

STRATEGIC FACILITIES PLAN FOR PARKS AND RECREATION FOR THE TOWN OF ORO VALLEY

Since its founding in 1974, the Town of Oro Valley has planned, developed and built a number of recreation facilities for its residents. The Parks and Recreation Department has managed and maintained these Town facilities, and has continued to develop innovative programming that appeals to residents and visitors of all ages and abilities. The Department's core Mission Statement is "To enhance the quality of life for all Oro Valley residents by providing exceptional community facilities and programs for all ages."

Since its inception, Parks and Recreation has produced several reports to guide the development of parks and facilities within the Town, including the *Parks, Open Space and Trails Plan* (1999), the *Trails Task Force Report* (2002), the *Naranja Park Master Plan* (2002; updated in 2007), the *Steam Pump Ranch Master Plan* (2008) and participated in several regional plans, including the *Pima County River Parks Plan* (1996) and the *Eastern Pima County Trails Master Plan Update* (1989, 1996 and 2010). In addition, the goals and objectives of the Department relating to providing facilities and services to the public have been critical elements in the Town's General Plans and Strategic Plans.

However, as the Town continues to experience population growth and a shifting demographic base, it has become evident that an update to the Oro Valley Parks and Recreation Master Plan is needed. As a precursor to an updated Master Plan (which will begin in 2015), the Department was directed by the Town Council to present, in writing, the Town of Oro Valley's Parks and Recreation plans for its facilities in both the short-term and the long-term time periods. This report will present a solid foundation for the upcoming Parks and Recreation Master Plan, as well as providing information to Town leaders, staff, and residents about current parks and future needs for facilities. By working closely with the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB), the Parks and Recreation Department will be able to enhance and supplement the Town's recreation offerings to residents and visitors.

In the preparation of the Strategic Facilities Plan, the overarching Departmental Planning Philosophy has been: "to develop future plans which incorporate the community's values and needs while having the capacity to facilitate, promote, and enhance economic development and tourism as the Town grows."

DEFINITIONS – PARK TYPES

"Contemporary parks and open space planning focuses on creating systems that respond to local values, needs, and circumstances" (Steiner & Butler, 2012). In each system, these parks, open spaces, and other facilities are placed into distinct classifications that reflect their individual function as well as how the entire system can be seen as a whole to function collectively. The number and type of facilities within each classification can be utilized to evaluate the current inventory, in order to ensure a balance of facilities in terms of structure, as well as in order to meet the needs of residents within the existing and future financial restrictions and opportunities.

The typical classification of parks includes:

1. Traditional Parks

A. Neighborhood Parks: 2 to 15 acres with 1/2 mile user radius. These parks are the backbone of the park system in most communities. They serve a recreational and social purpose, with an emphasis on informal recreation. They may include such

facilities as play apparatus, multi-use courts, family picnic areas, and open space areas.

B. Community Parks: 15 – 40 acres with a 3-mile user radius. These parks are designed to provide centralized recreation facilities for a major portion of the Town with amenities capable of accommodating large groups, and including facilities such as tennis courts, multi-use courts, playing fields, and picnic areas, as well as perhaps preserving unique landscape features and open spaces. This type of park may also include a community center building.

C. Regional Parks and Park Preserves: 200-plus acres with a 5+ mile radius or a one (1) hour driving time. These parks may be very large in scope (several thousand acres) if they are dedicated solely to natural resource conservation. Regional parks generally have a large service area that may include several (or many) jurisdictions; these parks are generally associated with larger urban areas, and are utilized to meet large-scale community recreation needs.

E. Privately owned parks and recreation facilities - The size of these facilities varies, depending on ownership. Although they are privately owned, they still contribute to a community's parks facilities inventory, as they do offer recreational opportunities for some residents.

2. Specialized Fields and Centers

A. Youth Athletic Fields/Complexes – Size varies, with 20 acres or more being most desirable. These fields consolidate programmed youth athletic fields and facilities to fewer strategically located sites throughout a community. They may also include some neighborhood facilities.

B. Community Athletic Complex/Facility – may be as small as 20 acres, but over 80 acres in size is optimal. This consolidates both programmed adult and youth fields and facilities into a limited number of sites in the community, and may include tournament-level facilities.

3. Natural Open Space Parks – the size of these parks varies, depending on the type of landscape or feature that is to be preserved for the public, as well as the opportunities available from a budgetary perspective. These are primarily lands that are set aside for preserving natural resources, landscapes, and open space. Often these types of parks can feature some passive use parks amenities, such as benches or trails.

4. Special Use Parks – these parks fall into a “Special Use” category, which may also encompass facilities oriented toward single-purpose uses. This category may also include historical and nature parks, nature centers, campgrounds, and golf courses, as well as historic and cultural sites.

5. **Trails, multi-use trails, linear parks, trailheads** – these types of facilities offer different recreational opportunities for residents and thus vary in size. Trails can be of different surfaces and focused for varied users (hikers, mountain bikers, equestrian users). Multi-use trails and linear parks are often used for connecting a community, providing both recreational opportunities as well as for non-motorized transportation. Trailheads offer access to both rural and urban parks and trails, connect urban areas with recreational opportunities, and provide a focused gathering place.

CURRENT INVENTORY AND CONDITIONS IN ORO VALLEY PARKS

The Town of Oro Valley’s current parks inventory consists of the following facilities. A brief assessment of each facility’s current condition is also provided.

1. Traditional Parks

- A. **Neighborhood Parks** – The Town has two of these facilities at the present time. However, there are many privately owned and managed parks within the Town limits.
 1. **Greenock Park** (Figure 1) is a small park (4.76 acres) located adjacent to Oracle Road. It has several benches and an art component, and is used primarily as a trailhead. While there is plenty of parking for visitors, it is not paved and does not offer any other facilities such as restrooms. It also does not have any signage, and access to a nearby trail can be very tricky (and the trail is owned by a nearby Homeowner’s Association and Pima County Flood Control).
 2. **“Bosque” Park** (name has not yet been approved; shown in Figure 2) – a 1.76-acre park that was recently acquired as part of a development agreement. The park is located as part of the Encantada at Steam Pump Village apartment complex. It is a new, passive use park that contains a short trail segment, as well as benches. It does not have any restroom facilities, although some are located nearby. It provides an important access point to the CDO Shared Use Path.
- B. **Community Parks** – these parks have been the workhorses of the Oro Valley Parks system for years.
 1. **James D. Kriegh Park** (Figure 3) – This 19-acre park was the first park developed within the Town limits. It contains amenities such as baseball and softball fields, racquetball, a birding trail, a dog park, restrooms, ramadas and playgrounds. This park is heavily used throughout the year. The athletic fields are booked an average of 85-90% all year round; the ramadas are extremely busy in the cooler months. While the park has received upgrades within the past several years, including new shade structures and an accessible playground, it continues to need replacement

of aging infrastructure. Within the park limits is also located the Oro Valley Aquatic Center, a state-of-the-art facility that opened in 2013. In addition to offering regular programming, the Aquatic Center has been a revenue source and an economic driver for the Town by hosting high-profile swimming competitions.

2. **Canada del Oro (CDO) Riverfront Park** (Figure 4) – The 22-acre park is also an active-use park which features a basketball court, a tennis courts, a paved walking path, a performance stage, soccer and softball fields, an equestrian staging area, as well as restrooms, ramadas and playgrounds. Similar to James D. Kriegh Park, the fields and ramadas receive extensive use and are often completely booked, resulting in a complicated scheduling and reservation process to try to accommodate all potential users.

C. Regional Parks

1. **Naranja Park** (Figure 5) – This 213-acre park is the largest park to date in the Oro Valley system. In 2006, a Master Plan for the property was completed that included many different parks facilities, including a performing arts component as well as athletic fields. The bond to build the park as initially planned was rejected by the Town residents. Since that time, a trail system has been established, as well as three archery ranges. The Sonoran Desert Flyers also use the property for their temporary remote controlled airplane field. In 2014, construction on the park infrastructure for water and electrical systems was started with amenities to include two lighted multipurpose athletic fields, a dog park, and associated parking; these facilities are expected to open in early 2015. An update to the Naranja Park Master Plan will be completed in 2015 in conjunction with a survey of residents; the results of the study are expected to guide the future development of the park.

- D. Privately owned parks and recreation facilities – There are a multitude of privately owned parks and recreation facilities within the Town limits. These include small neighborhood parks that are owned and maintained by the Homeowner’s Associations, as well as several recreation centers that are available to residents in the Rancho Vistoso/Sun City area. In addition, there are several fitness centers within Town limits, both national chains as well as several with local ownership. Although these privately owned facilities are not owned or managed by the Town, they do offer residents other recreational opportunities. Most (if not all) require a membership fee or other qualifications to utilize their facilities or programs.

2. **Natural Open Space Parks**

1. **Honeybee Canyon Park** (Figure 6) is a 75-acre park located within the Rancho Vistoso area. Acquired several years ago from Pima County, the

passive-use park contains an extensive trail system, petroglyphs, as well as ramadas and restrooms. Trail signage is needed to improve the visitor experience at the park.

2. **West Lambert Lane Park** (Figure 7) is a 40-acre passive use park that features trails and a parking area only. There are no other amenities, including restrooms. The original plan for the park included the expansion of the park to the east, as well as the construction of several other tennis courts and associated facilities, but those plans were abandoned in a re-evaluation of the park in the last ten years.

3. **Special Use Parks – Steam Pump Ranch Historic Park** (Figure 8) is a 16-acre property that demonstrates the history of Oro Valley through the preservation of the historic Ranch and its associated facilities. Since being purchased by the Town, the property has undergone extensive cleanup and rehabilitation. It is used for Town special events such as festivals, as well as monthly Second Saturdays events that showcase the historic aspects of the Ranch in coordination with the weekly Farmer’s Market and other activities. While the property has received funding from the Town, Pima County, the state, and other grant resources, a substantial amount of funding is still needed to complete the vision of the Ranch as espoused by the Steam Pump Ranch Master Plan document. Currently, an update to the existing Steam Pump Ranch Master Plan is underway; and an updated Building Assessment of the Ranch structures, funded through a State Historic Preservation Office grant program, was completed in early 2015.

4. **Trails, multi-use trails, linear parks, and trailheads** (Figure 9) - Within the Town’s limits are 55 miles of trails, and 21 miles of shared use paths and linear parks. The Town’s shared use path system is a popular recreation facility, as users can travel from one end of Town to the other without encountering vehicular traffic. The system is planned to be extended into Catalina State Park, along Naranja Drive, and along Big Wash in the future. It is also scheduled to be connected to Pima County’s extensive Loop system in 2015.

The Town has three formal trailheads within the Town limits. The Linda Vista Trailhead provides access to the Pusch Ridge area of the Catalina Mountains. The equestrian trailhead in CDO Riverfront Park provides access for horses into the CDO Wash, but it is not frequently used. The Town also owns a trailhead parcel close to the Stone Canyon development at the north end of Town, but it has no legal access and is not expected to be a viable trailhead in the near future. Funding for improvements to the Linda Vista Trailhead and for access to the trailhead near Stone Canyon has been proposed for a potential future Pima County bond issue.

STRATEGIC FACILITIES DIRECTION

After analyzing the current facility inventory and its condition, the Parks and Recreation Department, in conjunction with the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board, has developed the following recommendations for the future growth and use of the Town’s parks and facilities. The Town’s Parks system met most of

the needs of the residents in the past, but the changing demographic mix within the Town has requested both additional facilities to supplement those already existing, as well as new facility types that are not currently available. The Department will strive to meet and exceed existing Town Zoning Code requirements for new Town-owned parks and amenities, including accessible facilities and equipment, connections to transit and other multimodal options, and sustainable infrastructure, while at the same time encouraging private park builders to do the same. The Department will continue to seek both Town funds as well as funds from other sources, including grants.

1. Traditional park facilities priorities:

A. Focus on constituent needs

The recent (Summer 2014) survey of residents that was conducted as part of the Naranja Park Plan Update process gathered opinions of needed recreation facilities for the Town in general, as well as Naranja Park specifically. Among the most requested amenities were: playgrounds/play structures; ramadas/picnic areas; paved walking paths; youth baseball and Little League fields; and indoor court facilities. In addition to the survey results, the requests of “power” user groups (frequent users) were solicited. The Department has been very responsive in addressing the immediate recreation needs of the community; in building the new multisport fields and dog park at Naranja Park, the Town responded to the many requests of park users and its own usage statistics and staff observation to establish these facilities.

B. Park amenities

Several of the existing parks need to have essential facilities constructed or rehabilitated. These include restrooms and signage, both of which are critical and enhance the user experience. The Department has been exploring the possibilities of more ecofriendly restroom facilities in order to lessen the impact on the environment as well as to provide a more aesthetically pleasing facility. Signage is a crucial component of park amenity upgrades. While several of the newer parks have interpretive signage, the majority of the parks do not. Directional and interpretive signage is needed at the remainder of the parks, and upgrades may be necessary for the existing signs. A comprehensive park signage plan should also be developed and included in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan in order to provide a consistent branding for all Town recreational facilities. All future amenities and facilities should meet or exceed the Town’s green infrastructure policies and goals for long-term environmental sustainability.

C. Consolidate large user groups

Currently, the use of the athletic fields within the Town’s two current active use parks (James D. Kriegh and CDO Riverfront) is fractured and puts added stress on users, as well as on the maintenance staff. For example, there are softball fields at both parks; a family with children of differing ages could be shuttling between two parks for both practices and games, making it extremely inconvenient. In addition, the maintenance requirements for the types of fields at both parks mean that often staff needs to make

changes such as moving outfield fences, and rotating fields to allow them to “rest.” These periods of non-field use often result in unhappy teams who are forced to practice or play their games elsewhere.

The Department will be implementing a dedicated consolidation plan for the fields in the parks that will cluster uses to maximize the uses and efficiency of the parks. Feedback from the community and from the power user groups of the parks has consistently stated the need for additional multisport fields (such as for soccer and lacrosse) within the Town. These fields are identified in the Naranja Park Programming & Conceptual Design update.

Once the improvements to Naranja Park are completed, fields at James D. Kriegh Park will be converted to Little League baseball fields. The structure of Little League baseball within the Oro Valley area has resulted in two separate leagues based on geography; the northern region (Oro Valley Little League) and the southern region (CDO Little League), but their practice and games facilities are often spread throughout the area. The plan for the fields at James D. Kriegh Park will allow CDO Little League baseball to consolidate in this area. In the future, additional Little League fields will be built at Naranja Park to accommodate the ballplayers from the Oro Valley Little League.

At CDO Riverfront Park, the soccer fields will be converted to softball fields; Naranja Park improvements will also include a Senior Softball field. The Town’s single heavily used tennis court may be converted to an additional basketball court with the potential acquisition of the El Conquistador Golf and Tennis resort property, which contains 31 additional tennis courts for public use.

While this consolidation plan for park uses will result in dedicated parks for certain types of activities, it is the goal of the Department to ensure that there is a net gain of fields during and after the transition, rather than a loss in capacity.

D. Use of National Standards

The Parks and Recreation Department will utilize existing National Recreation and Park Association standards for the provision of parks facilities (measured in acres per 1,000 residents) to assess the current Oro Valley park inventory. This analysis, in conjunction with GIS mapping of existing parks, will allow any gaps to be identified; this will also provide information for future targeted acquisition of parcels for parks.

2. Tourism Emphasis

In addition to its primary purpose of meeting the recreational and programming needs of its residents, the Town has placed an additional emphasis on tourism as a revenue source for the future. The Department must be cognizant of this additional focus in determining the mix of facilities for the future, as bed tax revenues play an integral part in providing funding for Departmental goals in the absence of a property tax on residents.

A. Sport tourism - Over the past few years, the Town has been successfully marketed as a destination for athletes. In addition to National events in Duathlon and Swimming, the

Town has hosted state and regional championships and events at its facilities, including the new Oro Valley Aquatic Center. Visit Tucson and the Oro Valley Chamber of Commerce continue to market the Town as a place to compete as well as a popular destination for bicycling and running training and events. In order to continue this trend, the Department will continue to maintain and rehabilitate (when needed) facilities that will ensure that the sports tourism base continues to grow. In addition, with the construction of additional fields and facilities at Naranja Park in the future and the possible acquisition of the El Conquistador facilities, it will be possible to attract more tournaments to the Town.

B. Historic and cultural – It is anticipated that, in the future, the Steam Pump Ranch site will be open to the public on a daily basis. Several partnerships have been discussed that may offer the Department the opportunity to improve the property and increase visitors. The Ranch is expected to become a revenue generator with more outside events such as weddings taking place; the property has already been utilized by several groups for festivals and smaller gatherings.

C. Eco-tourism – The Town’s scenic features can be used in the future as a marketing tool to attract visitors to the area. With the plethora of hiking and biking trails within the region, including in Catalina State Park, a greater emphasis should be placed on increasing the number of eco-tourists to the Town. The Department has made a significant start in this area by hosting the “Move Across” hiking challenge each year, which has attracted visitors from around the state to experience the beauty of the area.

3. Park Facility Acquisitions

The Town must continue to be vigilant in assessing the potential opportunities for the expansion of its park system. Many of these opportunities may appear in a manner which requires a timely response, such as in the case of new development plans or a property sale. Trail easements and bicycle facilities can often be obtained (including funding and building) by developers through the development review process. This process can also ensure that important connections are made between existing and future recreation facilities, as well as providing an opportunity for expansion of the existing system.

Assessment of possible acquisitions should evaluate several criteria, including location, access and amenities that may be provided. The location of a potential property should continue to balance the existing park system – several parks should not be clustered next to each other, but should provide more recreational opportunities for more residents. Careful consideration should be made in evaluating the current and future access of residents to all types of facilities – including HOA private parks, school and church recreational areas, and private facilities – in order to meet the nationally recommended park standards as well as to identify gaps in the Oro Valley park system. Figure 10 shows the location of the private parks located within Town limits.

Legal access to a potential property is needed to ensure viability - the trailhead near Stone Canyon is inaccessible to the public, therefore it is not a current asset to the

system. In addition to legal access, new facilities should be assessed for their ease of access by the public, through ensuring connections to transit, bicycling and pedestrian routes, and by providing adequate parking.

Amenities are critical in the acquisition of a property – providing a new and/or needed amenity adds additional value to the overall park system. Evaluating the physical, structural, and programming changes (and associated costs) that will be required before a facility or amenity can be used must be part of the careful screening process prior to any acquisition.

As part of the acquisition process, the Department should also consider the current and future needs of the community as obtained by statistically valid surveys or other opinion-gathering methods. While surveys may guide development and acquisition of parks and facilities in the near and short-term future, the community's needs and desires may change over time. Periodic surveys should be undertaken to ensure that the Department is meeting the needs of the community.

4. Collaboration and partnerships

A. Government and quasi-government groups - The Parks and Recreation Department has a solid history of working with other jurisdictions and government agencies to provide services to the residents. These include the collaboration with the Town of Marana and Catalina State Park for the MOVE Across event as well as using the Park for youth camps. These partnerships are crucial in utilizing scarce resources, as well as expanding the audience base for programs. The Department and the Town have also been fortunate to receive funding for programs and facilities from regional, state, and federal funding agencies to build facilities and establish programs. Although government funding has become rarer in the last few years, it is imperative that the Department continue to seek both outside funding and partnerships to leverage existing funding in providing services to residents.

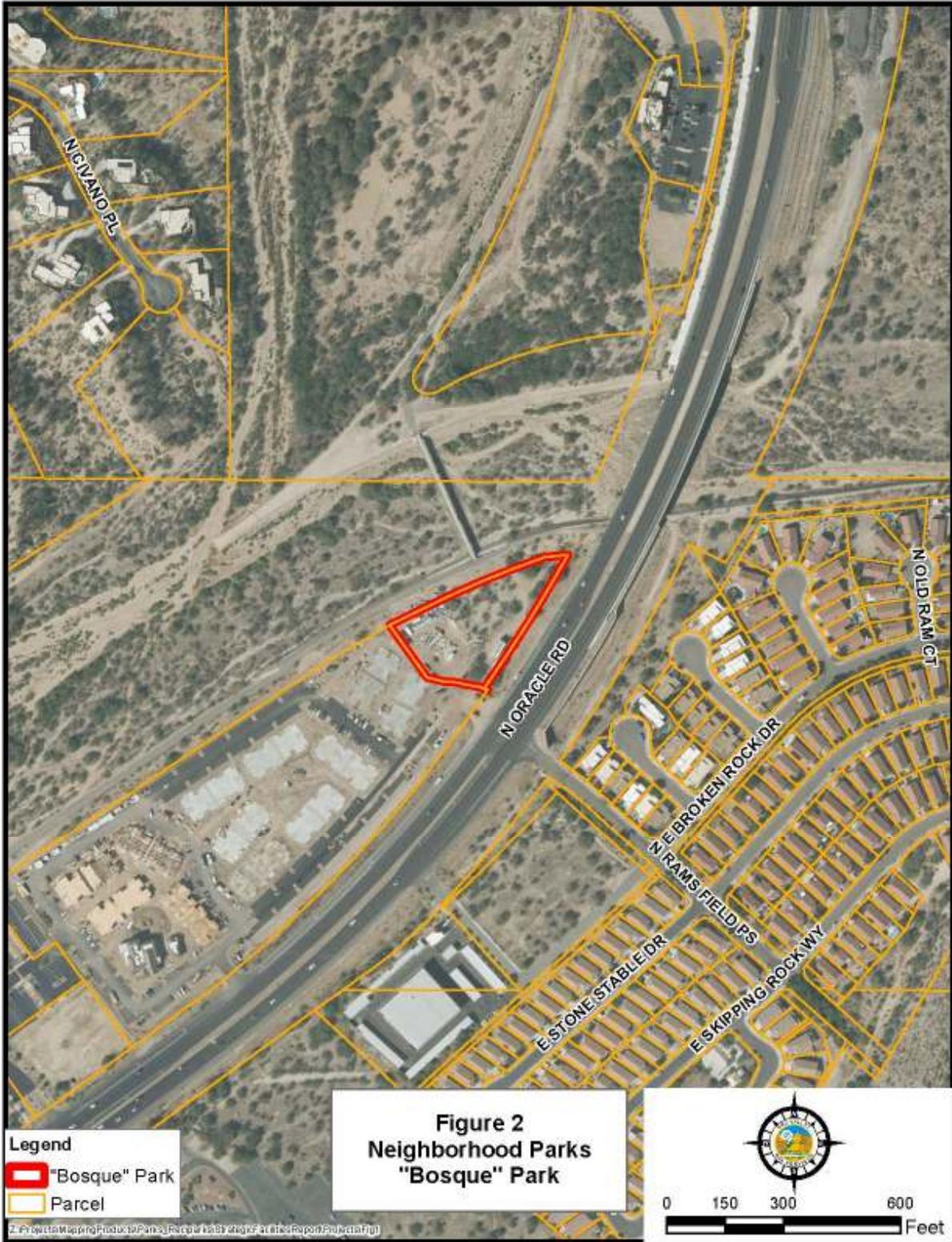
B. Non-profits - Non-profits can be an important source of funding through their programs for allocating sports funding and providing expertise in programming and for equipment purchases. However, their most important role may be as a partner in initiating new programs. The Oro Valley Historical Society has been instrumental in assisting with the Steam Pump Ranch property, conducting tours and educational sessions for the public, as well as offering other programs. The Pusch View Archers were instrumental in providing a grant for the archery ranges at Naranja Park, and members of the archery community offered their expertise for the development of the archery ranges.

C. Local organizations – Local organizations and businesses are often an overlooked resource. In conjunction with the Town's Economic Development Manager, the Department has been able to secure funding (cash or in-kind goods or services) from local businesses for special events and programs. Additionally, several businesses (such as Wal Mart) have made significant monetary contributions to the Parks and the Aquatic Center.

Summary

The Town of Oro Valley's Parks and Recreation Department, in conjunction with members of PRAB, developed this Strategic Facilities Plan to address the current and future recreation needs of its residents. These needs will be gathered through continued and regular feedback from residents, to include a statistically valid survey to be taken every five years. Through the careful consideration of residents, user groups, staff, and Town officials, it is anticipated that this plan will address the requirements of all users through a plan that emphasizes a net gain in facilities, while building capacity for tourism opportunities through the continued building of partnerships and funding relationships in the community.







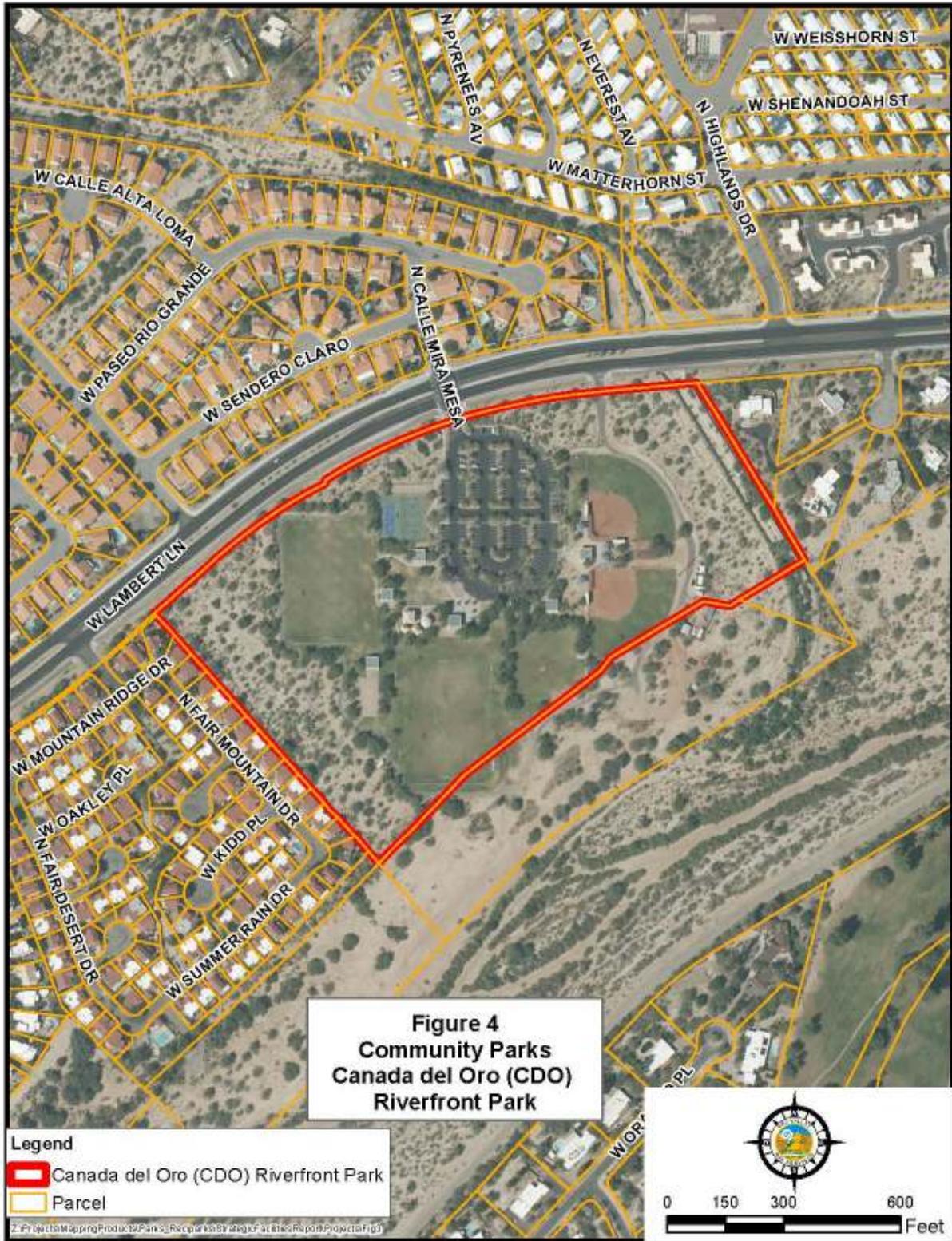
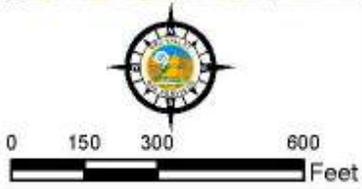


Figure 4
Community Parks
Canada del Oro (CDO)
Riverfront Park

Legend
 [Red Outline] Canada del Oro (CDO) Riverfront Park
 [Yellow Outline] Parcel



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