Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve Master Plan

Community Input Report

December 29, 2022

PREPARED BY:

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COVER LETTER

December 29, 2022

Kristy Diaz-Trahan, CPRP
Parks and Recreation Director
Town of Oro Valley
10555 N La Canada Dr.
Oro Valley, AZ 85737

Re: Vistoso Nature Preserve Community Input Report

Kristy,

We appreciate the opportunity to submit the Vistoso Nature Preserve Community Input Report for your records. This report includes the following sections:

- Park & Recreation Board Summary
- Town Council Meeting Summary
- Community Workshop Summary
- Public Meeting Summary
- Community Survey
- Field Review Summary
- PowerPoint Presentation
- Initial Base Maps
- Initial Image Boards

Please let us know if you have any questions and/or require any additional information.

Sincerely,

Liz Cole, RLA
Project Manager

PARK & RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD SUMMARY

PARK & RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD PRESENTATION SUMMARY

DATE:	11/15/2022
PROJECT:	Vistoso Trails Master Plan
LOCATION:	Oro Valley Town Hall Hopi Room
MEETING TYPE:	Presentation

A presentation was made to the Town of Oro Valley Park and Recreation Advisory Board on Tuesday, November 15, 2022. The Parks & Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB) acts in an advisory capacity to the Town Council in matters pertaining to parks and recreation, parks design, open space and trail use (prior to the review comments being submitted to other Boards, Commissions or the Council). The purpose of the presentation was to provide a project overview of the scope of work and schedule for the master planning of the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve and to receive suggestions regarding the future programming for the facility. Sites Southwest presented the following information:

1. Introduction of consultant team, Sites Southwest and The Acorn Group, and services to be provided, environmental planning, landscape architecture, interpretive planning, and educational programming.
2. Brief review of consultant team's relevant project experience, Bachechi Open Space and Trail Master Plan, Valle De Oro Master Plan, High Desert Community, Big Basin Redwood State Park, Compton Creek Natural Area, George F. Canyon Nature Center, and Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.
3. The goal of the master plan process which is to create a working document that addresses:
    - The long-term protection of the site's ecological and cultural resources
    - Providing educational opportunities for a wide range of user groups that is inclusive of all ages and abilities
    - Creating site-sensitive passive recreational attributes that blend the built environment within the natural surroundings
4. Programming suggestions received to date from stakeholder's included the following:
    - Create a system of looped walking/biking trails
    - Provide natural surface trails for running and walking
    - Create separate areas for wildlife viewing
    - Provide spaces for family gatherings
    - Include sculpture and public art
    - Provide shade and seating areas
    - Create educational gardens and signage
    - Provide dispersed parking areas and directional signage
    - Address wash area erosion and safe crossing concerns
    - Create areas for nature play
    - Provide programming for habitat and dark sky viewing
    - Connect the Preserve trail to the Town trail system
    - Create natural structures and water features to support habitat
    - Re-establish native vegetation throughout the Preserve
    - Develop operations and management protocols

5. Community engagement and project schedule overview included the following:

A. Community Engagement Timeline

- Tuesday, November 15, 2022, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Meeting at 6 p.m. in the Hopi Room
- Wednesday, November 16, 2022, Community Workshop between 10:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. at the Oro Valley Public Library
- Wednesday, November 16, 2022, Town Council Meeting at 6 p.m. in Council Chambers
- Thursday, November 17, 2022, Community Meeting at 6 p.m. in Council Chambers

B. Project Timeline

- November - December 2022
  I. Site Research and Data Gathering
  II. Stakeholder Meetings
  III. In-person Meetings and Workshop
  IV. Questionnaire
  V. Findings Report
- January – March 2023
  I. Draft Master Plan - Presented to Community via Community Workshop and Meeting (January)
  II. Draft Master Plan - Presented to Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (February)
  III. Draft Master Plan - Presented to Town Council (March)
- April – May 2023
  I. Final Master Plan - Presented to Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (April)
  II. Final Master Plan - Presented to Town Council (May)

At the conclusion of the presentation, the following comments were received from meeting attendees.

1. One blue card was presented from a resident who wants pollinator propagation to be considered as part of the master plan. This should include adding plants that will help sustain the Monarch population and bring other pollinators to the area.
2. The master plan should include a phasing plan for implementation.
3. The master plan should include a habitat management plan.
4. The master plan should provide access to variety of users.
5. The Town has posted a questionnaire on website and has already received 230 responses.
6. Seventeen residential communities have easy access to the preserve.

End of Park & Recreation Advisory Board Presentation Summary

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING SUMMARY

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING SUMMARY

DATE:	11/16/2022
PROJECT:	Vistoso Trails Master Plan
LOCATION:	Oro Valley Town Council Chambers
MEETING TYPE:	Presentation

A presentation was made to the Oro Valley's Mayor and Council on Wednesday, November 16, 2022. Oro Valley's Mayor and Council are committed to providing high-quality municipal services and responsible development. Through the Town Manager, the Mayor and Council provide policy direction by adopting rules, regulations, and procedures to meet community needs. The purpose of the presentation was to provide a project overview of the scope of work and schedule for the master planning of the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve and to receive comments regarding the future programming for the facility. Sites Southwest presented the following information:

1. Introduction of consultant team, Sites Southwest and The Acorn Group, and services to be provided, environmental planning, landscape architecture, interpretive planning, and educational programming.
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At the conclusion of the presentation, the following comments were received from Mayor and Council:

1. Councilmember Solomon expressed concerns regarding the future/unknown costs to maintain the preserve and asked what it would cost to maintain the preserve on an annual basis. Oro Valley Park and Recreation Director Kristy Diaz-Trahan explained that the maintenance costs will be addressed in the annual park and recreation department budget and that these costs will be determined based on the approval of the final master plan document. Currently, maintenance of the Preserve is being outsourced. The current fiscal year has $220,720.00 identified for general landscaping, which is outsourced to Brightview Landscape and includes the removal of invasive plant materials as well as general maintenance. There is an additional $350,000.00 for capital improvement work that includes the master plan, restroom, and cart path repair. During the next fiscal year funds will be spent to fix the cart path, washes, and additional areas of erosion. The consultant has been directed to create a master plan that can be developed in phases as funds and grants become available. Issues concerning future implementation and maintenance funding and budgeting will be addressed during the budget approval process with the Town Council.
2. Vice-Mayor Barrett asked for more information on the services that Acorn will be providing. It was explained that Acorn is working with local schools to develop curriculum that incorporates the Preserve. Additionally, it was stated that there is tremendous potential for biology classes and projects to be connected to the preserve including the mapping of plant material and measurement of plant growth.
3. Vice-Mayor Barrett stated she thought it was very important that the site be revegetated.
4. Councilmember Bohen asked if there is a cost estimate for the improvements and maintenance. Oro Valley Park and Recreation Director Kristy Diaz-Trahan explained that this information will be included in the master plan.
5. Councilmember Nicolson asked what grants were available. Sites Southwest stated that grant sources will be identified based on the master plan programming and will be included in the final document.

6. Councilmember Jones-Ivey stated that she had meet with Sites Southwest and is looking forward to the development of the master plan.
7. Oro Valley Park and Director Kristy Diaz-Trahan stated that standards need to be developed for improving the Preserve buffer zones that are adjacent to residents and that the process for submission, approval and execution will need to be established.

End of Town Council Presentation Summary

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP SUMMARY

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP SUMMARY

DATE:	11/16/2022
PROJECT:	Vistoso Trails Master Plan
LOCATION:	Oro Valley Public Library
MEETING TYPE:	Workshop

During the community outreach and public participation phase of the Vistoso Trails Master Planning process, the Town of Oro Valley hosted a community workshop meeting for the purpose of receiving comments and programming input from community members. The meeting was held at the Oro Valley Public Library from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM on Wednesday, November 16, 2022. The workshop format included a sign-in station that was monitored by representatives from the Town of Oro Valley Parks and Recreation Department and the consulting team. The meeting greeters:

• Welcomed attendees
• Requested that attendees sign-in, complete a comment card and survey
• Requested that attendees view the information located at the image board station
• Requested that attendees visit one of the two (2) programming stations manned by representatives from the consulting team

The image board station was comprised of a series of presentation boards that outlined the master planning process and schedule, and included photographs of the following potential programming elements:

- Trail types - (including nature trails, walking trails and multi-use paved trails)
- Trail amenities - (including pervious parking areas, rest areas, site furniture, signage, and public art)
- Site structures - (including pavilions, shade structures, overlooks and wildlife viewing blinds)
- Nature play spaces - (including natural structures that are woven into the existing terrain)
- Passive open spaces - (including outdoor classrooms)

An existing conditions base map of the project site was located at each of the two (2) programming stations, which were manned by representatives from the consulting team. The workshop format allowed attendees to review the initial Preserve base map, ask questions and offer suggestions for proposed Preserve improvements and desired amenities. Most comments received were focused on preserving the character of the site and creating amenities that would allow users to enjoy and engage with the natural environment. Many of the attendees proposed the following improvements/amenities:

- Provide separate trails for walking and biking
- Provide loop trails for walking and biking
- Provide neighborhood connection trails
- Keep the area natural and protect the mountain views
- Revegetate the site with native plant material
- Provide limited parking
- Provide environmental education opportunities for the community

- Turn the former pond into a site amenity
- Create shaded resting areas along the trail(s)
- Create a volunteer network to assist with funding, maintenance, and planting
- Create buffer guidelines to prevent the clearing of Preserve property that lies adjacent to residential areas

It should be noted that there were also requests for the inclusion of a disk golf course, a dog park and mountain biking trails. Participants were informed that these uses are not permitted based on the conservation easement agreement. It was further clarified that while the easement does not support a mountain biking park and that changing the landscape for an intensive use does not comply to the spirit of the easement, it does allow for passive recreational biking that includes the use of road bikes, mountain bikes, e-bikes, etc. Additionally, comments regarding potential traffic safety and impacts to the adjoining residential communities were received.

The information collected from this community workshop meeting will be incorporated into the Vistoso Trails Master Plan and will be used to assist with the development of the Preserve programming.

End of Community Workshop Summary

VISTOSO TRAILS MASTER PLAN
COMMUNITY WORSHOP

Wednesday November 16, 2022, from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm
Oro Valley Public Library
1305 West Naranja Drive, Oro Valley, AZ 85737

COMMENT SHEET

Please share any comments and/or suggestions you have for the programming and desired amenities at the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve.

Very pleased at the quality of planning by Sites Southwest !!
At the recent Parks + Rec Board Mtg, I suggested establishing Pollinator Conservation Planning for all 200 acres - this will conserve Monarch + other butterflies - honeybee + bumble bees - hummingbirds etc. Plant native AZ species = AZ Milkweed; Desert Milkweed; Giant Sand Milkweed; Desert Marigold, Indigo bush etc.

- care must be taken to watch for wild life poachers! These are a problem in Madera Canyon. Mr. John Murphy, Zooligist can advise - his email is =
<serpent research@gmail.com>

We live adjacent to the Preserve,
GOOD LUCK!

Charles R Stack, MPH, BEES
cstack3@gmail.com
(Town of OV EPAC/PAG Representative)

VISTOSO TRAILS MASTER PLAN
COMMUNITY WORSHOP

Wednesday November 16, 2022, from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm
Oro Valley Public Library
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COMMENT SHEET

Please share any comments and/or suggestions you have for the programming and desired amenities at the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve.

Keep it natural as much as possible – limited paving, native plants, careful minimal lighting, minimal pesticides/herbicides. Use small water features.
Habitat for birds + wildlife – consult with local expertise such as Tucson Audubon Society, Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection, Int'l Dark Skies Assoc (headquartered in Tucson), for cleanup, restoration, and maintenance planning & work.
Initial cleanup plans have been ill-conceived – too much mowing or trimming of unwanted vegetation when removal is more effective and less expensive in the long run. Mowing returns seeds to the ground-
Buffelgrass + Fountain Grass – treat/remove, not mow -
Tumbleweed – do not chop; seeds remain. Remove instead.
Desert Broom – leave in place for habitat areas. In other areas, remove, not just cut low.
Thistle plants – also good for habitat wherever possible.
Connect to existing or planned wildlife corridors; ask Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection about these. Carolyn Campbell is Director.

Walking trails – as many as possible.
Bike trails only if separate trail on perimeter or wide trail with lots of signage.
No motorized vehicles of any kind.
Disc golf would be great, unless there is another O.V. park better suited.

over ⇒

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COMMUNITY WORSHOP

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COMMENT SHEET

Please share any comments and/or suggestions you have for the programming and desired amenities at the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve.

Nature art classes

Restaurant where old structures stand (+ outside fire pit)
Some lighting for when it's dark
ways to get off trial fairly easily & back to civilization
benches needed
educatnal classes would be nice
water fountain/s " "

Existing restaurant & offices (located at Vistoso Highlands and Bowcreek Springs intersection) should be conserved & upgraded:
- fundraising events in restaurant
- education center in offices
↳ vistoso Community Association Office [redacted]

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Besides the obvious paved paths, bathrooms and unpaved paths, we would particularly like to see natural desert habitat re-established. This is to create habitat and wild life corridors that work well.

Cactus gardens, butterfly and bird sanctuaries also seem desirable.

The pond would make a great habitat area, if enhanced, for all sorts of wild life. Also, could be used for helicopters fighting fires.

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COMMENT SHEET

Please share any comments and/or suggestions you have for the programming and desired amenities at the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve.

The fewer "amenities" the better—
I want it to remain natural and to be
user friendly for wildlife—

VISTOSO TRAILS MASTER PLAN
COMMUNITY WORSHOP

Wednesday November 16, 2022, from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm
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Bird Walks
Butterfly Walks
Reptile walks
Stargazing

VISTOSO TRAILS MASTER PLAN
COMMUNITY WORSHOP

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COMMENT SHEET

Please share any comments and/or suggestions you have for the programming and desired amenities at the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve.

Keep the Park Serene.

VISTOSO TRAILS MASTER PLAN
COMMUNITY WORSHOP
Wednesday November 16, 2022, from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm
Oro Valley Public Library
1305 West Naranja Drive, Oro Valley, AZ 85737

COMMENT SHEET

Please share any comments and/or suggestions you have for the programming and desired amenities at the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve.

Keep the property as natural as possible.
No Mountain Biking - it is disruptive to home owners and wildlife - deer will not use the property for wildlife corridor if bikes are out into the main areas of the property - keep human access on the cart path

VISTOSO TRAILS MASTER PLAN
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COMMENT SHEET

Please share any comments and/or suggestions you have for the programming and desired amenities at the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve.

Would like to keep it nature, so wild life could expand.

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COMMENT SHEET

Please share any comments and/or suggestions you have for the programming and desired amenities at the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve.

First Priority in my mind is to do something with the empty lake. It is a tremendous eye sore. At one point Preserve Vistoso had discussed getting some maintenance cost from the fire department / state fire fighting budget. In years past the lake was a source for water for fire fighting planes.

2nd priority is to fix the street side landscaping to be consident with the rest of the street

Right now that whole are looks like a third world country

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COMMENT SHEET

Please share any comments and/or suggestions you have for the programming and desired amenities at the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve.

Questions:

1) Will there be regulations for bikes? email bikes? ~~dirt paths for mountain bikes~~?

2) Hopefully the park should be low impact for the preserve - no group activities unless it is guided for education

VISTOSO TRAILS MASTER PLAN
COMMUNITY WORSHOP

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COMMENT SHEET

Please share any comments and/or suggestions you have for the programming and desired amenities at the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve.

Please make it as close to natural desert as possible

Do not refill pond with water

Consider not allowing class III e-bikes

Keep any public access parking lots small

There are a lot of trails already - more trails will divide up the wild area.

VISTOSO TRAILS MASTER PLAN
COMMUNITY WORSHOP

Wednesday November 16, 2022, from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm
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COMMENT SHEET

Please share any comments and/or suggestions you have for the programming and desired amenities at the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve.

(1) Please Keep the Nature Preserve as Pristine as Possible. Natural. No Picnic Areas

(2) Encourage Adjacent Homeowners To Pull INVASIVE GRASS

(3) TRIM TREES

(4) Place DOG WASTE CONTAINERS at Appropriate locations

(5) Install Security Cameras at Entrances where unlawful Vehicles can enter the Trails

THANK YOU

Comments/Suggestions for Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve Way Ahead Study

Gordon Parkhill
13469 N Flaxleaf Pl
Oro Valley AZ 85755
(206) 963-6590
November 16, 2022

I would like to make the following suggestions for the Sites Southwest Study regarding the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve:

1. Wetland Bird Habitat: As you know there is golf course pond infrastructure on the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve property. That pond was filled year around when the golf course was operational. I assume the infrastructure supporting that pond still exists (the condition unknown). That would include pumps, piping, etc. It is my understanding that, when the original owner of the golf course sold it, he also sold existing water wells on the property (perhaps two or more) to the Town of Oro Valley. That action eventually contributed to the demise of the golf course partly due to the high yearly cost of watering the course. ($600,000 ?).

I assume those wells still exist and may or may not be currently used by the Town. That pond, if refilled and maintained as a Sonoran Desert Wetland, would be an excellent resource for attracting many varieties of Southern Arizona wetland birds and also birds that periodically migrate through the Oro Valley/Tucson/Mt Lemmon area. Such a water feature would significantly enhance public use of the Nature Preserve, providing a unique and special opportunity for observing the waterfowl and Sonoran Desert wetland education.

At the Parks & Recreation Board Meeting on Nov 15th a concern was raised regarding mosquitoes if the pond were to be refilled. I have done a quick search online and found several sites describing nature friendly mosquito abatement processes for golf course ponds and water features.

I strongly recommend that the Sites Southwest Study include the restoration of the former golf course pond into a Sonoran Desert Wetland Pond.

2. Wildlife Observation Stations: I believe that there are several locations around the Nature Preserve which would provide excellent opportunities for viewing the native wildlife. From personal experience residing on the Nature Preserve property since 2017, I can attest to an amazing array of wildlife that exists on the property and the wildlife corridors being used daily by the wildlife. I have photographed much of that wildlife from our backyard.

I recommend the study address the possibility of installing wildlife observation stations (decks, etc.) where appropriate with signage describing what wildlife could be observed from the station.

November 17, 2022

For: Sites Southwest

My name is Bill Sugars and I live in Fairfield Vistoso on the 1st hole of the former golf course.

I have a couple of thoughts on the planning process for the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve. Based on my talks with neighbors, it seems like you and the town are well on your way to developing a General Plan that will protect and enhance the 206 acres many of us fought for these past 4 years.

Walking the course these past several months, I have noticed several homeowners have taken it upon themselves to landscape up to 150 feet or so of the land that is supposed to be a nature preserve. I do not understand why they thought this would be okay since the property was owned by Romspen, then the Conservation Fund and now the town of Oro Valley.

Point 1 – I hope the town takes aggressive action and requires those homeowners to cease the landscaping and let it once again become Sonoran Desert. Other than clearing off our fence lines to reduce fire danger, no landscaping should occur.

Point 2 – I would say that around a dozen or so homeowners installed lighting to shine on trees, cactus and rock formations. Those people should be required to remove all lighting placed on the property. The potential for a "Dark Sky" program will be impacted by these lights.

Point 3 – I have heard that creating a Riparian wetlands at the site of the dry pond is a possibility. GREAT IDEA. I am sure that would receive widespread support throughout Oro Valley.

On 11/12/2021 11:32 AM Jonathan Horst [redacted]

Good morning Ray,

Mary forwarded to me the Preserve Vistoso Vision document - it's a very inspiring vision for what the golf course can become. Tucson Audubon would be very interested to work with you on this transition on many fronts.

I love the idea of having topical gardens/areas at different locations throughout. We have worked with quite a few different organizations (including golf courses) on pollinator habitats, monarch waystations, and a variety of other interpretation habitat installs. There is an incredible opportunity here to also include non-plant habitat enhancements (e.g. nestboxes, bathouses, bee-keeps for native (non-stinging) bees, lizard habitats, etc), as well as a variety of water features. Things like small distributed wildlife drinkers will help protect any newly installed plants and the irrigation system, while also benefiting wildlife moving through those corridors. Puddlers and specific dishes can also be a boon to birds. There look to also be some good opportunities to create recirculating small streams with ponds that could be a HUGE win for wildlife and would use insignificant amounts of water as compared to the historic maintenance of the grass on the greens and fairways. We've designed and installed all of these types of features on private and public areas.

Another great opportunity here would be to ensure that the parking area (i think it was at hole 14) that is planned would be created either with permeable pavement (like what we have at our Mason Center and Paton Center) or would be intentionally graded to harvest rainwater runoff from the parking into usable features augmenting plant growth.

Water harvesting, both large and small scale, throughout the project will reduce long-term water costs and will improve plant health and growth rates (plants grow much better with rainwater than with water from any of the municipal supplies). We've incorporated intentionally designed, and retrofit, rainwater harvesting into numerous plans for wildlife habitat in the area - it's a definite win for the area if it can be included.

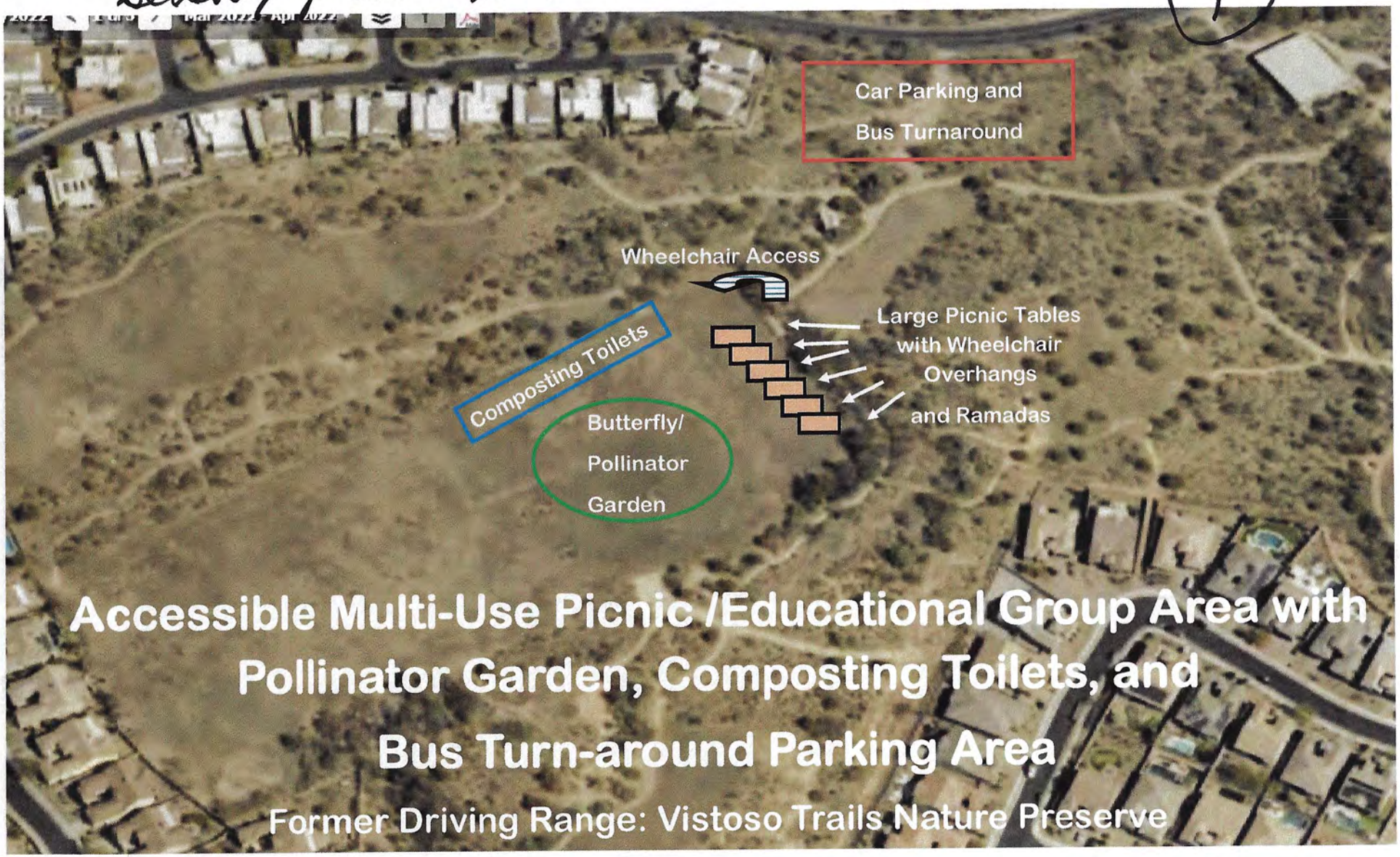
Have a wonderful weekend and i look forward to exploring how we might work with you on this project.

Jonathan

Jonathan Horst
Director of Conservation + Research | Ecologist
Tucson Audubon Society
[redacted]

sending plant info.

1



Accessible Multi-Use Picnic /Educational Group Area with Pollinator Garden, Composting Toilets, and Bus Turn-around Parking Area

Former Driving Range: Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve

Andrew Hogan, [redacted]

[redacted]

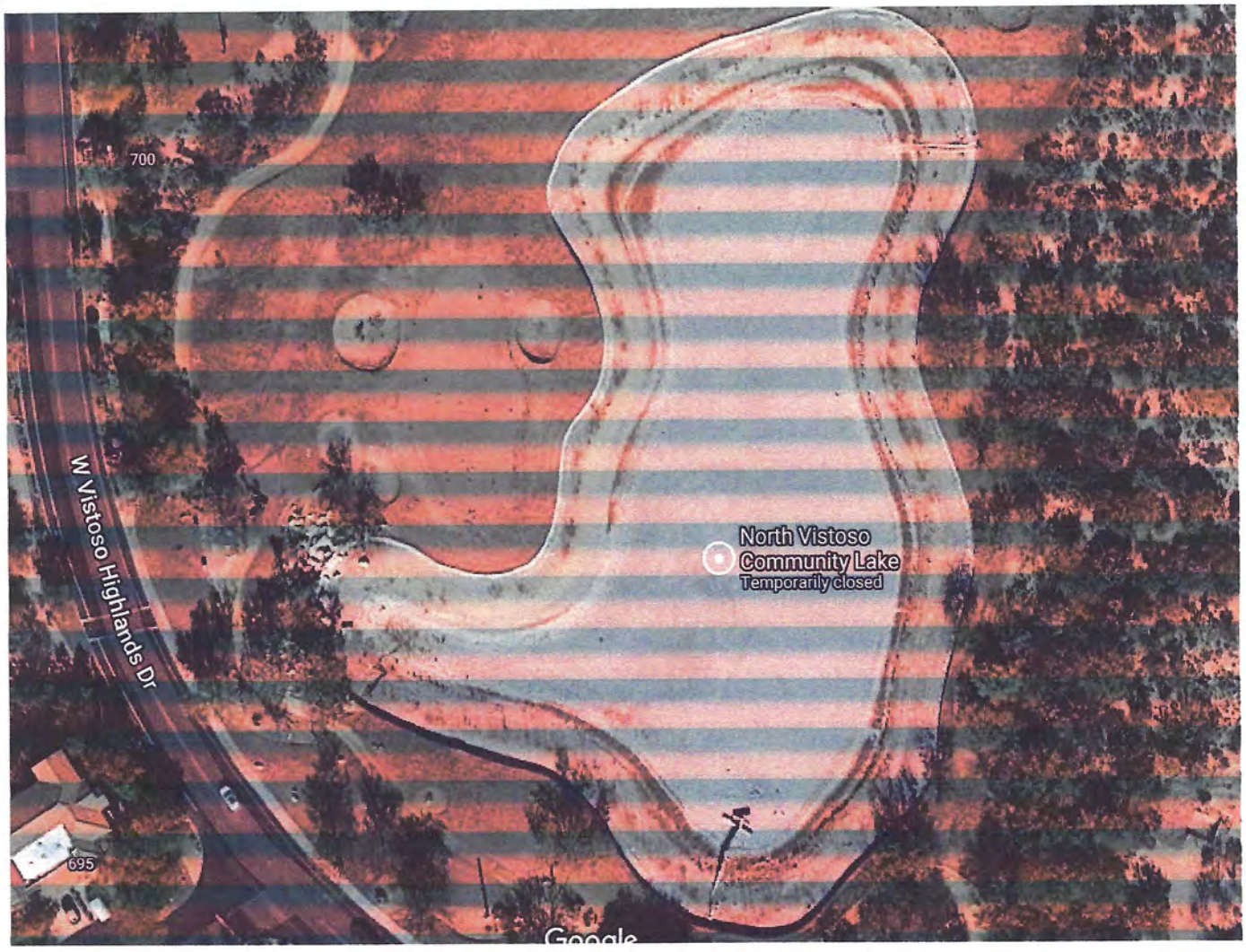
Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve Community Input

Richard Bagley

[redacted]

Proposal: Pond ideas

Presently the empty pond is an eyesore



If it could be completely refilled with water, that would be spectacular, but I would like present a few other ideas.

- [ ] Educational signage/kiosks
- [ ] Labyrinth
- [x] Public art
- [x] Shade structures
- [ ] Shorter distance loop trails
- [ ] Trailheads
- [x] Water features
- [x] Wildlife viewing blinds
- [x] Other Solar powered lights in underpasses. separation lines in underpasses. Separation lines for whole trail mirrors?

6. What kinds of programmed activities (e.g. eco-tours, exercise classes, star gazing, etc.) would you like to see at the Preserve? Please list the activities that you would enjoy.*

Eco tours, star gazing, photography sessions w/s

1000

7. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions?*

Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve Community Input Survey

The Town of Oro Valley has selected Sites Southwest, a landscape architecture and planning firm, to assist with developing a master plan for the 202-acre Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve (formerly known as the Vistoso Golf Course). A key component to this process is gathering public input. Your responses to the questions below will help us plan and design a community-focused space that reflects the needs of our residents and the Town of Oro Valley.

1. Are you familiar with the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve?*

- [x] Yes, very familiar. I know about the acquisition process, and I have visited the property.
- [ ] A little familiar. I've heard about the Town acquiring the property, but I've never been there.
- [ ] Unsure. I think I may have heard about this, but I don't remember much.
- [ ] Not familiar. This is relatively new information to me.

2. Have you visited the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve?*

- [x] Yes
- [ ] No

3. How often do you visit the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve?*

- [ ] N/A I have never visited

- [ ] Daily
- [ ] Multiple times a week
- [x] About once a week
- [ ] A few times a month
- [ ] About once a month
- [ ] Rarely

4. How do you travel to the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve?*

- [ ] N/A I have never visited
- [ ] Walk or jog
- [x] Bike
- [ ] Drive a vehicle

5. Which of the following features and amenities would you like to see at the Preserve? (Select all that apply)*

- [x] Benches
- [ ] Dirt trails

VISTOSO TRAILS MASTER PLAN

DECEMBER 2022 ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY INPUT

(Note: Additional community comments received following the on-site public meetings held from November 14, 2022, through November 18, 2022.)

COMMENT SHEET

Please share any comments and/or suggestions you have for the programming and desired amenities at the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve.

We live at the SW end of the former driving range in Siena. Our thoughts include this are should remain a passive area without human involvement except for keeping the nasty weeds out of the area like we have experienced over the last few years with the heavy infestation of weeds resulting in a mass of tumbleweeds and other noxious weeds.

It is great to see the animals out on this area. In past years when the "range" area was more accessible, we would see a multitude of a variety of species... including, fox, coyote, rabbits, deer, Javelinas, small rodents, etc.

The area acts as a passageway and open grazing and playing area for these animals. This use represents a conformity with the intent of the Conservation Easement on the Vistoso Trails Preserve.

For people not living on the edge of the Preserve, the east end of the range that is elevated represents a potential viewing area for people visiting the Preserve.

PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY

PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY

DATE:	11/17/2022
PROJECT:	Vistoso Trails Master Plan
LOCATION:	Oro Valley Town Council Chambers
MEETING TYPE:	Presentation

A public meeting was held at the Oro Valley Town Council Chambers on Thursday, November 17, 2022. The purpose of the meeting was to provide a project overview of the scope of work and schedule for the master planning of the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve and to receive comments regarding the future programming for the facility. Sites Southwest presented the following information:

1. Introduction of consultant team, Sites Southwest and The Acorn Group, and services to be provided, environmental planning, landscape architecture, interpretive planning, and educational programming.
2. Brief review of consultant team's relevant project experience, Bachechi Open Space and Trail Master Plan, Valle De Oro Master Plan, High Desert Community, Big Basin Redwood State Park, Compton Creek Natural Area, George F. Canyon Nature Center, and Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.
3. The goal of the master plan process is to create a working document that addresses:
    - The long-term protection of the site's ecological and cultural resources
    - Providing educational opportunities for a wide range of user groups that is inclusive of all ages and abilities
    - Creating site-sensitive passive recreational attributes that blend the built environment within the natural surroundings
4. Programming suggestions received to date from stakeholder's included the following:
    - Create a system of looped walking/biking trails
    - Provide natural surface trails for running and walking
    - Create separate areas for wildlife viewing
    - Provide spaces for family gatherings
    - Include sculpture and public art
    - Provide shade and seating areas
    - Create educational gardens and signage
    - Provide dispersed parking areas and directional signage
    - Address wash area erosion and safe crossing concerns
    - Create areas for nature play
    - Provide programming for habitat and dark sky viewing
    - Connect the Preserve trail to the Town trail system
    - Create natural structures and water features to support habitat
    - Re-establish native vegetation throughout the Preserve
    - Develop operations and management protocols
5. Community engagement and project schedule overview included the following:
    A. Community Engagement Timeline
    - Tuesday, November 15, 2022, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Meeting at 6 p.m. in the Hopi Room

- Wednesday, November 16, 2022, Community Workshop between 10:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. at the Oro Valley Public Library
- Wednesday, November 16, 2022, Town Council Meeting at 6 p.m. in Council Chambers
- Thursday, November 17, 2022, Community Meeting at 6 p.m. in Council Chambers

B. Project Timeline

- November - December 2022
  I. Site Research and Data Gathering
  II. Stakeholder Meetings
  III. In-person Meetings and Workshop
  IV. Questionnaire
  V. Findings Report
- January – March 2023
  I. Draft Master Plan - Presented to Community via Community Workshop and Meeting (January)
  II. Draft Master Plan - Presented to Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (February)
  III. Draft Master Plan - Presented to Town Council (March)
- April – May 2023
  I. Final Master Plan - Presented to Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (April)
  II. Final Master Plan - Presented to Town Council (May)

At the conclusion of the presentation, the following comments were received from attendees:

1. Use a turbine blower to clean trail. These are used on golf courses and work well.
2. Less is more. Minimize the number of restrooms and improvements. More benches and shade areas would be good but, do not add any more parking.
3. Less is more. Keep it desert. Preserve will be a draw to the world. After liability items are fixed, redo pond. Use maintenance area for parking and don't add any more parking.
4. Pond is most important and do something for nature and wildlife, but it must be affordable. Fire Department might help with funding if the pond can be used for firefighting. Grants are available to help build back the pond.
5. Less is more. Restore the pond.
6. No more ground lights. Use maintenance yard for education building and give access to all. Possible bump out parking in a few places. Minimal pond restoration for wildlife habitat. Riparian wetlands would be good.
7. Pond needs to be developed into something. Maintain area between street & pond to make it look better. Schedule for restoration of the fairways needs to be accelerated.
8. Pond could be wetlands.
9. Prevent overuse. Keep it as natural as possible. Regrow desert areas. Bikers are dangerous!!!
10. Include a place for bridge players.
11. Post a 5 MPH speed limit on the trail and make the trail one way only for bikes.
12. Create separate trails for bikers and walkers.
13. Limit height of buildings. Continue effort to get rid of deadwood and patching of concrete cart path.
14. Add shade, trees, and water stations along trail for people and animals.
15. Fire buffer at residential areas – what is going to happen???

16. Less is more. Do not add parking by the school. That area seems to be an animal corridor and should be protected.
17. There is less cursing since the golf course is gone. Less is more.
18. Fill in the pond and get rid of it. Sand traps ugly and get rid of them. Maintain the cart path better.
19. How many parking lots are going in? No crowded parking lots.
20. Pond 2.0 reimagined to wildlife habitat. Wildlife need water. Attract and nurture as many species as possible. Add nest areas. Accelerate the return of greens to desert. Include 5 MPH speed limit on cart path and one way traffic pattern.
21. Jake Smith prepared a 175-page document of birds, plants, etc. that live in the preserve and is on website.
22. Do everything we can to allow users to view the mountains and incorporate kids through education.
23. Hope that there are a lot of grants to help it all get built.
24. Find money in Oro Town budget to build and maintain the Preserve.
25. Get garbage cans and dog stations along cart path.
26. Add a management staff person on property so that users know that there are eyes on the Preserve.
27. Waterfall is eyesore, fix it. Add grass and picnic area near pond.
28. What are the plans for the fairways? Leave them open.
29. Holes #4 & #5 have best mountain views.
30. Developer of six (6) acres is building one hundred and forty (140) units with Preserve as main selling point.

End of Public Meeting Summary

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Analysis of Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve Community Input Survey

Overview

The Town of Oro Valley invited the community to participate in the master planning process for the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve (formerly known as the Vistoso Golf Course). The Parks and Recreation department administered a survey to gather input from community members to help plan and design a community-focused space that reflects the needs of Oro Valley residents at Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve (Preserve). The survey gathered input on future site improvements, visitor experience and land-use management that will be used to develop the Preserve's Master Plan.

Key findings include:

- The survey showed that the community is aware of the Preserve. However, we should be cautious of a self-selection bias inherent in the opt-in nature of the survey.
- Given the high response rate among those who frequently visit the Preserve (75 percent of respondents visit at least once a month), we should consider this survey skewed towards current users.
- There is broad agreement on the amenities sought at the Preserve.
- Frequent visitors tend to be pedestrians. Less frequent visitors tend to drive a vehicle.
- Those who have never visited may be drawn in with greater number of dirt trails, shorter distance loops and trailheads.

Methodology

The survey was available both online and on paper copy.

Overall, 622 surveys were completed over the course of November 2022. The overall results have a precision of at least +/- 3.9 percent at the 95 percent confidence level (meaning we can be 95 percent confident that the survey results reflect the overall opinions of Oro Valley residents to within plus or minus 4 percentage points on any answer).

However, participants were able to choose whether to participate in this survey, thus introducing a possibility of self-selection bias. Self-selection bias occurs when the group that chooses to participate is not equivalent to the group that opts out. We can generally assume that individuals that took time to respond to a survey regarding the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve are more likely to be users of the Preserve than those who chose not to participate.

This report contains the following:

Section 1: Charts and tables showing the overall results of the survey

Section 2: Analysis comparing results based on certain respondent characteristics

Appendix 1: tabular data showing overall results for all questions on the survey, including complete open-ended responses

Appendix 2: a copy of the survey instrument

Section 1

Q1: Are you familiar with the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve?

Respondents to the survey were very familiar with the Preserve – nearly 97 percent of respondents were very or at least a little familiar with the Preserve.

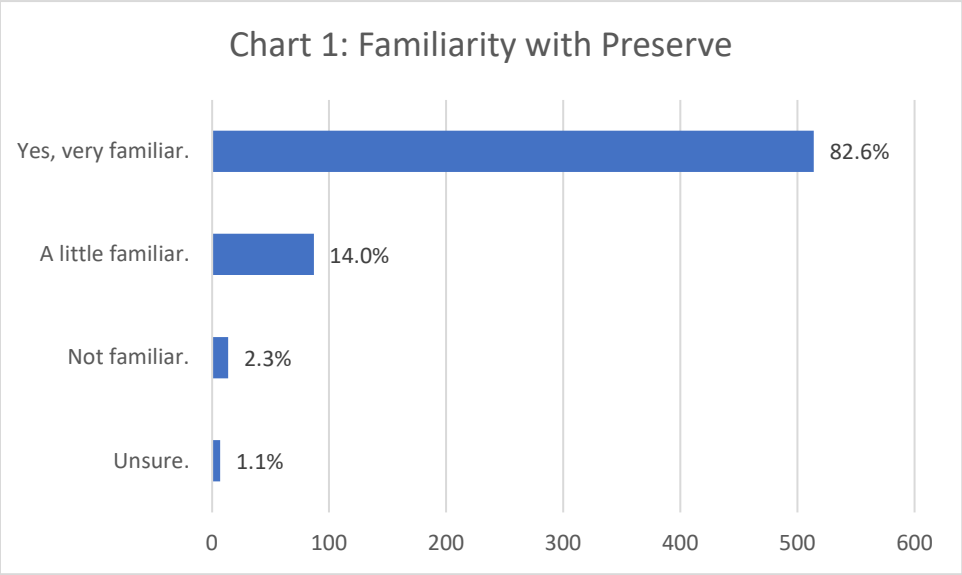


Table 1: Are you Familiar with the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve?	
Familiarity with Preserve	**Respondents**
Yes, very familiar. I know about the acquisition process, and I have visited the property.	514
A little familiar. I've heard about the Town acquiring the property, but I've never been there.	87
Not familiar. This is relatively new information to me.	14
Unsure. I think I may have heard about this, but I don't remember much.	7
Grand Total	**622**

Q2: Have you visited the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve?

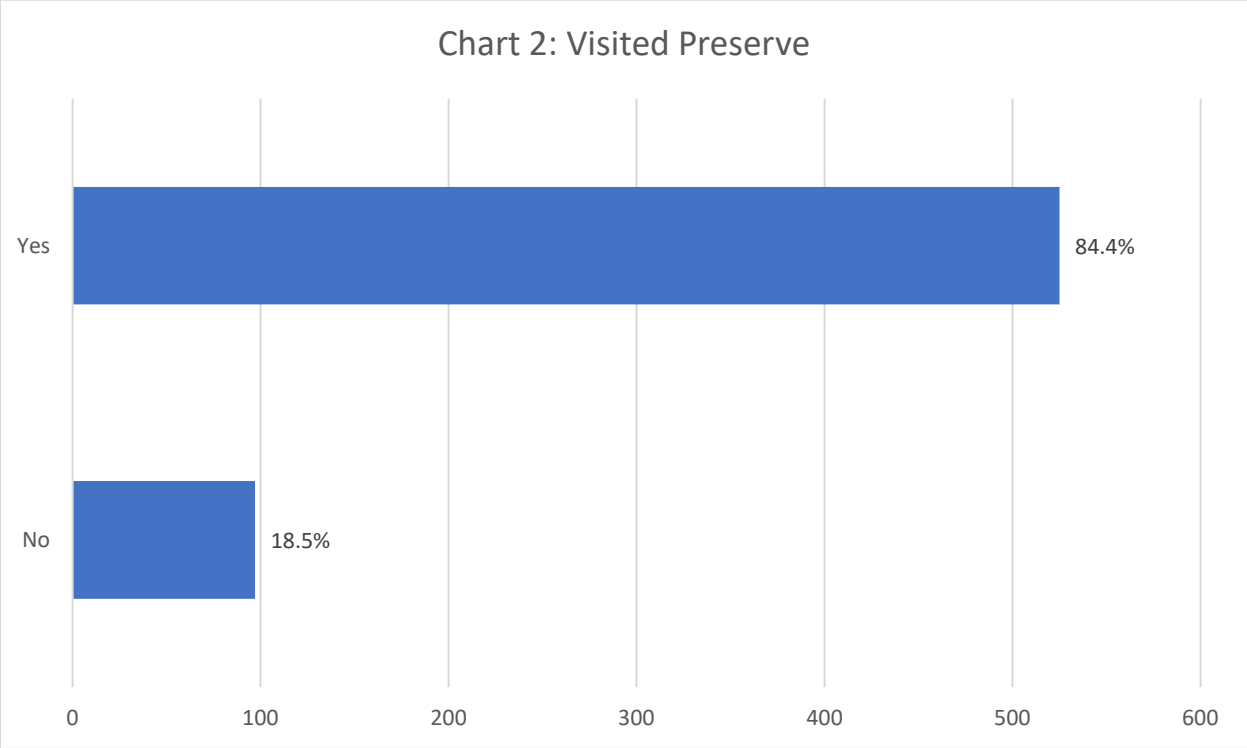


Table 2: Have You Visited the Preserve?	
Have Visited	**Respondents**
Yes	525
No	97
Grand Total	**622**

Q3: How often do you visit the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve?

Over 51 percent of respondents were frequent visitors to the Preserve (visiting at least once a week) and nearly 75 percent of respondents are at least occasional visitors to the Preserve (visiting at least once a month).

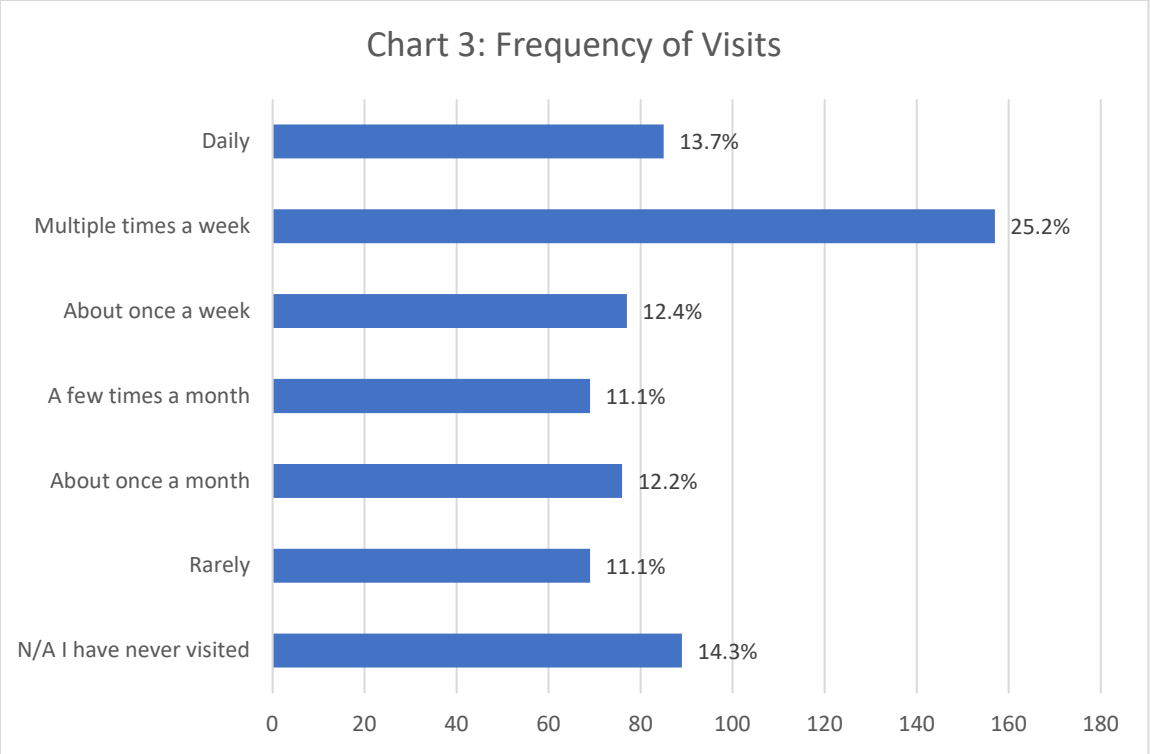
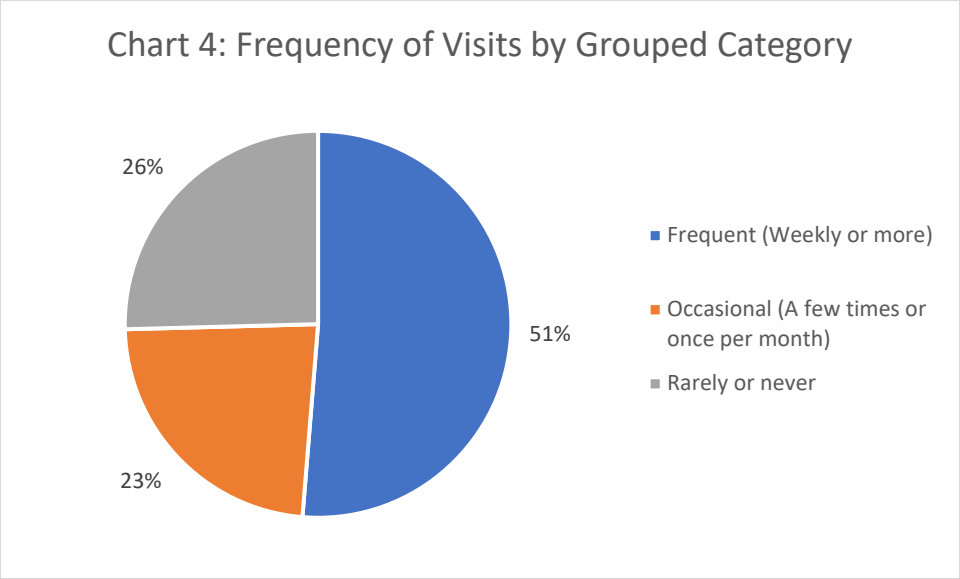


Table 3: How Often do You Visit the Preserve?

Frequency of Visits	Respondents
Daily	85
Multiple times a week	157
About once a week	77
A few times a month	69
About once a month	76
Rarely	69
N/A I have never visited	89
Grand Total	**622**



Q4. How do you travel to the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve?

Most respondents visit the Preserve on foot.

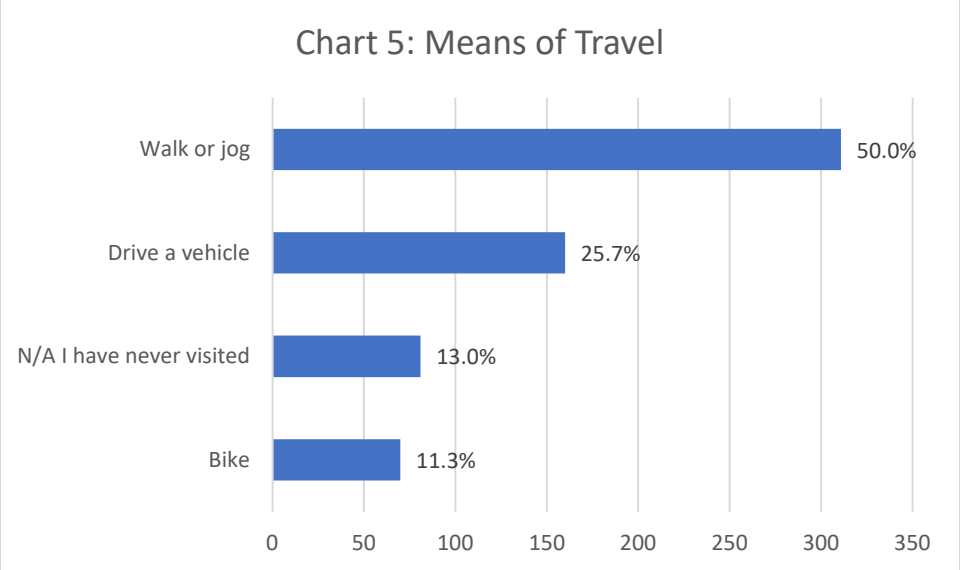


Table 4: How do You Travel to the Preserve?	
Means of Travel	**Respondents**
Walk or jog	311
Bike	70
Drive a vehicle	160
N/A I have never visited	81
Grand Total	**622**

Q5: Which of the following features and amenities would you like to see at the Preserve?

A majority of respondents favored two types of amenities. 65 percent of respondents indicated that they would like to see benches at the Preserve. 50 percent of respondents would like to see shade structures.

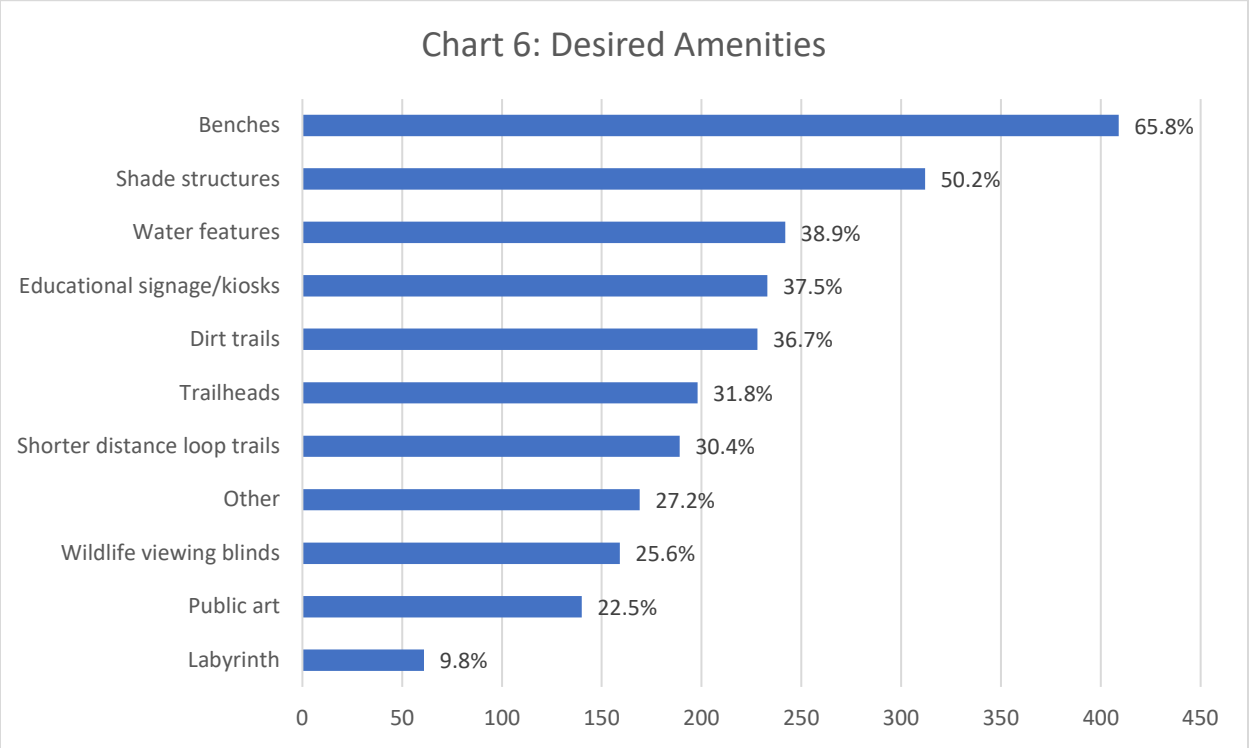


Table 5: Which of the Following Features and Amenities Would You Like to See at the Preserve?

Amenities	Respondents
Benches	409
Shade structures	312
Water features	242
Educational signage/kiosks	233
Dirt trails	228
Trailheads	198
Shorter distance loop trails	189
Other	169
Wildlife viewing blinds	159
Public art	140
Labyrinth	61
Grand Total	**622**

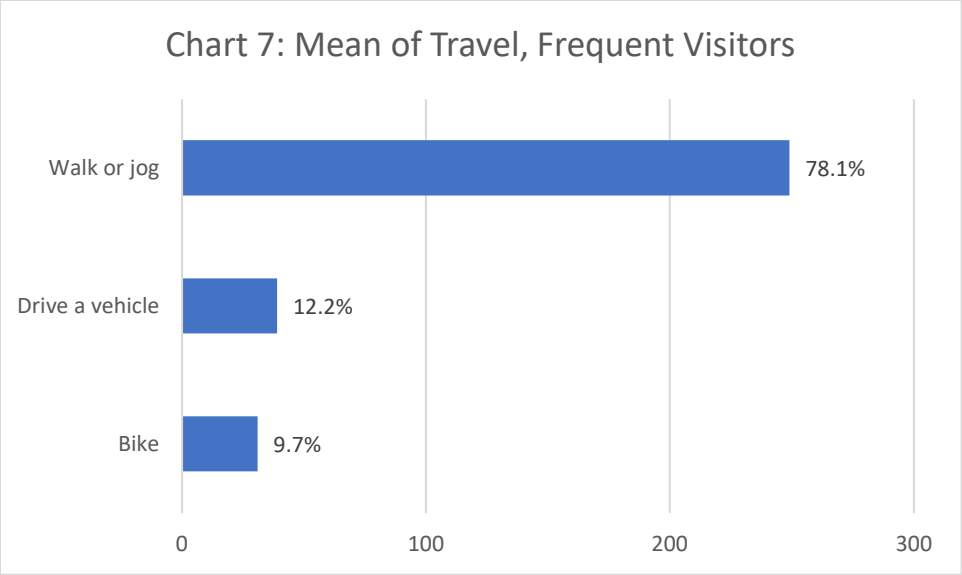
169 respondents took the time to submit an open-ended response as well. Among open-ended responses, including restrooms was a priority along with refilling the lake/pond, minimally disturbing the natural desert landscape and having regular pet waste receptacles.

Table 6: Other Open-Ended Amenity Responses	
Other Amenities	**Respondents**
Restrooms	31
Lake/pond (large natural water feature with wild plants/animals)	22
Natural vegetation (minimal investment and disturbance of native plants/animals)	21
Trash receptacles	18
Signage (mile markers, maps, keep dogs leashed, rules of the trail, land acknowledgement)	16
Event space (amphitheater, community space, education facility, beer garden)	12
Accessible trails (paved or hard-packed trails for people of all abilities)	10
Potable water stations	8
Separated bike paths	7
Disc golf	6
Gardens: Community, cactus, butterfly, rock, Zen, botanical	6
Shaded areas	6
Improved aesthetics around the dry lakebed and boulevard	6
Public art	5
Feeder trails (park is accessible from multiple points and is easily accessible from surrounding neighborhoods)	4
Parking	4
Food and beverage options	4
Pump track or other mountain bike infrastructure	3
Dog park	3
Water feature (separate from lake/pond, e.g. fountains)	3
Exercise stations	2
Children's playground/nature play space	2
Mini golf	2
Bike racks	1
Sundial	1
Grand Total	**169**

Section 2: Results Based on Certain Respondent Characteristics

Frequent Visitors

319 of the 622 respondents (51.3 percent) indicated that they were frequent visitors, using the Preserve about once a week, multiple times a week or even daily. These frequent visitors were 28 percent more likely to walk or jog than respondents overall.



Frequent users showed the same general preference for amenities at the Preserve as respondents overall. Within the open-ended comments for other amenities, frequent users commonly agreed with respondents overall in voicing a desire for restrooms, a lake/pond, natural vegetation, trash receptacles and signage.

There were some differences lower in the list of other amenities. However, the number of respondents becomes quite small at that point, limiting the conclusions we should draw.

Table 7: Comparison of Overall Respondents with Frequent Users

Q4. How do you travel to the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve?

Amenities	Full Survey Respondents	Frequent Users	Difference
Bike	11.3%	9.7%	-1.5%
Drive a vehicle	25.7%	12.2%	-13.5%
Walk or jog	50.0%	78.1%	28.1%
N/A I have never visited	13.0%	0.0%	-13.0%
Grand Total	**622**	**319**	

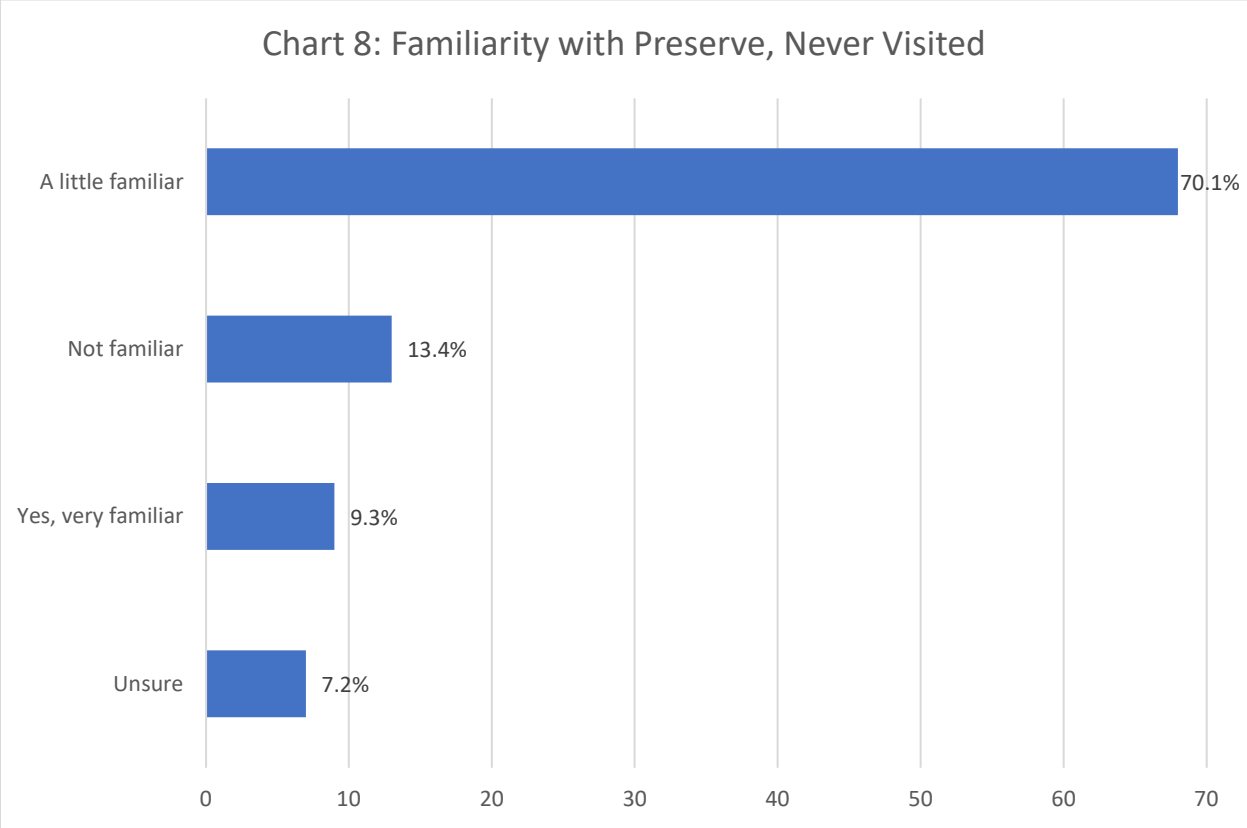
Q5. Which of the following features and amenities would you like to see at the Preserve?

Amenities	Full Survey Respondents	Frequent Users	Difference
Benches	65.8%	66.8%	1.0%
Shade structures	50.2%	43.3%	-6.9%
Water features	38.9%	41.7%	2.8%
Educational signage/kiosks	37.5%	38.2%	0.8%
Dirt trails	36.7%	32.0%	-4.7%
Trailheads	31.8%	27.0%	-4.9%
Shorter distance loop trails	30.4%	22.9%	-7.5%
Wildlife viewing blinds	25.6%	22.6%	-3.0%

Public art	22.5%	22.3%	-0.3%
Labyrinth	9.8%	8.5%	-1.3%
Other	27.2%	28.8%	1.7%
Grand Total	**622**	**319**	

Respondents Who Had Never Visited the Preserve

97 respondents had never visited the Preserve. Yet this group still knew about the Preserve with 79 percent expressing some level of familiarity (very familiar or a little familiar).



Those who have never visited showed a greater interest in pedestrian amenities (dirt trails, shorter distance loops and trailheads) than respondents overall and were less interested in water features and educational signage.

Table 8: Comparison of Overall Respondents with Those Who Have Never Visited

Q5. Which of the following features and amenities would you like to see at the Preserve?

Amenities	Full Survey Respondents	Never Used Respondents	Difference
Benches	65.8%	58.8%	-7.0%
Shade structures	50.2%	59.8%	9.6%
Water features	38.9%	29.9%	-9.0%
Educational signage/kiosks	37.5%	26.8%	-10.7%

Dirt trails	36.7%	45.4%	8.7%
Trailheads	31.8%	37.1%	5.3%
Shorter distance loop trails	30.4%	38.1%	7.8%
Wildlife viewing blinds	25.6%	27.8%	2.3%
Public art	22.5%	24.7%	2.2%
Labyrinth	9.8%	11.3%	1.5%
Other	27.2%	19.6%	-7.6%
Grand Total	**622**	**97**	

Conclusions

To be discussed and determined. Key findings may include:

- The survey showed that the community is aware of the Preserve. However, we should be cautious of a self-selection bias inherent in the opt-in nature of the survey.
  It is difficult to assess the amount of self-selection bias in a survey, yet we can be reasonably sure it exists. Other outreach methods may reflect the opinions of different groups within the Town. Use of the Town's Flashvote survey instrument may offer the opportunity to benchmark the results of this survey.
- Given the high response rate among those who frequently visit the Preserve (75 percent of respondents visit at least once a month), we should consider this survey skewed towards current users.
  It may be determined that serving those who already utilize the Preserve is the wise strategic direction in a limited funding environment.
- There is broad agreement on the amenities sought at the Preserve.
  Benches, shade structures, water features, educational signage and dirt trails were all popular amenity choices and were favored by all respondents, frequent uses, and those who have never visited the Preserve.
- Frequent visitors tend to be pedestrians. Less frequent visitors tend to drive a vehicle.
  We can likely assume that frequent visitors are also more likely to be from the neighborhoods that border the Preserve.
- Those who have never visited may be drawn in with greater number of dirt trails, shorter distance loops and trailheads.

FIELD REVIEW SUMMARY

FIELD REPORT

DATE:	11/14/2022 – 11/18/2022
PROJECT:	Vistoso Trails Master Plan
LOCATION:	Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve
MEETING TYPE:	Site Visit

A series of site visits were conducted by Sites Southwest representatives from November 14, 2022, through November 18, 2022. The purpose of the field reviews was to develop a thorough understanding of the existing conditions and operational needs of the Preserve. During these investigations, the following observations were documented.

1. Listing of Current Site Uses - The current uses at the Preserve include the following:

- The existing 6.2 miles of concrete cart path, which ranges in width, is being used as a multi-use trailway. User types observed included:
    A. A wide range of recreational bike types, including electric bikes
    B. Electric scooters
    C. Walkers
    D. Joggers
    E. A range of baby/kid stroller types, including jogger, double and bassinet styles
- The parking area adjacent to the former golf course clubhouse is being used as a trailhead.
- The parking area adjacent to the former golf course maintenance yard is being used as a trailhead.
- Preserve Vistoso prepared a 174-page field guide that is available to the public and documents the plants, birds and mammals that inhabit the Preserve. The site is being used by individuals and organized groups for habitat viewing and photography.
- The site is being used by individuals and organized groups for dark sky viewing and photography.
- Innovation Academy is developing programs that incorporate the Preserve.

2. Listing of Current Site Maintenance Operations – Maintenance of the facility is currently outsourced to Brightview who's responsibilities include the on-going treatment and removal of invasive species and bermuda grass throughout the driving range, fairways, greens, and tee boxes.

3. Listing of Current Site Conditions – During the initial review of the site, our team observed the following:

- The site is being maintained and no areas of debris, trash and/or dumping were observed.
- The cart path is being used as multi-use trail and is constantly occupied with a wide range of users.
- Sections of the cart path are cracked and missing expansion joints.
- Portions of the cart path have elevated curbing.
- There are many sections adjacent to the cart path that have been filled with rock to addresses erosion concerns.
- There does not appear to be shoulders along much of the cart path.
- Sections of the cart path do not appear to meet ADA requirements for multi-use trailway use.
- Sections of the cart path that cross existing washes are showing signs of erosion and undercutting.
- The sightlines into and out of the cart path tunnels are narrow and the high of the tunnel is low. Additional signage may be needed to address safety concerns.
- Sections of the cart path are located very close to the residential view fences.

- At grade road crossing of the cart path were noted. Additional safety signage should be placed in these locations.
- Trail rules and regulation signage has been installed along sections of the trail.
- Several social trails connecting the surrounding neighborhoods to the cart path were noted.
- Users are accessing the Preserve from the neighborhood social trails and the parking lots located at the former golf course club house and maintenance yard.
- A few "volunteer" mountain biking trails have been developed and mountain biking use was observed. Based on the conservation easement language, this is not a permitted use.
- The existing restrooms are currently under renovation.
- Portions of the existing irrigation system appear to have been damaged. Further information will be needed to determine if any of the system can be reused to establish future plantings throughout the Preserve.
- The former pond area was observed and based on community input, suggestions for this area include refilling with reuse water, filling with dirt, and/or creating a constructed wetland for wildlife habitat. A few dead trees were observed between the road and pond location.
- The former maintenance yard was observed, and it is recommended that this area, which is secured by walls and fencing, continue to be used to support future restoration and maintenance needs of the Preserve and Town operations. This area could also feature a trailhead.
- Bird feeders within the Preserve and adjacent to residents were observed in several locations.
- Clearing of portions of the Preserve adjacent to residents was observed in several locations.
- Site furniture, signage, real estate brochure boxes and accent lighting have been placed within the Preserve adjacent to residential areas.
- Invasive species and bermuda grass treatment and removal was observed at the driving range, fairways, tee boxes and greens. A sustainable phased revegetation plan that promotes habitat needs to be developed to address these areas.
- Based on the conservation easement language and our team's field observations, improvements to the site will need to address:
    A. The long-term protection of the sites ecological and cultural resources
    B. Providing education opportunities for a wide range of user groups that is inclusive of all ages
    C. Creating site-sensitive passive recreational attributes

End of Field Report

POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

Vistoso Trails Master Plan

ORO VALLEY ARIZONA
FOUNDED 1974

The Acorn Group

SITES
SOUTHWEST

OUR TEAM

SITES
SOUTHWEST

Sites Southwest was founded in 1997 in Albuquerque, New Mexico to provide clients throughout the Southwestern United States with planning, landscape architecture, and urban design services. We are an SBA-certified small business based in New Mexico with offices in Albuquerque, El Paso, and Bend, Oregon. We believe that great places are created by carefully and collaboratively integrating site, environment, and culture. We understand and value our region's diverse ecosystems, cultures, traditions, and environments. Our mission is to significantly improve the communities in which we work.

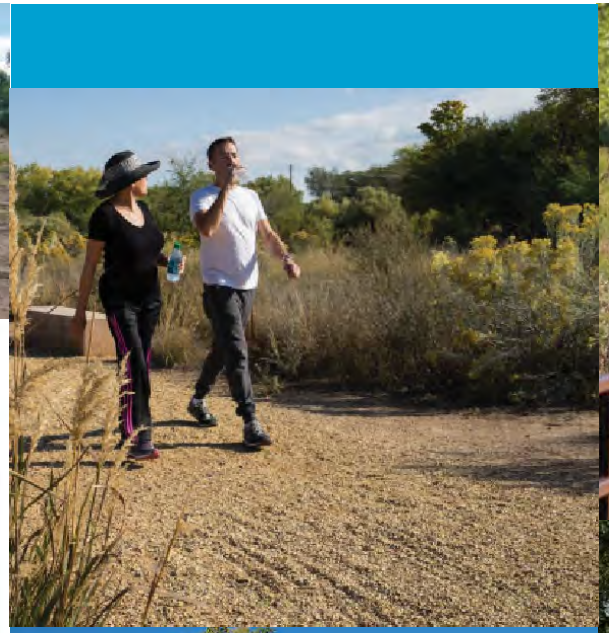
The Acorn Group

Blending the skills of planners, designers, and educators, The Acorn Group offers award-winning services in interpretive planning and design. Part art, part science and history, accented with storytelling and design, our interpretive master plans, exhibits, panels, and programs create sensory-rich experiences that bring content to life. Established in 1990 and nationally certified as a Woman Business Enterprise, The Acorn Group works with a range of clients from government agencies to private and non-profit institutions. Project sites include visitor centers, museums, public gardens, ecological reserves, parks, and educational institutions. Our greatest satisfaction comes from seeing plans and drawings become reality and watching visitors take delight in new experience.

Our Team's Relevant Project Experience

SITES SOUTHWEST

BACHECHI OPEN SPACE AND TRAIL MASTER PLAN



VALLE DE ORO MASTER PLAN

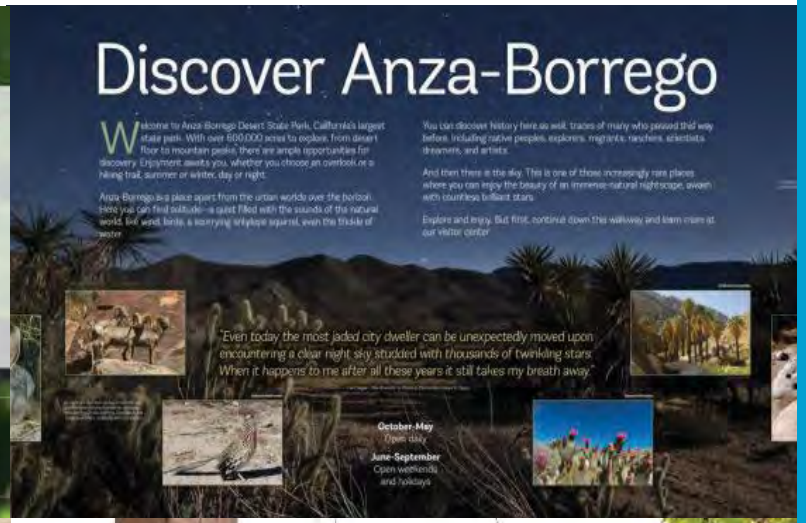
The refuge's goals include attracting waterfowl and other avian species to xeric and mesoxeric landscape habitats.

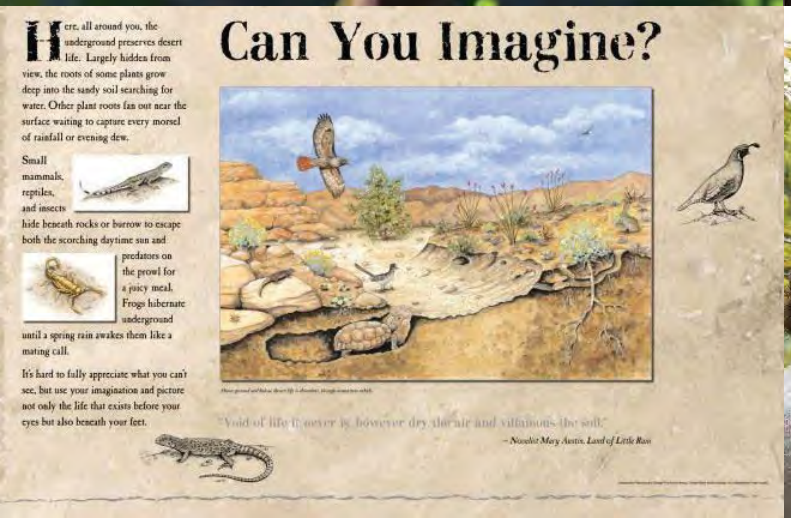
HIGH DESERT COMMUNITY

Sites Southwest received three awards for our work on High Desert, including the American Society of Landscape Architects' New Mexico Chapter's 2006 Design Award.

The Acorn Group

- Big Basin Redwood State Park
- Borrego Village Association
- Cabrillo Marine Aquarium
- Compton Creek Natural Area
- George F Canyon Nature Center
- North Carolina Botanical Garden
- Silver Creek Preserve
- Coral Mountain Discovery Park
- Anza-Borrego Desert State Park
- Holden Forests and Gardens





The Acorn Group's projects and efforts have been recognized nationally, receiving such awards as the Exhibit Design Award, Print and Media Award, and Interpretive Media Award by the National Association for Interpretation, Award of Excellence by the American Society of Landscape Architects, Best of Show by the Western Fairs Association, Award of Excellence by the California Parks and Recreation Society, and National Education Award by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

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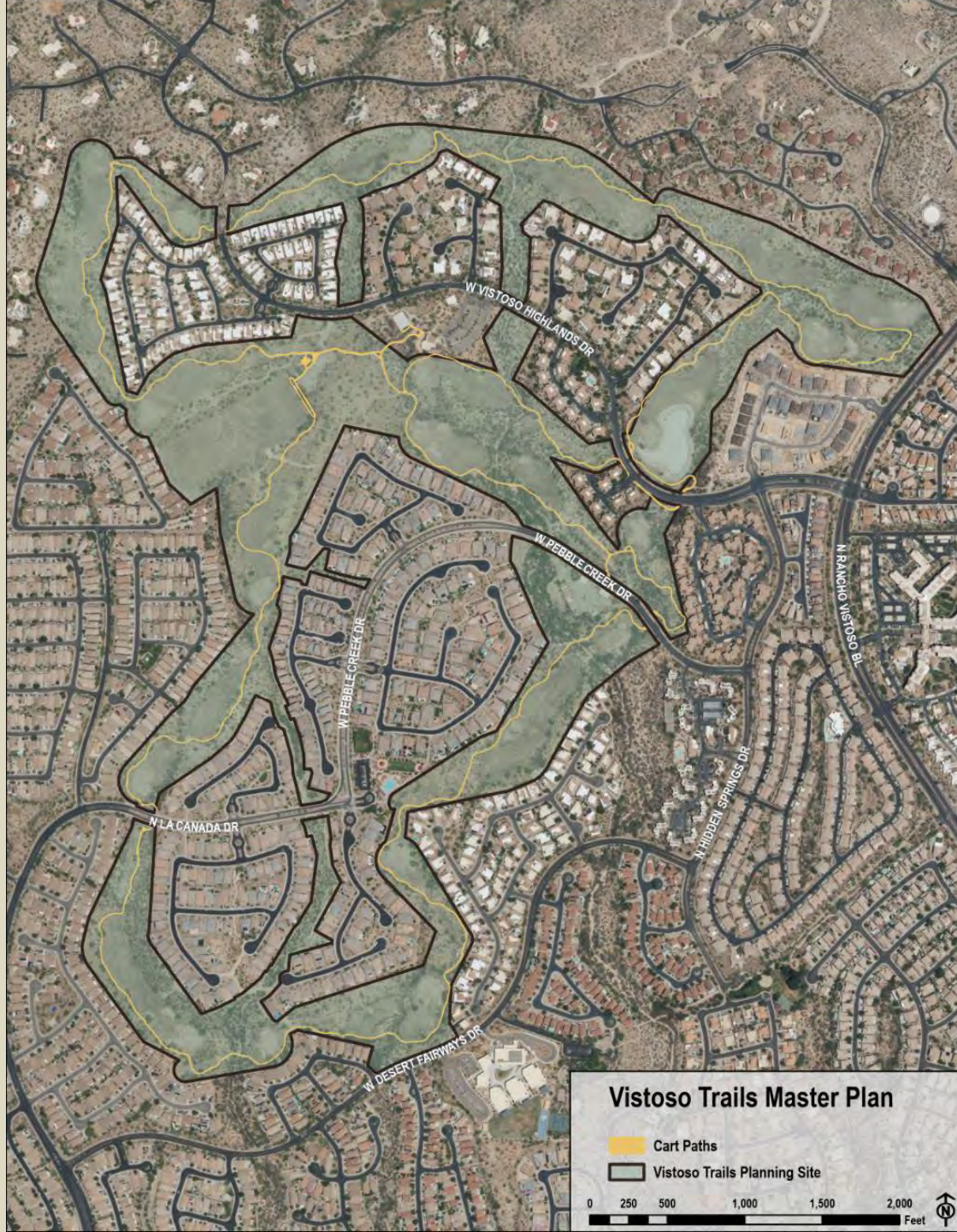

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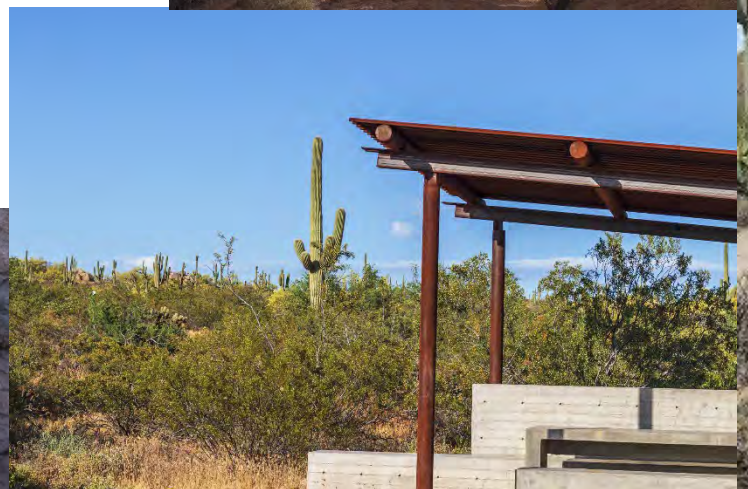

Next Steps

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Questions & Comments

For more information, contact:

Sites Southwest

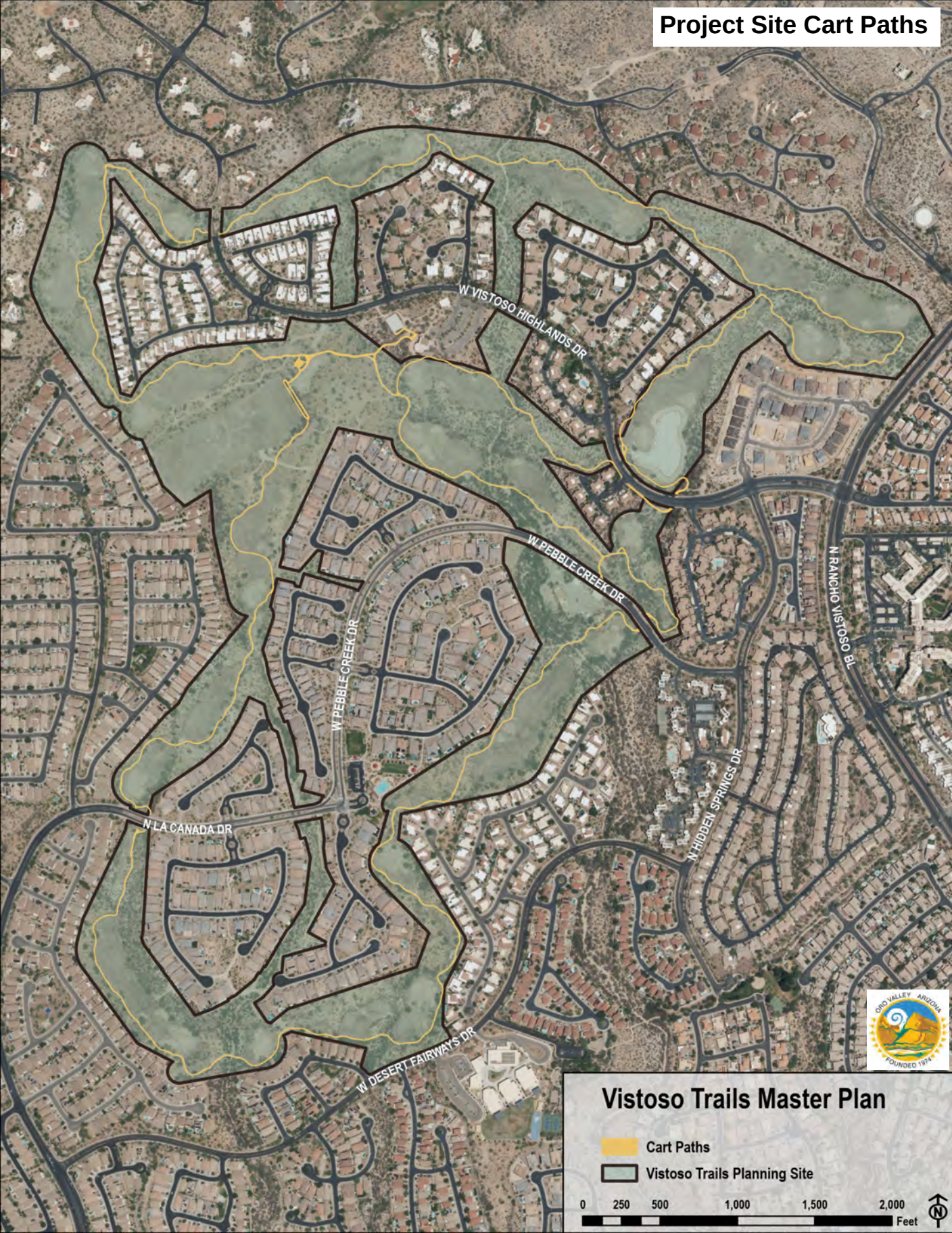
505.822-8200

lcole@sites-sw.com

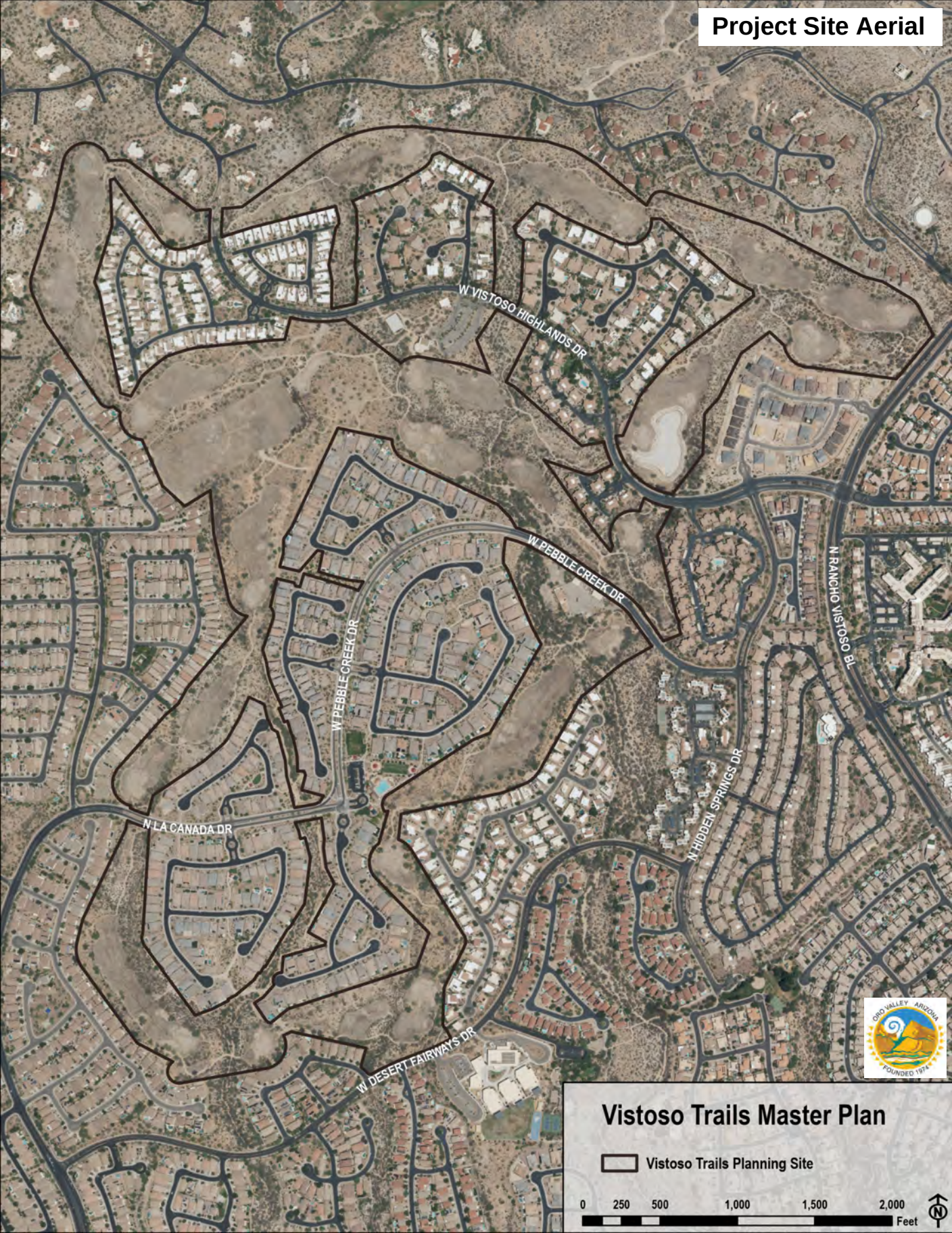
INITIAL BASE MAPS

Project Site Neighborhoods
Stone Canyon
Stone Canyon
Vistoso Highlands
Stonegate
Stone Village
Fairfield Rancho Vistoso
W VISTOSO HIGHLANDS DR
Vistoso Highlands
Golf Casitas I & II
Richmond at Vistoso Highlands
Siena
Summit North @CPV
W PEBBLE CREEK DR
The Pinnacle @CPV
Vistoso Resort Casitas
N RANCHO VISTOSO BL
Cortona
Desert Crest II @CPV
W PEBBLE CREEK DR
Monticello
Centerpointe Vistoso (CPV) Clubhouse & Pool
Hyatt Worldmark
N HIDDEN SPRINGS DR
Desert Crest I @CPV
Stonefield
N LA CANADA DR
Stone Terrace
The Cove @CPV
Summit South @CPV
Sommerset Canyon
W DESERT FAIRWAYS DR
Innovation Academy
Hohokam Park
Bella Vista
Torreno
ORO VALLEY ARIZONA FOUNDED 1974
Vistoso Trails Master Plan
Vistoso Trails Planning Site
0 250 500 1,000 1,500 2,000
Feet
N

Project Site Cart Paths

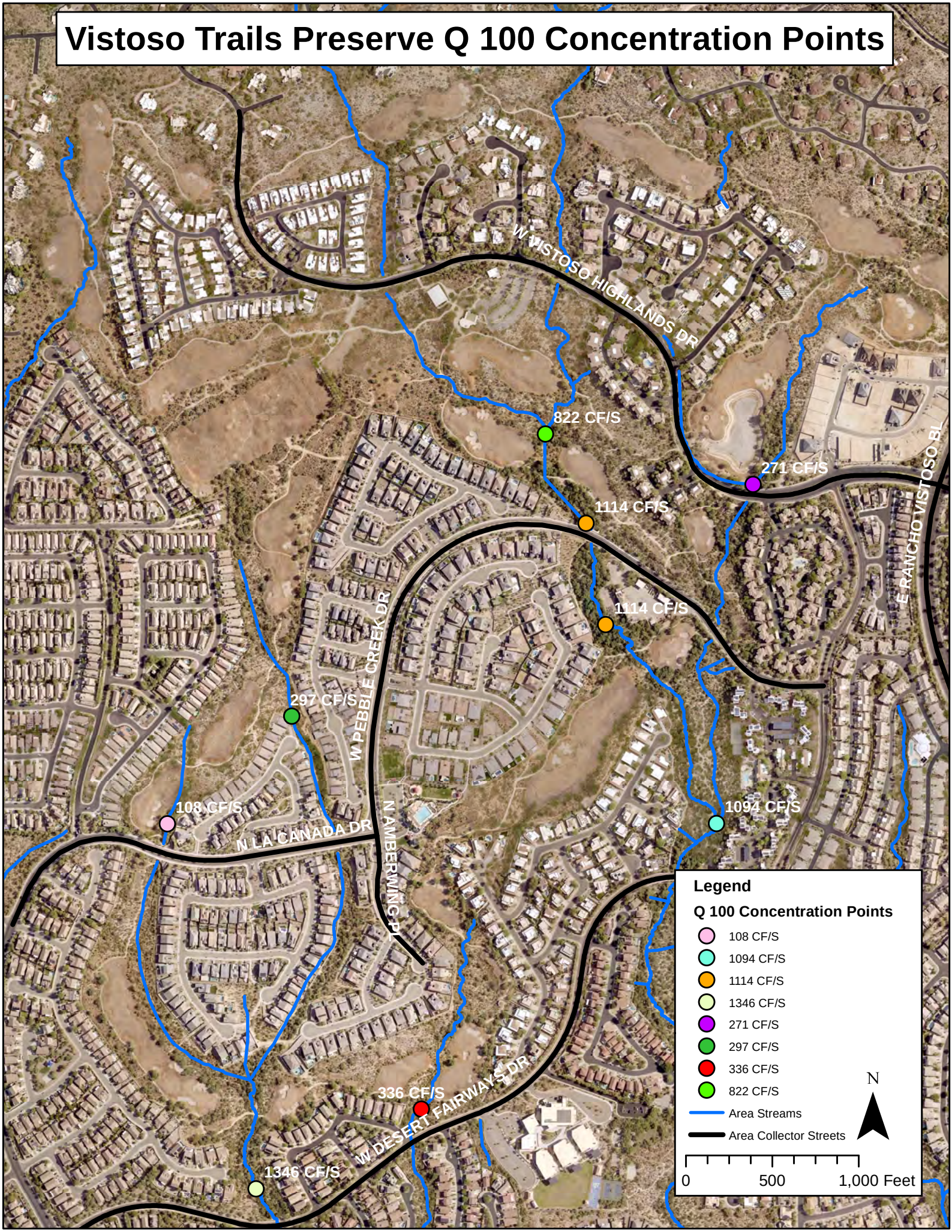


Project Site Aerial



Project Site Topography

Project Site Topography, Washes & Floodplain


Vistoso Trails Preserve Q 100 Concentration Points
W VISTOSO HIGHLANDS DR
822 CF/S
271 CF/S
E RANCHO VISTOSO BL
1114 CF/S
1114 CF/S
W PEBBLE CREEK DR
297 CF/S
108 CF/S
N LA CANADA DR
N AMBERWING PL
1094 CF/S
336 CF/S
W DESERT FAIRWAYS DR
1346 CF/S
Legend
Q 100 Concentration Points
108 CF/S
1094 CF/S
1114 CF/S
1346 CF/S
271 CF/S
297 CF/S
336 CF/S
822 CF/S
Area Streams
Area Collector Streets
N
0
500
1,000 Feet

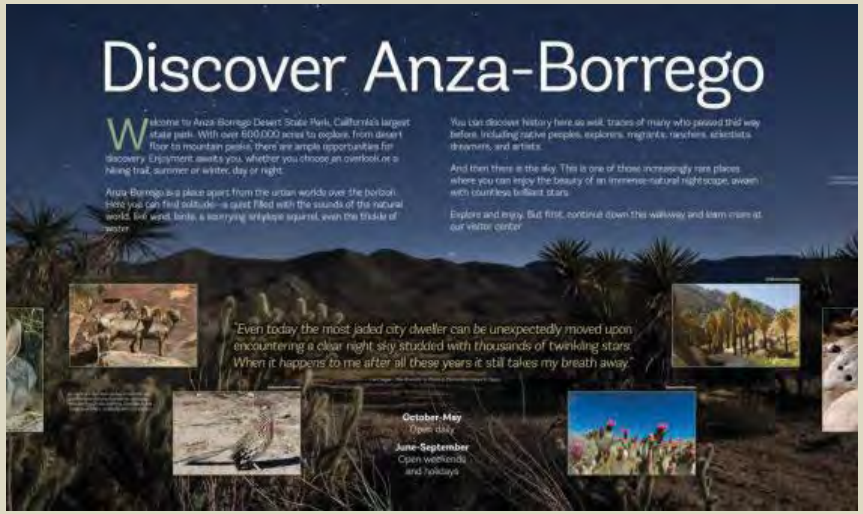
INITIAL IMAGE BOARDS

Vistoso Trails Master Plan

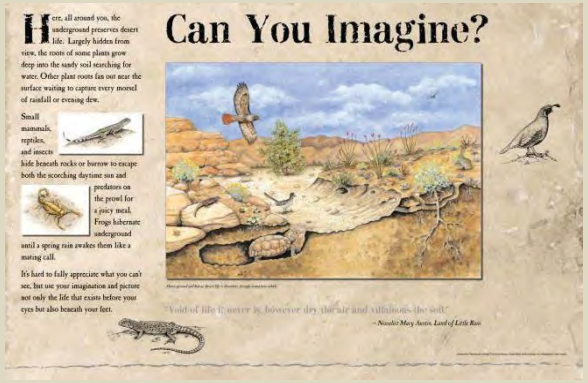
ORO VALLEY ARIZONA
FOUNDED 1974

The Acorn Group

SITES
SOUTHWEST


Discover Anza-Borrego
Welcome to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, California's largest state park. With over 600,000 acres to explore, from desert floor to mountain peaks, there are ample opportunities for discovery. Enjoyment awaits you, whether you choose an overlook or a hiking trail, summer or winter, day or night.
Anza-Borrego is a place apart from the urban worlds over the horizon. Here you can find solitude—a quiet filled with the sounds of the natural world: the wind, birds, a scurrying antelope squirrel, even the trickle of water.
You can discover history here as well, traces of many who passed this way before, including native peoples, explorers, migrants, ranchers, scientists, dreamers, and artists.
And then there is the sky. This is one of those increasingly rare places where you can enjoy the beauty of an immense natural night scape, awash with countless brilliant stars.
Explore and enjoy. But first, continue down this walkway and learn more at our visitor center.
"Even today the most jaded city dweller can be unexpectedly moved upon encountering a clear night sky studded with thousands of twinkling stars. When it happens to me after all these years it still takes my breath away."
October-May
Open daily
June-September
Open weekends and holidays

Scaling a tree


Can You Imagine?
Here, all around you, the underground preserves desert life. Largely hidden from view, the roots of some plants grow deep into the sandy soil searching for water. Other plant roots fan out near the surface waiting to capture every morsel of rainfall or evening dew.
Small mammals, reptiles, and insects hide beneath rocks or burrow to escape both the scorching daytime sun and predators on the prowl for a juicy meal. Frogs hibernate underground until a spring rain awakes them like a mating call.
It's hard to fully appreciate what you can't see, but use your imagination and picture not only the life that exists before your eyes but also beneath your feet.
"Void of life it never is, however dry the air and villainous the soil."
~Nicolet Mary Austin, Land of Little Rain

Alfalfa and a Fishing Pole

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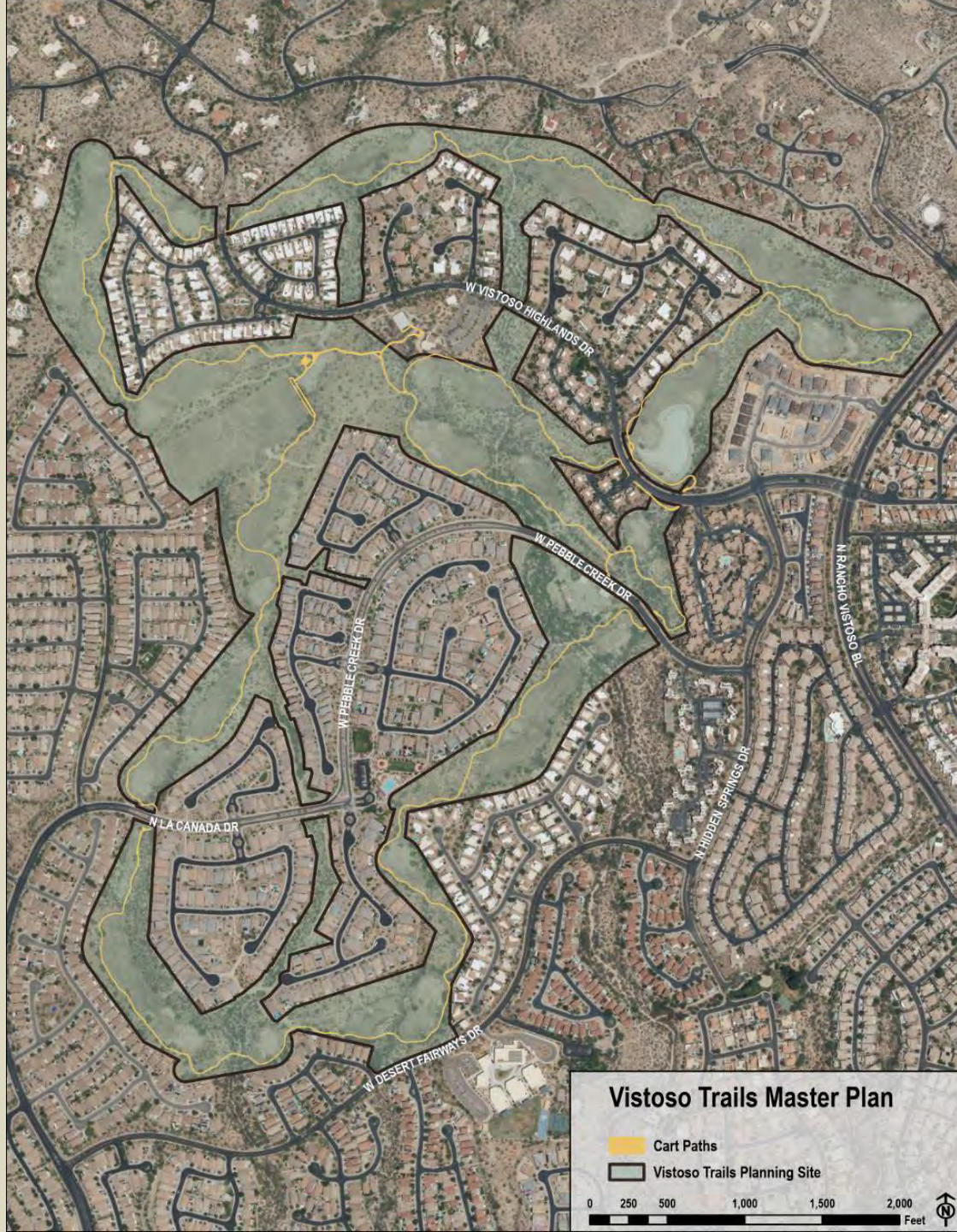

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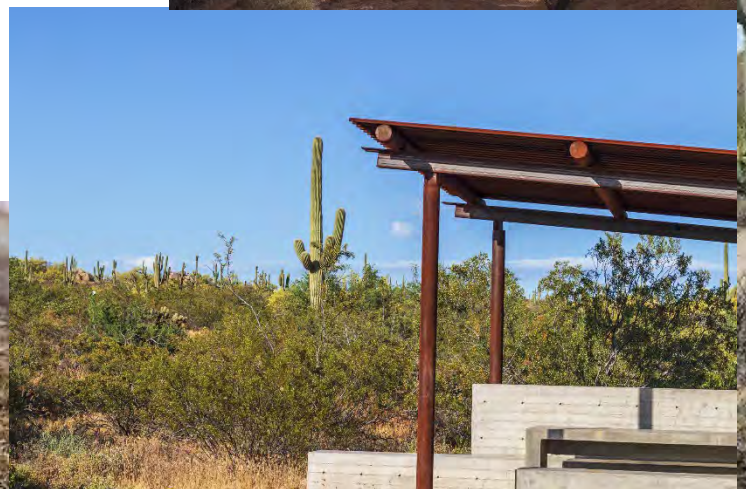

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