

**MASTER PLAN FOR  
CITY OF SANTA CLARA OPEN SPACE PARK**

Parks and Recreation Department  
City of Santa Clara, California  
1500 Warburton Avenue  
Santa Clara, California 95050

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## Introduction

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In 1996 and 1997, the City of Santa Clara began plans to lease or sell about 50 acres of City-owned land to Interland Inc., a developer of apartment housing. This land had been part of the former Fairway Glen Golf Course and was considered a land bank whose sale or lease would finance other golf, park and open space projects in the City. As a result of these proposals, People for Open Space, a non-profit grass-roots organization of Santa Clara residents and open space advocates, approached the City Council and requested that a portion of the site be set aside for open space. In March 1997, the City Council voted to preserve 41.2-acres as a City Open Space Park. The Open Space Park is one of 32 City parks covering a total of 232 acres.

In the summer of 1997, the City began a process of preparing this master plan for the park site. The specific goals for the master planning of the Open Space Park are: Preserve wildlife habitat; Provide California native vegetation appropriate to its role in wildlife preservation; Preserve open space for recreational use; Protect historic resources.

The master plan process included an initial public meeting on November 4, 1997 to hear ideas about the park. On December 16, a second public meeting reviewed alternative ideas for park development. Completion of the master plan was delayed until the fall of 1998 in order to permit the City Council Subcommittee to review proposals from the American Indian Alliance for development of a Native American Cultural Center on the park site. In July of 1998, the Subcommittee voted to set aside 1.5-acres of land to be leased to the American Indian Alliance at market rates.

## Existing Site

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The Open Space Park site is an approximately 41-acre site in the northern portion of the City of Santa Clara. It is bordered by Lick Mill Boulevard, a four lane road with planted medians, along its 3000-foot south western edge and by Tasman Drive along its 500-foot north-western edge. The 300-foot north east edge of the site is defined by a 15-foot levee separating the site from the Guadalupe River. The southeast edge of the site borders a site that is proposed for apartment development.

Generally the site is flat and covered with a mix of grasses and non-native trees such as Aleppo pines, eucalyptus and Blackwood acacia. Until approximately ten years ago, the site was part of the Fairway Glen Golf Course. Remnants of the golf course exist on the site in the form of tree plantings and some of the earth mounds created for the golf tees, greens and bunkers.

Across Lick Mill Boulevard from the park site, are several three to four story apartment complexes. In addition, there is Lick Mill Park, an approximately seven-acre City of Santa Clara neighborhood park with a community center building, restrooms, parking, turf areas, tennis courts, children's play area and picnic sites.

### Other Site Features

#### Levee

A 3000 foot-long flood control levee borders the eastern edge of the site. It rises approximately 17-feet above the general elevation of the park site. It was built around 1963 when the meandering course of the river was straightened for flood control purposes. Levees stopped periodic flooding and allowed development of the site for other uses such as the Fairway Glen Golf Course. The levee is under the jurisdiction of the Santa Clara Valley Water District. A 15-foot wide maintenance road and foot trail runs along the top of the levee. The side slopes of the levee are covered with perennial grasses that hold the slope. From the inside of the park, the levee slopes provide a simple visual backdrop and give an illusion of larger space than is actually available. The Water District has announced plans to raise the levees, which will also cause the side slopes of the levees to be extended into the park a few feet. The extent of the height increase and the schedule for this work are not known.

#### Wetland

Currently an approximately 1.5-acre wetland exists in the northern area of the site. This long wetland was a former river meander dating from the time before the river was channeled (1963). It is currently filled with bulrush species and bordered with Red willow (*Salix laevigata*).

In order to compensate for loss of wetlands on another site owned by the city, 4.95 acres of the park site will be used as a wetland mitigation and enhancement area. The wetland will be created by minor excavation of the site to create a shallow pond area that will fill naturally from ground water whose source is lateral movement from the nearby Guadalupe River. The proposed

pond will be connected to the existing pond, creating one large pond area of approximately six-acres. It is expected that plant species from the existing pond, such as Bulrush and willow, will quickly colonize the new water area.

### Hetch-Hetchy Aqueduct

A portion of the Hetch-Hetchy Aqueduct crosses the site. The double, underground pipelines are about seven-feet in diameter and run down the middle of an 80-foot wide right of way that crosses the narrow dimension of the site from east to west. Restrictions established by the Water Department of the City of San Francisco, owner of the aqueduct, prohibit any kind of building or tree planting within the right of way. The Countywide Trails Master Plan (1995) for Santa Clara County designates that a regional trail (#C-4) will follow the aqueduct right of way. Because the Guadalupe River breaks the potential continuity of the Hetch-Hetchy Trail in the vicinity of the park, it is not necessary that one of the park trails closely follow the right of way within the park. However, park trails should anticipate that Hetch-Hetchy Trail users will want to cross the River at the Tasman Bridge and pass through the park to re-connect with the Hetch-Hetchy Trail and right of way.

### Pump Stations

There are two storm water pump stations within the park area. The largest is located near the south end of the park and is adjacent to the flood control levee along the park's eastern border with the Guadalupe River. This facility is designed to pump storm drainage waters over the levee and into the River. Vehicle access to this pump station comes from a ten-foot wide service road connecting to Lick Mill Boulevard. A second storm water facility is located at the northern end of the site. This facility lifts water from the site and nearby storm drainage lines to channels on the north side of Tasman Drive.

### Archeological Site

A portion of a recognized archeological site covers the middle portion of the park site. This site, numbered CA-SCL-6W, has been investigated several times and was the subject of two reports: the first by Basin Research Associates, Inc. in March of 1984 and the second, by Archeological Resources Inc. from March to August 1989. The site was a large pre-historic occupation and burial site. It has been significantly disturbed by flooding, agriculture and golf course. Archeological evidence at the site has been dated from 430 - 1070 CE.

The ecology of the site area had many important resources for the Ohlone Indians, the original site inhabitants. The natural communities around the pre-historic site included riparian areas near the Bay with low grasslands, bunch grass, and a rich faunal life. River flooding deposited silt levees along the edges of the river, making the river actually higher than surrounding site. Over time, the changing river course left the site with an irregular topography and many pools and puddles. Despite the many food resources near the site, winter flooding along the Guadalupe River meant that the site was only inhabited seasonally and could not be inhabited in the winter. As a result, the site must have been used for seasonal encampments for gathering, hunting and collecting. This type of settlement was noted by early Spanish.

The Spanish came to the Santa Clara Valley in the 1770s. The founding of Mission Santa Clara and the Pueblo de San Jose de Guadalupe had many negative impacts upon the traditional Ohlone way of life and the site was consequently abandoned. In the early 1800's the site was

probably un-used but may have been used as pasture by Spanish and Mexicans. Following secularization of the Missions in the 1830s, emancipated Indians lived on former mission lands on the west side of the Guadalupe, probably near the site. An early land survey recorded three Indians "huts" and one sweathouse in the area of the site. The park site lay within Rancho Ulistac, a land grant to three native Americans - Pio, Marcello and Cristobal – dating from 1845.

In 1850 the land was sold to Jacob D. Hoppe. The site and surrounding lands were used for farming and plowing with the coming of northern-European Americans ("Anglos") in the 1840s and later from 1860 to 1940. Chinese ceramics have been found on or near the site dating from a period before 1920. It is known that Chinese workers raised strawberries in areas around the site from 1870 to 1890. Later Japanese and Filipino workers took their place. Japanese farmers leased the fields for truck crops until 1942. At some point the strawberry and truck crop fields were converted to Pear orchards. The site was used as a golf course from 1950's until 1988. . The City of Santa Clara purchased the Fairway Glen Golf Course in 1974. The site has been fallow for the last decade.

## General Intent of Master Plan

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The basic direction of the master plan is to provide wildlife habitat restoration of the site as well as some limited facilities for interpretation of Native American culture and other local history. An area for a full Native American cultural center is proposed on one-and-a-half acres of the site, located between the Hetch-Hetchy Aqueduct and the existing service road to the existing pump station. Specific program elements will include:

- Existing native trees and other plant species are retained.
- Exotic plant species are gradually removed.
- Native plants originally endemic to the site will replace removed exotics. Particular attention will be paid to native plants with wildlife benefits such as food sources, nesting materials, etc.
- Revegetation efforts will focus on four vegetation types: wetlands, riparian, meadows/grasslands, and oak woodlands.
- Mitigation wetlands will be constructed in areas not likely to be part of any archeological site.
- Existing Hetch-hetchy facilities and existing storm water facilities will be retained.
- An area for a full Native American cultural center is proposed on one-and-a-half acres of the site, located between the Hetch-Hetchy Aqueduct and the existing service road to the existing pump station.
- Beyond the area set aside for the Native American cultural center, additional but limited interpretive facilities for presentation of Native American culture will be included in the park site. These facilities will include: approximately 10 display panels placed at scattered locations around the site; a designated site for re-creation of an Ohlone village; and a small amphitheater or gathering space for no more than 40 persons, suitable for use by school class groups.

## Description of Plan Elements

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Because the basic purpose of the park is to provide wildlife habitat and preserve native vegetation, there will be very limited construction on the site. As noted above, constructed facilities will include trails, interpretive panels, a gathering area, and a site where an Ohlone village could be re-created. Each of these are discussed below:

### Trails

A series of trails provide pedestrian access to various parts of the park site. Trails into the park begin at the corners of the site, the natural point of entrance for persons walking along the adjacent trails or sidewalks. The trails in the central portion of the park are designed to provide a simple loop so walkers can start and finish at the same point without re-tracing their steps.

Specific trail alignments have been set to take advantage of existing trees and land forms. As vegetation patterns change over time, new plantings can be designed to work with the existing trail layout and/or trail alignments can be modified to suit the new patterns. As noted, a regional trail follows along the top of the levee separating the site from the Guadalupe River to the east. Proposed trails total about 5,000 feet, not including the regional trail on the levee. Other than existing city sidewalks, there is no trail access into or around the proposed wetland at the north end of the site.

Trails will consist of a five-foot wide path of compacted earth. Tree branches will be cut to provide a clear space seven-feet high and five-feet wide over the trail. No slope along the trail will be steeper than ten-percent, that is, no more than one foot of rise for every ten feet of length. Side slopes will be no more than one foot of rise to two feet of horizontal distance. Due to the generally flat character of the site and the lack of sustained sloping trails, there will be little need to provide extensive drainage facilities.

In order to connect the regional trail along the top of the river levee, a graded ramp joining the top and bottom of the levee must be constructed. The ramp will follow the standards set-out in the Americans with Disabilities Act: 1-foot of rise for 12-feet of horizontal length, plus landings. Because the levees rise about 15 or more feet above the adjacent park site, the ramps will be 180-feet long or more. Grading for the ramps may not remove earth from the levees, therefore, earth will be placed against the inside slope of the levee to construct the ramp. Hand rails for the ramps will be required and will be helpful in keeping walkers from taking short-cuts down the levee slopes.

### **Fencing**

In 1998 the site was fenced with wooden posts and rails. Fencing has kept out unwanted motor vehicles with attendant erosion and dumping problems. Previously existing chain link gates have remained, although these may be changed to sturdy metal gates for service and emergency access. In addition to fencing, appropriate sand-blasted wooden signs identifying the park at two or three visible locations should be installed next to the sidewalk.

### **Interpretive Facilities**

The interpretive facilities proposed in this plan are preliminary ideas that are based on information from archeological reports about the site and from other sources. The final interpretive program must be completed in greater depth than can be accomplished within the scope of this Master Plan. An interpretive development team including City Park staff, historians, representatives of local Native American groups such as the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, and other interpretive design specialists should conduct this work.

Due to the park's rich history, interpretive facilities represent an important opportunity for education about the park site. Although the pre-contact Native American village is the most unique and important aspect of the site's history, other periods and resources are also of great interest, including the natural history of the site and the settlement of the surrounding area.

Following are some ideas of topics that could be developed for use as interpretive facilities.

## Topic 1 - Natural Resources

In addition to their own intrinsic value, natural resources represent an underlying resource base for the Ohlone, Spanish/Mexican, and Anglo cultures at the site. The natural resources at the site include native vegetation, Guadalupe River riparian corridor, and wildlife. Several people have suggested that the Open Space Park could be a re-created example of the natural landscape that occurred on the floor of the Santa Clara Valley prior to the arrival of Europeans. Programs to revegetate the site, discussed below, could also be explained as part of the interpretive program.

## Topic 2 - Pre-contact Native American Settlement

### Definition of Period:

All settlements at the site prior to contact with European cultures; ending with the founding of Mission Santa Clara.

### Potential Interpretive Resources:

- Drawings and photographs of artifacts.
- Drawings showing re-creations of scenes of Ohlone life.
- Re-created history: re-creations of Ohlone structures and/or other artifacts

## Period 3 – Spanish/Mexican Period

### Definition of Period:

Initial period of contact between the Native American culture and European cultures; beginning with the land grant for Rancho Ulistac and possibly extending through the Spanish/Mexican Mission period of Native American resettlement and ending when the site was sold to Joseph Hoppe in 1850.

### Potential Interpretive Resources:

- Accounts of Mission life and early San Jose and Santa Clara history; this data can give a sense of the transition from pre-contact Native American village life to later post-contact European settlement as part of the early United States.

## Period 4 - Recent Park History to Present

### Definition of Period:

History of the site during the American period including use of the site for pasture and farming by various groups such as European-Americans, Mexican-Americans, Chinese-Americans, Japanese-Americans, and others. Use of the site as a golf course.

### Potential Interpretive Resources:

- Written historical sources
- Oral history of Native American tribes/families, local residents, and others

## Media Format

Interpretive information could be presented to the visitor in several formats including display panels, re-created Native American structures with possible demonstrations and displays of artifacts or replicas for organized groups such as school classes. Re-creations of structures could



include various elements of an Ohlone village such as dwellings, granaries, and/or a sweat lodge. Pamphlets and other printed information could be used to orient teachers and others who will bring groups to the site.

### Gathering Area

A small gathering area could be an important part of any interpretive program. Organized groups such as school classes or others would use the gathering area. The gathering area would be in the form of a small amphitheater and should have shaded seating for 30 or 40 persons so that they can watch demonstrations or informational presentations by teachers, staff or others.

### Site Management and Revegetation

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One of the goals of this master plan is to restore appropriate California native vegetation to the site. As noted earlier, the site is currently covered with vegetation that is largely not-native. Existing species include various eucalyptus species, Aleppo pine, acacia and many grasses. In addition to these exotics, there are some California native plants on the site including Fremont cottonwood, California box elder, Coast live oak, Red willow, and Coyote bush.

The master plan drawing designates site areas for three native vegetation communities. Although well defined vegetation areas are shown on the drawing, it is intended that wooded and grassland areas will blend together in densities that mimic natural conditions. Vegetation communities shown on the plan and some of the dominant plants that might be used in those communities include:

#### Oak Woodland

Coast Live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), Valley oak (*Quercus lobata*), and native grasses if it is feasible to maintain them against the constant invasion of non-native grass seed from outside sources.

#### Riparian Woodland

Red willow (*Salix laevigata*), Fremont cottonwood (*Populus fremontodendron*), California Box elder (*Acer negundo* 'Californica').

#### Grassland

This area will be generally devoid of trees and will consist of native grasses and other low species if they can be maintained against non-natives.

It is not anticipated that the designated areas will be pure stands of one type of vegetation but will rather be areas of concentration. Whenever possible, plants and seed should be collected from site sources or other nearby locations. It will be important for several reasons not to remove too much of the existing site vegetation before planting new native species. First, the existing trees have some habitat value for wildlife and removal of these plants before new ones are available could have a negative impact on wildlife populations. Second, the existing plants will provide some shelter for establishment of new, native plants. Third, the existing plants provide a much more visually interesting site for human recreation.

It seems likely that much of the re-vegetation effort will be beyond the availability of City staff, although staff may complete small but important aspects of the work. Therefore, volunteer groups such as People for Open Space and the California Native Plant Society can provide valuable

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pools of potential workers to supplement any efforts by City staff.

Considering that human resources for re-vegetation efforts may be limited, it will be important to concentrate efforts in one site area at a time. In each area, existing brush, grasses and weeds should be removed by cutting, mowing and spraying. Trees should be pruned to keep limbs off the ground and minimize fire danger. New trees should be planted. As the new trees grow to more mature sizes, existing trees should be pruned and cut back. As the new trees begin to compete in size with the old ones, the existing trees should be removed.

The California Native Plant Society has suggested that the following general list of California native plants would be appropriate for revegetation of the Open Space Park. The following lists are intended only as a general indication of the plants that would be used. A final list will be developed as part of future planning efforts.

**Riparian  
(Cottonwood Riparian Forest/Willow Scrub)**

<b>Trees</b>		
<i>Scientific Name</i>	<i>Common Name</i>	<i>Comments</i>
<i>Acer negundo</i> ssp. <i>californicum</i>	box elder	Can be invasive
<i>Aesculus californica</i>	California buckeye	Can be planted from seed
<i>Platanus racemosa</i>	Western sycamore	
<i>Populus fremontii</i> ssp. <i>fremontii</i>	Fremont cottonwood	Is present on open space. May be possible to grow from locally collected cuttings
<i>Salix laevigata</i>	arroyo willow	Willows can be propagated from cuttings collected on site. Need to confirm whether arroyo willow is present on the Open Space
<i>Salix lasiolepis</i>	red willow	
<i>Sambucus mexicana</i>	blue elderberry	In this part of the valley, blue elderberry grows along the edges of riparian corridors and near levees.
<b>Shrubs, Forbs, and Vines</b>		
<i>Aster chilensis</i>	California aster	
<i>Artemisia douglasiana</i>	mugwort	
<i>Marah fabaceus</i>	wild cucumber	
<i>Rosa californica</i>	California rose	
<i>Rubus ursinus</i>	California blackberry	
<i>Symphoricarpos mollis</i>	snowberry	
<b>Aquatic/Emergent Plants</b>		
<i>Scirpus</i> sp.	tule	from existing pond
<i>Typha</i> sp.	cattails	volunteer

## Oak Woodland

<b>Trees</b>		
<b>Scientific Name</b>	<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<i>Aesculus californica</i>	California buckeye	Can be planted from seed
<i>Quercus agrifolia</i>	coast live oak	Can propagate from acorns collected on Open Space.
<i>Quercus lobata</i>	valley oak	Scattered specimens also appropriate in grassland
<i>Umbellularia californica</i>	California laurel	
<i>Sambucus mexicana</i>	blue elderberry	Blue elderberry would be appropriate at the edge of oak woodland near the riparian area.
<b>Shrubs, Forbs, and Vines</b>		
<i>Artemisia californica</i>	California sagebrush	At sunny edge of oak woodland with sticky monkey flower (scrub that intergrades with grassland and woodlands)
<i>Mimulus aurantiacus</i>	sticky monkey flower	
<i>Ribes californicum</i>	hillside gooseberry	in open areas
<i>Heteromeles arbutifolia</i>	toyon	
<i>Rhamnus californica</i>	coffeeberry	
<i>Rubus ursinus</i>	California blackberry	
<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i> or <i>S. mollis</i>	snowberry or creeping snowberry	
<i>Bromus carinatus</i>	California brome	ecotone, at dripline
<i>Festuca californica</i>	California fescue	dappled light
<i>Melica torreyana</i>	melic	semi-shade

### Grassland

Trees		
Scientific Name	Common Name	Comments
<i>Quercus lobata</i>	valley oak	Scattered specimens also appropriate in grassland
Grasses		
<i>Elymus glaucus</i>	blue wild rye	
<i>Hordeum brachyantherum</i>	meadow barley	low areas in northern S.C. Valley
<i>Leymus triticoides</i>	alkali ryegrass	hard to start from seed, rhizomatous
<i>Melica californica</i>	western melica	
<i>Nassella lepida</i>	foothill needlegrass	
<i>Nassella pulchra</i>	purple needlegrass	
<i>Poa secunda</i>	pine bluegrass	
Forbs		
<i>Asclepias fascicularis</i>	narrow-leaf milkweed	Larval and nectar plant for Monarch butterflies
<i>Sidalcea malvaeflora</i>	Checkerbloom	Larval food plant for a number of butterflies
<i>Scrophularia californica</i>	bee plant	
Bulbs		
<i>Chlorogalum pomeridianum</i>	soap root	
<i>Dichelostemma capitatum</i>	blue dicks	
<i>Triteleia hyacinthina</i>	white brodiaea	low spots, standing water in spring, may be available from CNPS
Annual and Biennial Wildflowers		
<i>Calandrinia ciliata</i>	red maids	
<i>Collinsia heterophylla</i>	Chinese houses	
<i>Eschscholzia californica</i>	California poppy	