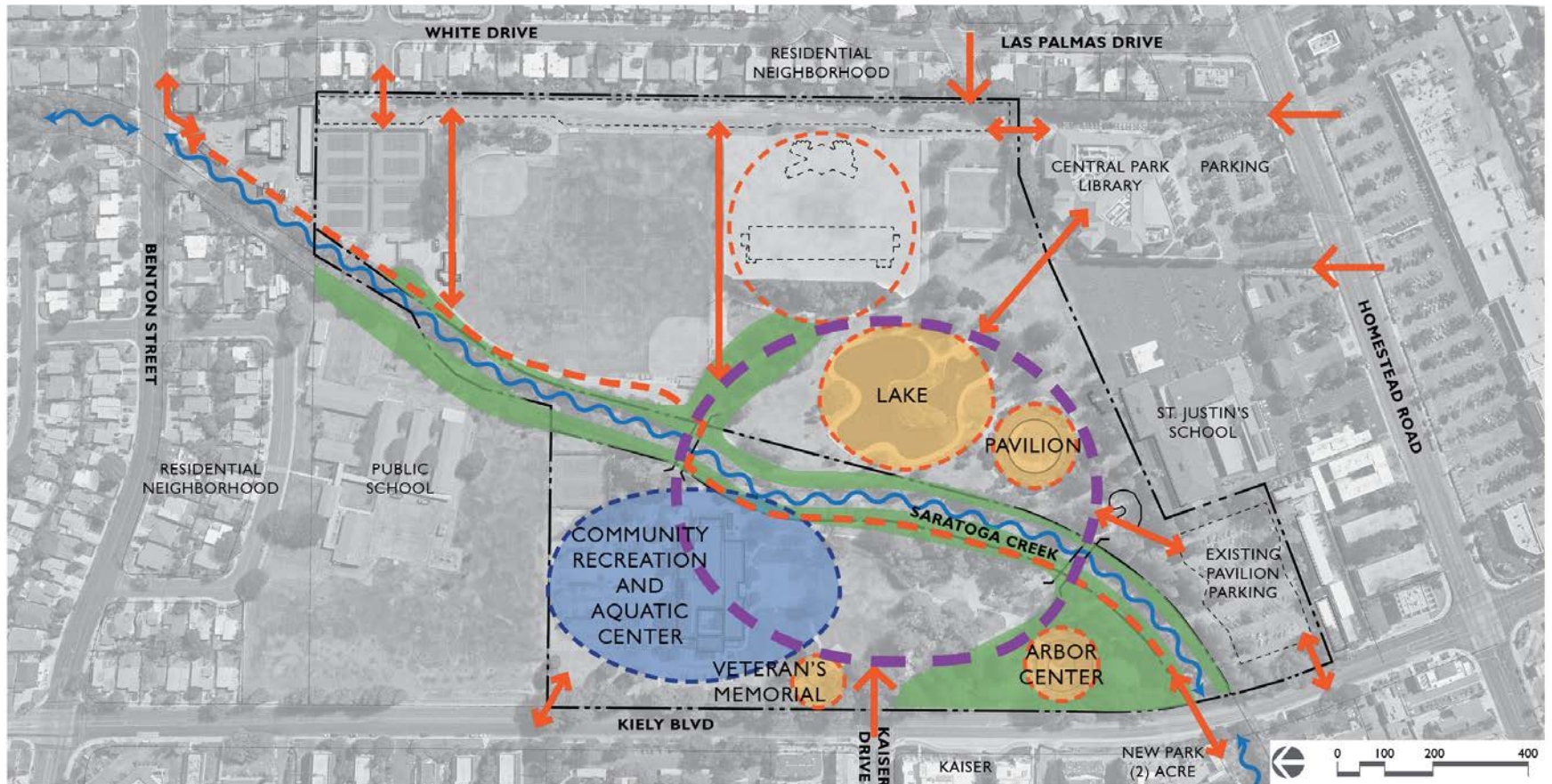
Implementation

Opportunities for enhancing connectivity within Central Park and greater community include:

- Aligning the Park's major auto entry with the Kiely Blvd. intersection.
- Providing a strong pedestrian connector between the Library and Park.
- Creating a circulation system that links the various uses into a greater whole.
- Utilizing a creek side trail as the Central Spine, to link to the bicycle and pedestrian circulation network in the greater community.
- Creating a bike/pedestrian friendly environment. Including paths wide enough to support pedestrians walking in groups, shaded paths with adequate seating and way-finding, and convenient connections to transit stops.



Provide Connectivity & Enhance Accessibility



Existing and potential access points and connectivity.

Connectivity & Access



Conceptual design for discussion and illustration only

Principles employed

- Create Community
- Increase Visibility
- Preserve Green Space
- Provide Connectivity
- Increase Service Level

Principle # 6

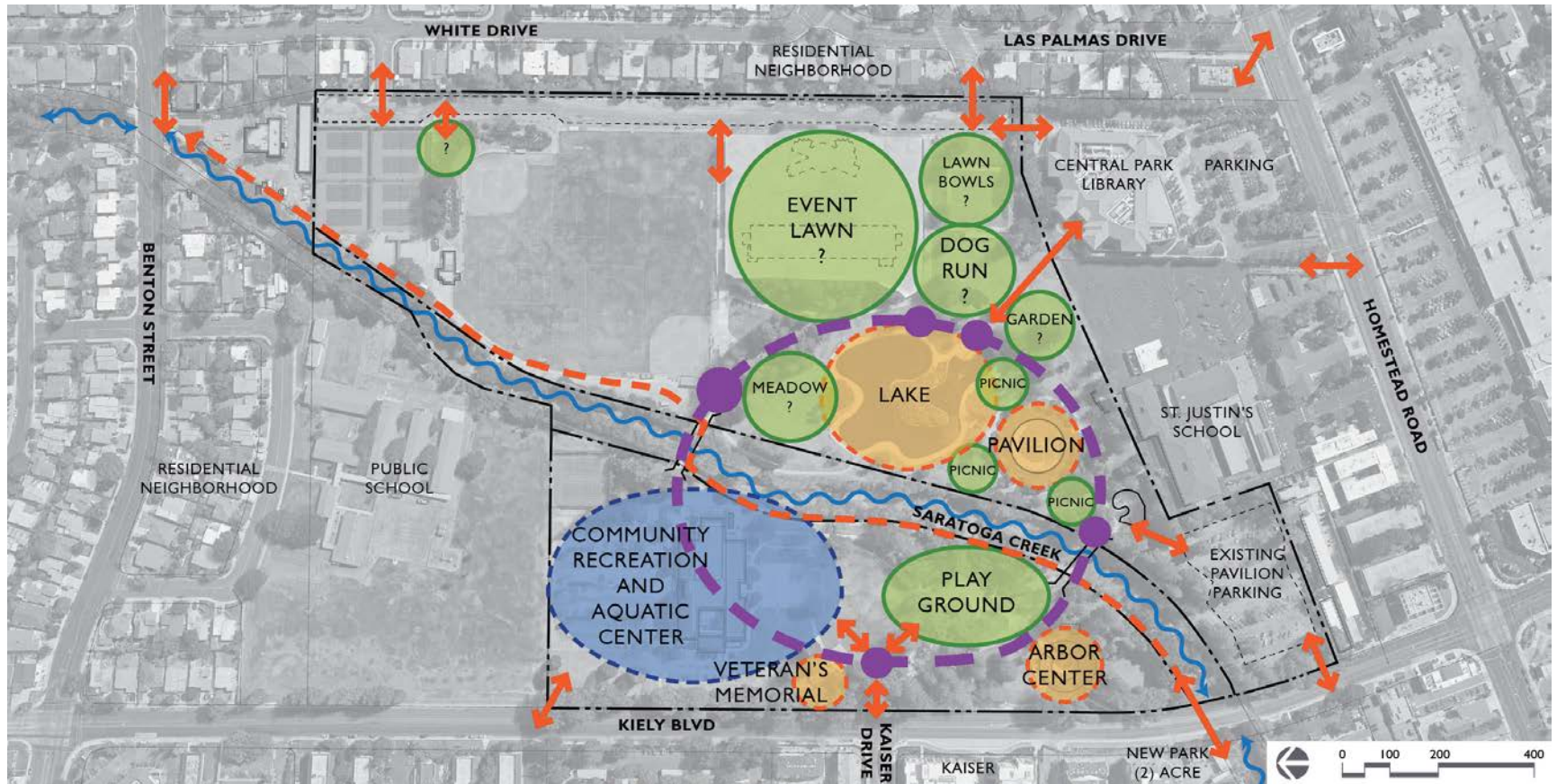
Create community and “sense of place” by reimagining the public event spaces and reinvesting in Central Park as the heart of the community.

The City of Santa Clara has hosted workshops recognizing the value of place-making to “build community.” Central Park should not be a collection of disparate recreational uses, but a place that fosters social engagement and cultural unity. Many members of the community perceive single use facilities in the park (Lawn Bowls Green, Swim Center) as “private”. Youth & Teen focus groups identified that the park feels “dead” and desired new, imaginative, photographable, social spaces and experiential destinations in the park.

Implementation

- The design of the park as a whole, and its component parts, should support community wide festivals and other special events.
- Cluster and consolidate uses to create social vitality.
- Provide attractive, welcoming gathering spaces and seating for casual observers adjacent to activities.
- Provide park spaces which accommodate special uses that encourage gathering and enhanced multi-sensory experiences: visual, auditory, smell, touch, taste (food carts/concession plazas, edible plantings, interactive artistic features).
- Consolidate and enhance event spaces to continue to provide and support high quality programs (concerts, festivals, civic events, sports, new venues).
- Re-purpose the existing ISC site as an outdoor temporary event space (with supporting facilities); secondary use as informal, open lawn. Consider a green buffer, decorative/functional sound wall, or planted berm(s) or other to mitigate sound travel to adjacent neighborhood.
- Provide infrastructure for outdoor events – stage & backstage areas, storage, power, additional restrooms, parking.

Create Community & “Sense of Place” Enhance Social Vitality



Create Community & Sense of Place; Enhance Social Vitality



Conceptual design for discussion and illustration only.

Principle # 7

Increase Park Capacity to accommodate a growing population – serve more people in same space.

New facilities should be multi-functional for a range of users. Existing parking area is inadequate. During large events, temporary parking is located on fields but this impacts on fields.

Implementation

- Future improvements should be designed to be used by multiple groups throughout the day and evenings. (Example: multi-clubhouse can provide meeting space to serve lawn bowls, bocce, other senior clubs, and restrooms for events).
- Under bleacher seating can accommodate storage areas, concessions, maintenance and/or public gathering space. Tennis facilities could be reconfigured with tennis above, parking below, adjacent to bleachers for ballfield.
- Increased park use capacity requires additional parking. Parking should not displace park users nor impact neighbors. Consider structured under buildings or rooftop recreational uses (tennis basketball, etc.) to increase park capacity.
- Distribute parking and drop off zones to provide convenient access to all park areas and facilities.

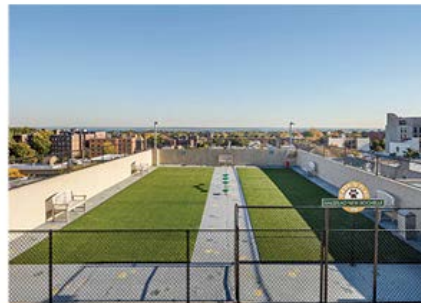
ROOFTOP AMENITIES



TENNIS COURT



COMMUNITY GARDEN

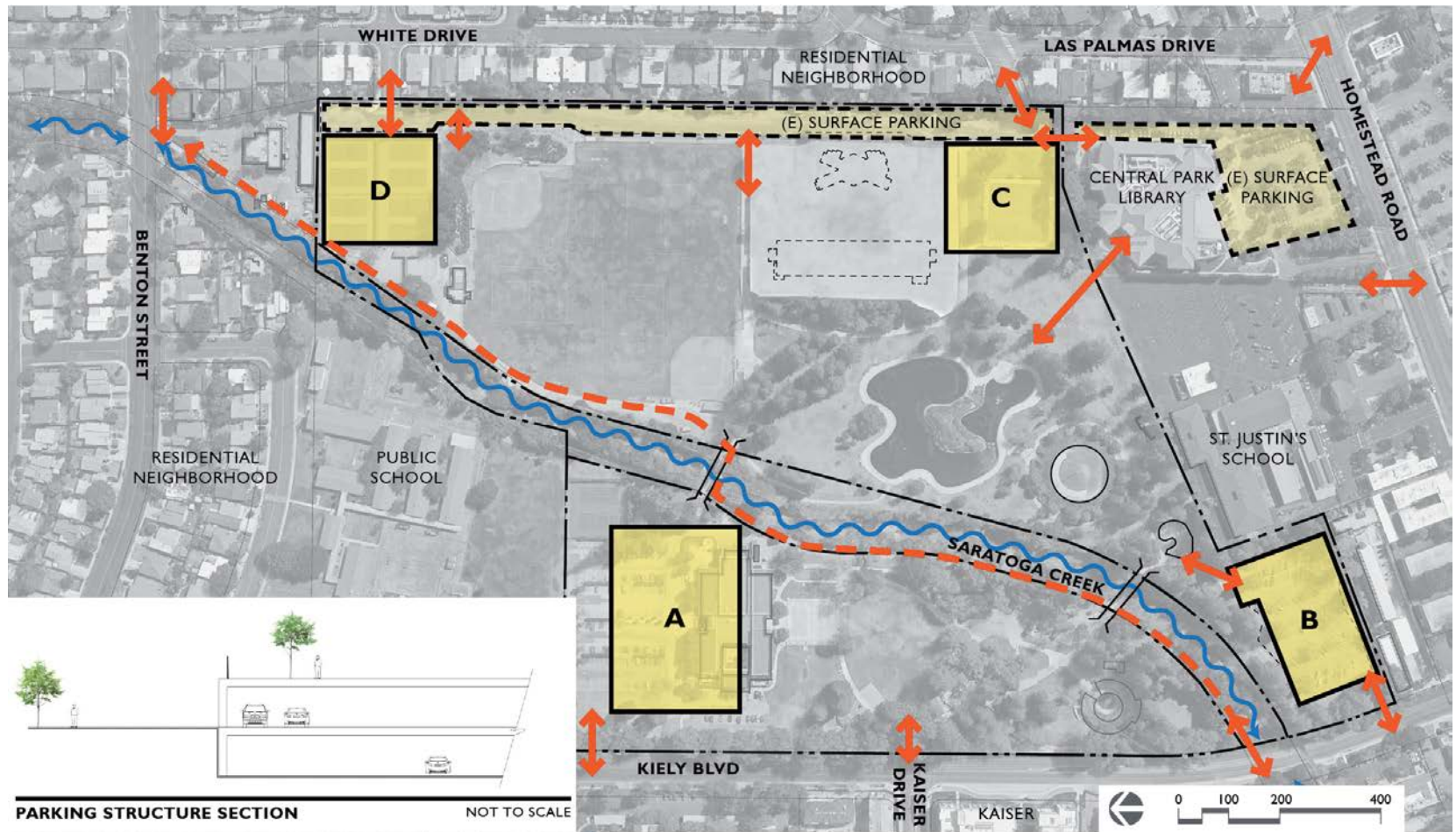


DOG RUN



CLIMBING WALL

Increase Park Capacity



Principles employed

- Provide adequately sized, convenient parking locations
- Increase Park Capacity
- Preserve green space

Principle # 8

Use principles of **inclusive design** to welcome visitors of all abilities.

Renovation of the Arbor Center play area is a priority for the community. However, playground amenities and play elements should be designed to welcome users of all ages and abilities.

Implementation

- Provide facilities that afford varying levels of difficulty and engage differing abilities (beginner, intermediate, advanced), including sports facilities, fitness elements and open fields for unstructured play.
- Provide a comfortable environment for parents to supervise and socialize with children in multigenerational play.
- Provide convenient, comfortable amenities, such as seating, drinking fountains, restrooms, shade areas, and trash receptacles to encourage use.
- Provide a consolidated, unique play environment that implements research based Elements of Play (swinging, climbing, sliding, spinning, brachiating, balance, running/free play).
- Address developmental needs (sensory, motor, cognitive, social) potentially incorporating water play.



Principle # 9

Promote community health and wellness by providing age-friendly opportunities for intergenerational social and cultural exchange, and offer something for everyone.

Retain existing uses while providing additional activities to meet evolving community recreational needs. The community identified the following amenities as designed addition to park:

- Water/adventure play
- Off leash dog area
- Adult fitness
- Event space
- More shade/trees
- Outdoor lounging
- Bike and walking trail
- Pollinator garden area

Implementation

- Prioritize improvements to the play areas, restrooms, pathways and picnic areas so that they are accessible to all ages.
- Provide uses and activities that draw a diverse population throughout the day and seasons of the year.
- Provide places for relaxation and meditation; opportunities to observe other people, and/or viewing of green space, water and wildlife habitat, to promote mental health.

- Park should feel safe. Park use extends beyond daylight hours. Provide adequate lighting along pathways.
- Incorporate CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles (e.g. easy surveillance – avoid tall hedges, blind areas, etc.).



Principle # 10

Support City's **sustainability** goals.

The community places a high value on an efficiently operated and well-maintained park system.

Implementation

- Future improvements should incorporate both passive and active best practices for sustainable design, materials, operations and maintenance.
- Life cycle costs of proposed facilities and individual assets should be evaluated and long term benefits understood.
- Major path should be 10' – 12' wide to accommodate maintenance vehicles.
- Add storage areas in conjunction with tennis / parking structure or bleachers for ballfield.
- Landscape systems should be designed to maximize water efficiency with minimal maintenance effort.

Principle # 11

Integrate and enhance, where feasible, the **natural habitat** with the built environment.

As Santa Clara has developed, the opportunities to interact with nature have been reduced. The park's urban forest and creek corridor serve as wildlife habitat and are important natural resources for Santa Clara residents.

Implementation

- Consider converting remnant lawn areas, not utilized for park activities, to other types of planting which provide higher habitat value.
- Protect mature trees and implement succession planting to ensure that a healthy tree canopy is maintained.
- Integrate San Tomas Aquino Creek with park uses. Protect creek habitat while providing views into the creek, locating compatible uses along the creek corridor.
- Provide interpretive exhibits to highlight sustainable systems.

Principle # 12

Use research based best practices to approach park design and assess community recreation benefits (provide measurable/desired outcomes).

Santa Clara has adopted a number of practices to insure provision of high quality recreation amenities.

Implementation

- Develop a thematic palette of site furnishings which unify the park.
 - Develop a distinctive consistent wayfinding system.
 - Provide safe connection/access to trail, all site amenities and adjacent streets.
 - Standardize, where appropriate, equipment to facilitate maintenance.
 - Design for future facilities should be based on an understanding of state of the art needs. For example event facilities should incorporate power loads, temporary parking, back of house needs, Wi-Fi communication and security.
 - Create an overall site lighting concept and vocabulary to provide a safe consistent system which encourages use.
- New playground should be design to be qualify for certification as a Playcore National Demonstration Site.
 - The architectural design style for future buildings and facilities shall take into account the setting and the character of Central Park.
 - Park design should comply with City's Park Amenity & Design standards.