

CHAPTER 5: PARKS AND OPEN SPACE



NORTHWEST SPECIFIC PLAN
CITY OF SAN RAMON

CHAPTER 5: PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Open space, both active and passive, is a key feature of the Northwest Specific Plan, and serves as a framework for the land use patterns within the Plan Area. The Plan Area will contain parks and open space areas as essential components of its design framework. Each land use within the Plan Area will be oriented around open space and/or parks, and will be inter-connected via a combination of trails and roadways. The parks and open space system (illustrated in Figure 5-1) offers a variety of parks, playfields, open space, and conservation areas that fulfill a variety of neighborhood and community needs, as well as resource protection and education objectives.

The City of San Ramon General Plan contains policies that require that at least 75% of the Plan Area is designated for non-residential uses, including schools, parks, common and public open space uses, ownership and maintenance of public and private open space, and design of open amenities such as staging areas, trails, and connections. The Land Use Program for the Plan, as detailed in Chapter 2 (Land Use), includes approximately 88-acres of residential development and 265-acres of non-residential development and permanent open space (for a ratio of 75% of non-residential development in the Plan Area).

The eastern portion of the Plan Area provides approximately 72-acres of residential development with approximately 218-acres of non-residential and permanent open space (including common open space and Geologic Hazard Abatement District (GHAD) areas within neighborhoods); in compliance with the 75/25 General Plan Open Space and Conservation Element development ratio. In addition, the developers of the eastern portion of the Plan Area will provide an additional 144-acres of adjacent off-site permanent open space, in order to achieve a total open space ratio of 80/20 (illustrated in Figure 5-2). The western portion of the Plan Area includes approximately 16-acres of residential development, with a corresponding 47.5-acres of open space, also in compliance with the General Plan's development ratio of 75/25.



The parks and open space system offers a variety of parks, playfields, open space, and conservation areas that fulfill a variety of neighborhood and community needs

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

The following goals, objectives, and policies have been established to guide the implementation of the Northwest Specific Plan Area's open space and parks system.

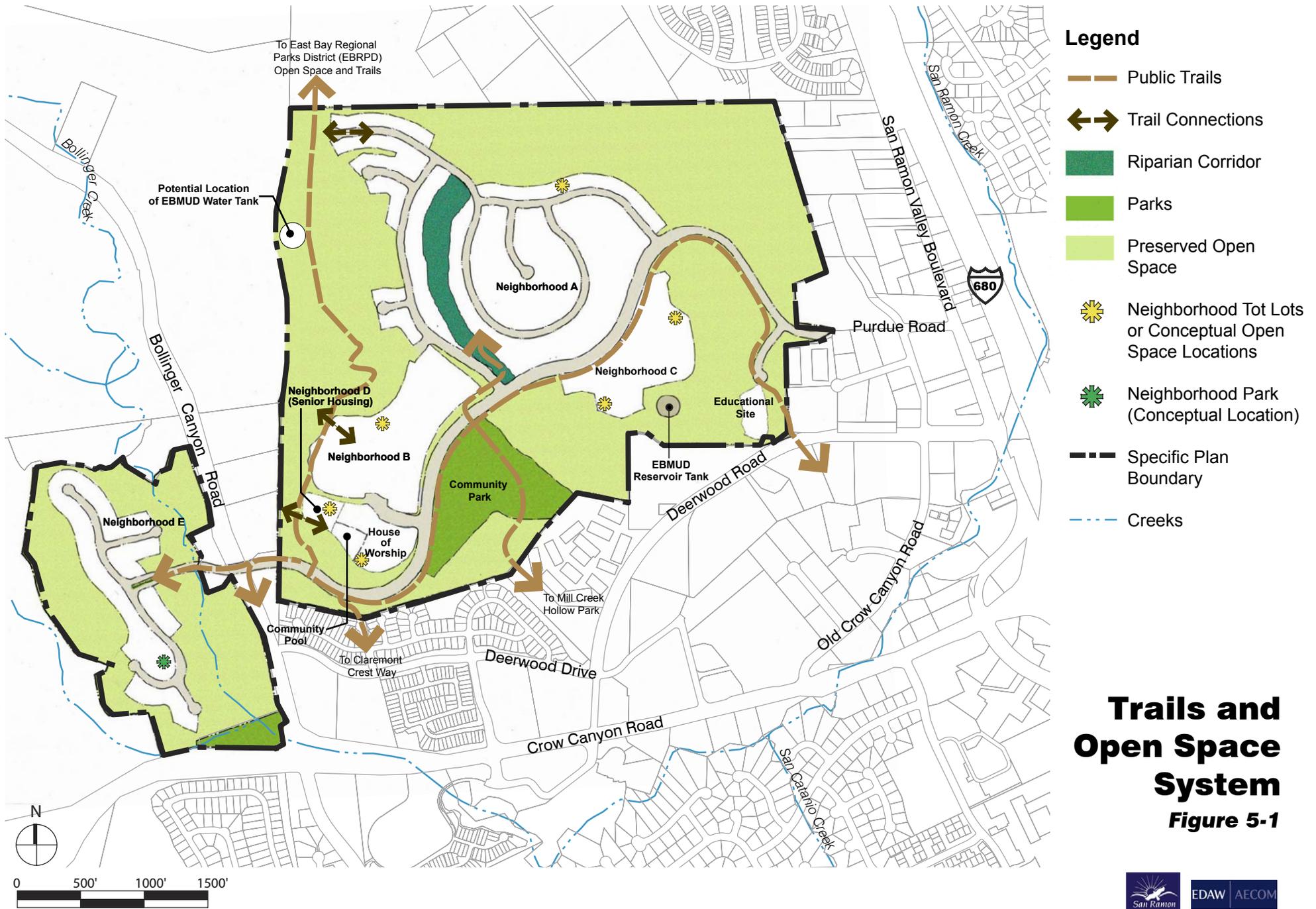
GOAL 1. An open space and park system that is compatible with and sensitive to the natural environment and surrounding resources, provides active and passive recreational facilities, functions as a prominent aesthetic resource, provides links to a greater regional park and open space network, where frequent use is encouraged through location, accessibility and amenities.

Preservation of Natural Resources

Objective A: Orient land uses around sensitive resource areas, ensuring preservation of vegetation, open space, natural resources, and significant topographic features.

Policies:

1. No development, or grading for development, shall occur within major ridgeline protection zones, unless as demonstrated as an exception in the General Plan (General Plan Figure 8-3).
2. Protect existing oak woodlands outside of identified development areas, and provide for replacement of effected oak woodland habitat, in accordance with Figure 5-1.
3. Preserve Bollinger Creek and the surrounding riparian corridor. Development shall not occur within 100' of the centerline of Bollinger Creek.
4. Require a maintenance program, such as a GHAD, Landscape Overlay, Homeowners' Association (HOA), or combination of the above for protected open space areas, including ridges, riparian corridors, Bollinger Creek, replantings and other natural resources.
5. The enhanced riparian and wildlife corridor located within the portion of the Plan Area east of Bollinger Canyon Road shall be improved and maintained as a passive open space amenity, with an average overall width of not less than 200 feet, as conceptually shown in Figure 5-1 and detailed in Figure 7 of the Biological Assessment (included as Appendix A).





Balance of Development and Open Space

Objective B: Maintain a balance of residential development, non-residential development, and passive and active open space within the Plan Area.

Policies:

1. Ensure that at least 75% of the Plan Area is designated for non-residential development or open space, as per the requirements in the City of San Ramon General Plan.

Community Park Facilities to Meet a Variety of Needs

Objective C: Provide park facilities that meet the needs of the residents of the Plan Area and surrounding communities for a variety of passive and active recreational facilities.

Policies:

1. Develop and dedicate an approximately 12.7-acre community park as a turnkey facility, with a variety of recreational facilities to provide passive and active recreational opportunities.
2. Ensure that the community park is connected to adjacent land use areas by either sidewalks or trails.
3. Provide a pedestrian connection via a dedicated easement from the community park to Mill Creek Hollow Park, south of the Plan Area.
4. Provide common open space areas integrated with residential development to support both active and passive open space uses.
5. Provide a neighborhood park (approximately 2-acres) within the western portion of the Plan Area.

Open Space Management and Maintenance

Objective D: Develop Open Space Management Plans to ensure funding methods for ongoing maintenance and operations for public and private open space in the Plan Area, including trails facilities.

There are several options for open space management within the Plan Area, including developing a GHAD or other special assessment district, establishing a HOA, or arranging a partnership with the EBRPD and/or the City of San Ramon. A combination of ownership and maintenance could also occur. The options and requirements for Open Space Management Plans are discussed further in the Implementation Chapter.

Policies:

1. Develop and implement an Open Space Management Plan, as part of the entitlement processes for future development applications within the Plan Area. An Open Space Management Plan will specify ongoing funding mechanisms for open space management, ownership patterns, and responsibilities for maintenance.

OPEN SPACE AND RESOURCE PROTECTION AREAS

There are several primary organizing components of the open space system within the Plan Area, including the riparian corridor, preservation of major ridgelines, and significant open space areas surrounding the residential neighborhoods. Additionally, the open space areas within the Plan Area will be linked via a trail system to regional open space areas.

Riparian and Wildlife Corridor

The Land Use Plan delineates an approximately 8.9-acre corridor in the western portion of the Faria property as an area that should be protected, and maintained as a riparian corridor.

After reconstruction, no development, grading, or construction is permitted within the corridor, with the exception of perimeter fencing and drainage facilities, including water quality and detention ponds as needed to provide wetland habitat and help control drainage.

As conceptually illustrated in the accompanying graphic, the riparian and wildlife corridor will include a meandering riparian drainage swale and a series of small wetland habitat areas and connecting ponds. The ponds will help to support adjoining wetland areas support wildlife movement, and enhance the planned storm water filtration system, while the corridor will connect major on- and off-site open space areas to the north of Neighborhood A, with the community park and additional open space to the south, as well as existing Mill Creek Hollow Park further to the south.

The average overall width of the riparian and wildlife corridor shall be a minimum of 200 feet. The planned facilities are to be improved and maintained in accordance with a Biological Assessment to be approved by the Army Corps of Engineers, which is included as an appendix to this document (Appendix A).



Artist's rendering of reconstructed riparian and wildlife corridor within Neighborhood A

Protection of Major Ridgelines

The General Plan Open Space and Conservation Element and the RCOD contain policies and standards for the protection of Major and Minor Ridgelines, and limit where grading and development may take place within the planning area.

Ordinance 197 was adopted by the City in 1990 and incorporated certain RCOD policies into the City's prior General Plan. It also extended the RCOD to cover a greater area in the City, including land that is above 500 feet in elevation. Ordinance 197 restricts development adjacent to ridgelines, on steep slopes, and along creek corridors, and it is designed to maintain an environmental balance consistent with the existing vegetation, soils, geology, slopes, and drainage pattern.

In 2002, San Ramon voters approved a new General Plan, which included certain exceptions to the RCOD policies for the Plan Area. Specifically, the voter approved General Plan expressly provided that portions of two of the three major ridgelines within the Plan Area may be altered by grading, and that housing and other community facilities may be developed on these and other areas, which include slopes that exceed 20%, to meet the goals and objectives of the General Plan for the Plan Area. (Gen. Plan Fig. 8-3, "Ridgelines, Viewsheds, and Resource Conservation Zone").

Residential Neighborhoods Integrated with Open Space

As detailed in Chapter 2 (Land Use), the Plan's land use program includes five distinct residential neighborhoods organized around an open space system, which is designed to preserve natural resources and create accessible and functional community open space amenities. The intent of the open space system is to maintain natural resources, and create a high-quality environment through the inclusion of a community park, an educational site, a house of worship, and a passive open space system with trails, and a riparian/wildlife corridor.



View of the offsite preservation area

The Plan's open space system extends beyond the Plan Area's boundaries, with the permanent preservation of open space within the Bollinger Canyon Subarea. This area consists of approximately 144-acres of additional off-site open space adjacent to the Plan Area, to be protected through recordation of a conservation easement. When added to the on-site open space preserved within the eastern portion of the Plan Area (the Faria property), these additional 144-

acres will increase the ratio of open space to residential development area for the Faria property to 80/20 (using the 2-acres of off-site open space equivalency to 1-acre of on-site open space standard as outlined in the General Plan Open Space and Conservation Element).

Linkages to Regional Open Space Resources

Another characteristic of the Plan Area is linkages to regional open space resources through a public trail system. Within the Plan Area, a public trail system is proposed to be fully developed and improved to City or EBRPD standards. The proposed trail system follows the major roadway connecting all neighborhoods to the Plan Area's community facilities, and eventually leads to the existing Mill Creek Hollow Neighborhood Park immediately to the south. Additionally, the proposed trail system is planned to serve as a regional trail link, running north-south along the ridgeline directly east of Bollinger Canyon Road, and to the adjoining EBRPD open space area to the north of the Plan Area.

EBRPD owns and maintains several areas in the vicinity of the Plan Area, including the Las Trampas Regional Wilderness, the Bishop Ranch Open Space area, and several parcels located north of the Specific Plan Area which EBRPD is in the process of acquiring to create a connection to Las Trampas. Integrated within these preserved open space areas are the existing Iron Horse Trail running parallel to San Ramon Valley Boulevard and I-680, the Las Trampas Ridge Trail within the Las Trampas Regional Wilderness, the Calavaras Ridge Trail, and future trail connections planned by EBRPD. The public trails system proposed for the Plan Area will supplement these existing regional trails with new connections to the surrounding regional open space amenities that offer a variety of recreational opportunities such as hiking and equestrian riding.



The Las Trampas Ridge Trail is accessible to the Plan area through a network of public trails

PARK FACILITIES

Several different types of active and passive recreational opportunities will be developed within the Plan Area, including a community park, a rose garden, an extensive trail system, the passive riparian and wildlife corridor, a tot lot, and interconnecting open space areas within the residential neighborhoods.

Community Park

As previously discussed, an approximately 12.7-acre community park is planned for the southern portion of the Plan Area, east of Bollinger Canyon Road, to be developed as a turnkey facility. The park is intended to provide a range of recreation opportunities for the residents of the neighborhoods within the Plan Area, as well as visitors to the area and residents of the community. The community park is envisioned as a series of terraces, gently stepping down the slope to provide flat, usable recreational areas. The park is surrounded by open space areas to the south and to the northeast, and is located across the roadway from Neighborhood B, and the house of worship.

The community park is envisioned to include facilities such as soccer and baseball fields with sloping areas for spectators, large grassy areas, a community services/maintenance building, picnic areas, a tot lot, an amphitheater, and parking facilities.

Pedestrian access is a key element of the community park design. A pedestrian crossing will be provided near the southwest corner of the park, to connect the site to nearby residential uses, the house of worship, and Mill Creek Hollow Park. The park entry will be located on the main internal access road through the Plan Area, and the entry way will be landscaped in a manner that is consistent with the residential development within the Plan Area. Parking areas will be located adjacent to the main internal roadway. The accompanying graphic illustrates a conceptual plan for the community park.



The community park is envisioned to include facilities such as soccer and baseball fields



Artist's rendering of the community park facility (Source: David Gates and Associates)

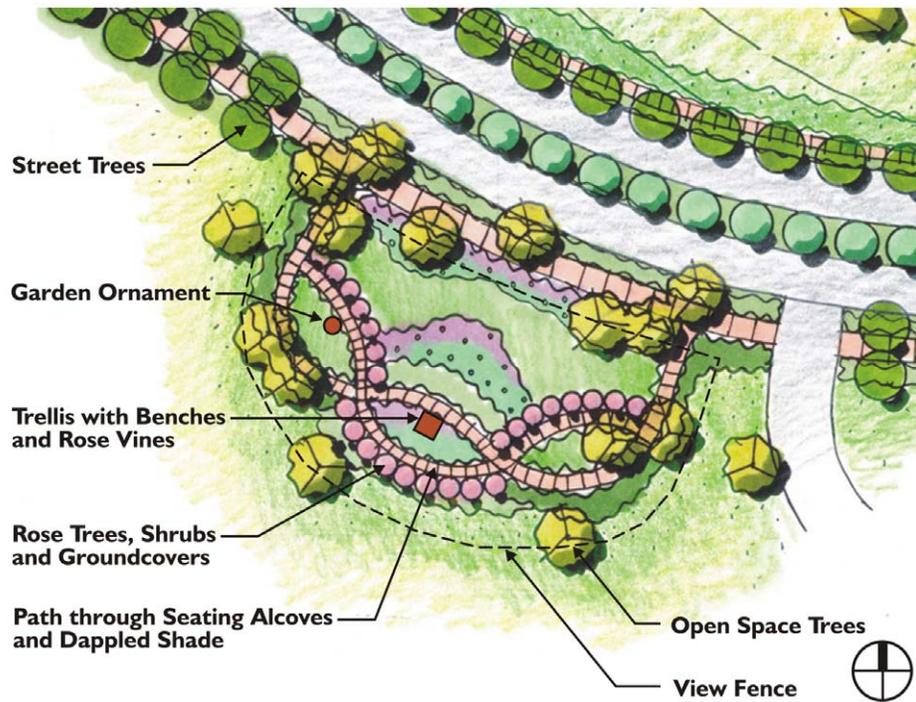
Rose Garden

A .5-acre memorial rose garden is planned to be located adjacent to or within the Community Park. This garden is envisioned as a small, intimate space that provides an area for residents to sit and enjoy the natural environment, and helps to define and enhance overall character of the community.

The rose garden will include shaded seated areas, and internal pathways. The rose garden will be pedestrian accessible. The garden will be enclosed with a view fence to help control deer intrusion. A variety of plant materials and garden ornaments and trellises will help to create a pleasant, inviting environment throughout the year.



Rose garden features



Artist's rendering of a rose garden facility (Source: David Gates and Associates)

Neighborhood Open Space Areas

Within the Plan Area there shall be a variety of common neighborhood areas that provide both active and passive open space opportunities. These neighborhood open space areas could serve as functional community amenities for residents, supplementing the Plan Area's proposed community facilities and enhancing the visual quality of the neighborhoods.

All neighborhoods will be surrounded by passive open space, creating a setting that enhances the visual quality of the Plan Area and delineates each neighborhood with a natural buffer. Passive open space is also proposed to be located within Neighborhoods A and D. Neighborhood A is planned around a riparian and wildlife corridor that intersects residences and the entry road, and Neighborhood D is designed with an informal meadow. Both of these areas are also linked by pedestrian paths and ultimately to the public trail system within the Plan Area.

Small tot-lots are envisioned to be located within Neighborhoods A, B, and C, and within the community center area containing the House of Worship and community pool. Neighborhood E will also contain a small neighborhood park that could be developed with a tot-lot and pedestrian trail easements, connecting to open space areas. These common open space areas will help to provide a distinctive identity to the neighborhoods.



All neighborhoods are integrated in an open space system and also include formal common open space and recreation areas