

# Memorandum

**Date:** December 5, 2006

**To:** Ron Cortez, Deputy County Executive Officer

**From:** Jason Stilwell, Parks Director

**Subject:** Comparison of the park facilities at Providence Landing and San Marcos Foothills

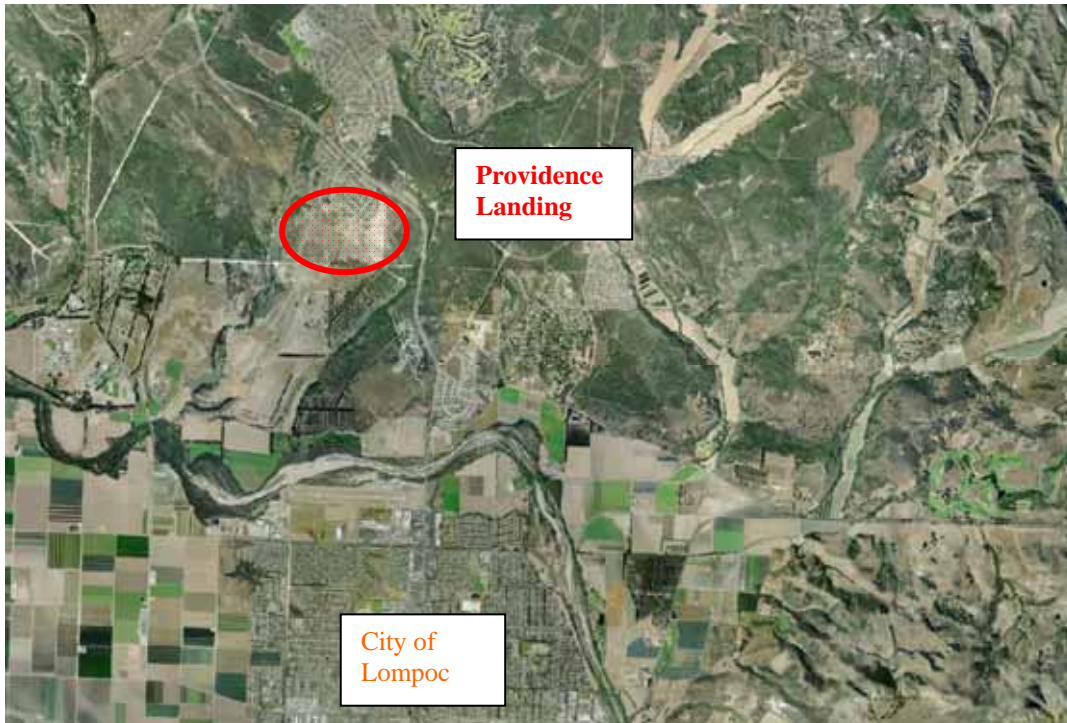
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Two new county parks are projected to be developed and operated by the County Parks Department. One is Providence Landing in Vandenberg Village. A second is a park projected in the San Marcos development on the South Coast foothills east of Highway 154. These parks were required as a condition of development for their respective residential development plans.

Both parks are part of new housing developments. This memo summarizes the history of the two parks, describes the policies that led to the county conditioning the parks, and explains how the park operations will be funded.

## Providence Landing



Prior to the Providence Landing housing development being submitted to the County for review, the Board adopted the Lompoc Land Use Guidelines in 1999 that included information and policy direction with regard to the lack of park, open space and recreational facilities in the unincorporated area. New projects were therefore encouraged to provide not only for their own park related impacts, but to address the community need. Comprehensive Planning worked with the developer of this large project at Providence Landing to craft a proposal meeting the new guidelines.

The project that emerged included an active park area that was viewed positively by the developer as he saw the concept as an amenity for his housing project. County Parks early on informed the developer and Comprehensive Planning that Parks did not provide for and was not set up to manage programmed recreation and that funding was not available to absorb the maintenance and operations burden of this new park. All recognized the need for the park and the amenity it would be for the community but the County was not equipped to fund or operate the park.

#### *Funding*

The developer and County agreed to pursue a special taxing district funding mechanism. A community facilities district (CFD) was created to fund operation of the new park. The CFD was specified as a condition of development approval. The developer was conditioned as part of the project approvals, to form a CFD that would assess all detached single family residences within the Providence Landing project for the cost to operate and maintain the park. CFD taxes were to be only assessed on the 267 market rate detached single family residences and not on the 61 affordable housing units (duplex, triplex and fourplex units). The County Executive Office worked with the developer, County Counsel and the Parks Department to implement the condition.

The Parks Department submitted a budget to the County Executive Office based on what Parks projected the annual maintenance cost of the proposed park to be. The original budget was approximately \$347,000 to operate and maintain the new park on an annual basis. This amount included a provision for a contingency and an insurance premium for a park operator (as an operator other than the County likely would not be under the governmental immunity umbrella). That amount translated to a maximum of \$1,358 per unit per year in added property taxes. The Board of Supervisors created the CFD on January 11, 2005 with the annual amount of \$1,358 set as a cap. At that time, the Board requested that staff revisit the cost assumptions in the CFD and come back with some refined numbers.

Based on staff's additional review and analysis, the park maintenance, utilities, and administrative costs were revised downward to approximately \$244,000 in March 2005. The revised cost estimates resulted in a reduction of the per parcel fee assessed to each homeowner from \$1,358/parcel to \$913/parcel, which the Board approved on July 12, 2005. In addition, on June 6, 2006, the Board took action to further reduce the per unit fee by allocating \$75,000 from General Fund Contingency. This effectively reduced the fee from \$913/parcel to \$632/parcel. However, the final fee the Board approved on July 25, 2006 was \$672/parcel due to some final developer and County-funded adjustments required to cover administrative costs.

### *Operation*

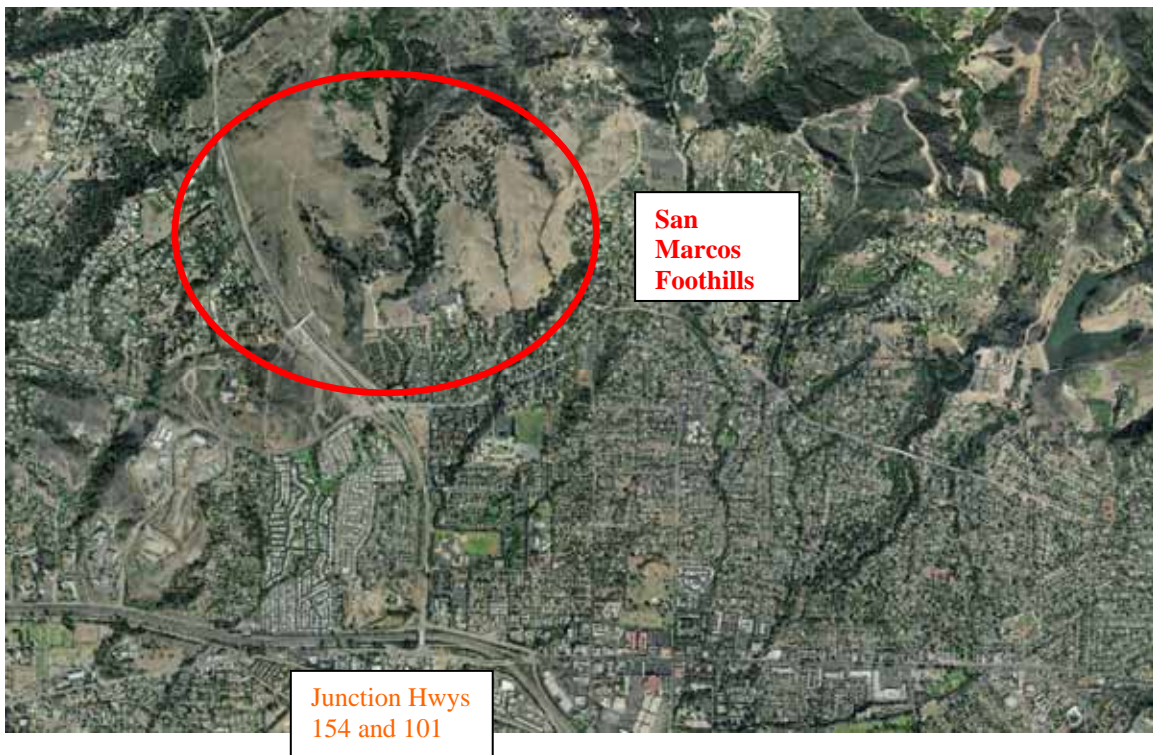
The developer and County Parks began conversations with the Lompoc Valley YMCA to see if they would be interested in being the management entity for the new park. Subsequently, the Parks Department entered into an agreement with the YMCA to operate the park. The park is an active recreation park heavily programmed and conditioned to provide a 12 acre park with the following features:

- Three little league baseball fields, including backstops, player and spectator seating.
- One multi-purpose field for soccer, football, etc.
- One level concrete area suitable for basketball, volleyball, in-line skating and roller hockey.
- One 1,028 square foot concession stand with public restroom, office and equipment storage for the park operator.
- Parking for 118 automobiles.
- An emergency landing area for Fire Department helicopters located on one of the baseball fields.
- Other park improvements such as walkways, drinking fountains, playground equipment, picnic tables, etc.

County Parks has not provided recreation services directly. The agreement with the YMCA allows the County to partner with an organization that has recreation programming expertise and provides the YMCA the opportunity to be intimately involved in the maintenance of the facilities they will utilize for their programming.

The park is currently under construction by the developer and will be accepted by County Parks when it is complete and ready for public use (likely within four months of the date of this memorandum).

### **San Marcos Foothills**



The Preserve at San Marcos consists of a proposed housing project on 177 acres. The total site is 377 acres. There is a 200 acre open space remainder parcel of the property that is not a part of the development proposal. The housing development proposal consists of 15 lots for single family market rate homes and one lot with a five unit attached affordable housing component. The development proposal also includes 3 parcels consisting of 12 acres to be dedicated to the County for park purposes, one private open space parcel of 20 acres and two additional open space parcels of 5+ acres of open space dedicated for hang glider use.

The Preserve at San Marcos county park area was a developer proposed amenity included in the development plan as part of the initial project submittal. The developer stated that he recognized that there had been use of the property by the public for recreation purposes in the past and he wanted to continue to provide the public with the opportunity to use a portion of the land. Therefore, the developer included in the project an offer to dedicate to the County twelve acres of land for future park use. No development of the property was offered by the developer, only the land dedication. The County would be responsible for any future park development of the property.

The developer did agree to include a conceptual park plan in the environmental impact report (EIR) for the purposes of environmental review of the park site. County parks and the project consultants collaborated on a design, only for the purposes of environmental review, that County Parks foresaw as potential full build-out of the park. The potential full build out for a passive park identified in the EIR might include group and individual picnic areas, a parking area, trails and a trail kiosk, a tot/child play area, a turf play area, a natural form gathering space for classes and similar activities, a viewing area/gazebo site, and other park amenities such as trash cans, drinking fountains, etc. Actual development of the park would entail a community master plan process with public meetings to determine actual uses, facilities and layout of the park.

#### *Funding*

Funding of the park master plan and park construction could come from accumulated park mitigation funds for the area, grants and state park bonds, or a general fund contribution. Ongoing maintenance revenue sources have not been identified. Costs are estimated to be less than \$100,000 annually depending on the type of park constructed. Even though both Providence Landing and the park at San Marcos Foothills are approximately the same size, there is no proposal to have the park at San Marcos include active recreation and the associated increased costs of maintaining active fields.

A CFD was not considered for this project due to the Board of Supervisors' policies and the fact that the development proposes only a small number of homes. Potential funding sources considered for ongoing operational costs are County Service Area 3 and the general fund.

#### *Open Space*

The project proposed that the 200 acre remainder parcel was to be dedicated to an entity that would keep this most sensitive area of the site in perpetual open space. The Trust for Public Land (TPL) was to act as the intermediary to receive the remainder parcel and to then transfer ownership to an agency or non-profit that would commit to be the stewards of this land. The proposal was for land dedication only and no maintenance provision is

proposed by the developer. The remainder parcel would be maintained as open space with trails and access for trail use coming from the twelve acre County Park.

TPL requested meetings with the County to determine the best long term stewardship plan for the remainder open space parcel. It became evident TPL concluded there were only a few viable entities to assume this role and that they viewed County Parks as a strong candidate.

Current timeline projections are that TPL desires to quickly transfer the parcel to the long term holder and that TPL may receive the parcel prior to the end of calendar year 2006. I was concerned that if the transfer were to occur and the Board of Supervisors accepted the transfer that County Parks would not have sufficient funding to maintain the 200 acres. Per acre maintenance costs would be low but trail, weed abatement, and fire fuel reduction costs mount for a 200 acre parcel.

As such, the Parks Department worked with the County Executive Office to bring a budget expansion request to the Board in the amount of \$50,000 that, in my mind, gave an early indication of the Board's potential to accept the parcel and dedicated funding in the event the parcel is required to be maintained by County Parks. The Board approved this expansion request on October 24, 2006.