



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

## LAND USE AGENDA ITEM

### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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**DATE:** November 16, 2022

**03**

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

### **SUBJECT**

**SPRING VALLEY – ESTABLISH AUTHORITY TO ADVERTISE AND AWARD A CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT FOR CALAVO PARK AND MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION (DISTRICT: 4)**

### **OVERVIEW**

The unincorporated community of Spring Valley encompasses approximately 11 square miles with a population of 61,232 residents. Spring Valley is classified as a low-income and an underserved community. With approximately 45 acres of local parks and a ratio of 0.7 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, this community currently experiences a deficit of parkland per County standard. This project will expand access to life-enhancing recreation and move Spring Valley toward the County's General Plan goal of 10 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. The project was initiated by the Board of Supervisors (Board) authorizing the purchase of the Calavo Property for future parkland on April 10, 2019 (1). The property was originally identified by the Spring Valley Community Planning Group for acquisition to provide much needed recreation space for the community. The purchase was supported by the community seeking an opportunity to recreate, relax and experience nature in Spring Valley.

The proposed 9-acre Calavo Park site is located directly adjacent to dense residential, multi-family housing and schools (Loma Elementary, Highland Elementary, Casa De Oro Elementary School, and Monte Vista High School) and intended to benefit residents of all ages and abilities. The community participated in a series of outreach events and surveys to help shape the design of the park. Community-prioritized amenities include an all-wheel area, accessible walking or jogging path, dog park, shaded picnic areas, playgrounds, community garden, multi-use field, pickleball court, restroom building and perimeter fencing. Additional Park elements include a synthetic turf baseball field, and sport courts, which are lacking in Spring Valley to support the current and future population. A volunteer park host site, where a volunteer can live on the property and be available after hours, was supported by the community and is included in the park design for additional park security.

Today's request will authorize the Director of the Department of Purchasing and Contracting to advertise and award a construction contract for the Calavo Park project estimated at \$8,900,000 including contingency. The total cost for construction of the Calavo Park project of \$8,900,000 was included in the Fiscal Year 2021-22 Operational Plan based on General Purpose Revenue. If

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approved, project construction will begin in Spring 2023 with completion anticipated in Winter 2023-24.

**RECOMMENDATION(S)  
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

1. Find, on the basis of the whole record, that there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment. Consider the Mitigated Negative Declaration (Attachment B) together with comments received during public review (Attachment C), and adopt it, finding that it reflects the independent judgment and analysis of the Board of Supervisors.
2. Adopt the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (Attachment D) prepared pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21081.6 and California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines section 15074(d), and authorize the Director, Department of Parks and Recreation to implement the identified mitigation measures.
3. Adopt the “Statement of Location and Custodian of Record of Proceedings” (Attachment E).
4. Authorize the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting, to advertise and award a construction contract and take any other action authorized by section 401 et seq. of the Administrative Code with respect to contracting for the construction of Calavo Park.
5. Designate the Director, Department of Parks and Recreation, or designee, as the County of San Diego Officer responsible for administering the construction contract, in accordance with Board Policy F-41, Public Works Construction Projects.

**EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The community of Spring Valley, where this new park will be located, is an underserved community, meaning residents’ incomes are either at or below 80 percent of the statewide median income or below a threshold designated as low-income by the Department of Housing and Community Development. Spring Valley has a Healthy Places Index score of 61.4, or 3rd quartile and lacks sufficient park and recreation space to support the population.

According to the County’s 2020 Park Master Plan, Spring Valley has a total of approximately 45 acres of parkland. The 2020 population of Spring Valley was estimated at 61,232 persons based on demographic data from the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG). This equates to 0.7 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, which is below the County’s General Plan goal of 10 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. Spring Valley is deficient by 567 acres to meet this goal. DPR has been working to provide additional parkland and recreational opportunities within the community to reduce this deficit. Once Calavo Park is developed, it will add 9 acres of additional parkland available to residents of Spring Valley and the surrounding communities. Calavo Park will result in a positive community physical and mental health impact for all residents by expanding outdoor recreation amenities such as accessible walking or jogging paths, an all-wheel park, multi-use sports fields and courts.

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**SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The Project aligns with the County of San Diego’s (County’s) sustainability goals of protecting and promoting natural resources, diverse habitats, while enhancing the natural environment for residents, visitors, and future generations to enjoy. This project is contributing to the health and wellbeing of Spring Valley, an underserved community who has limited access to recreational activities and green amenities. The Project will increase the communities tree canopy and plants, while using an automatic, weather-based irrigation system that will be adjust based on weather events.

The building features of the park will include solar powered lighting; the installation of one dual electric vehicle charging station and conduit to install two more in the future; and solar photovoltaic panels are anticipated to offset 50,846 kilowatt hours per year of the total electricity usage of the park. These sustainable building features will help reduce the park’s greenhouse gas emissions from building operations and vehicles visiting the park. In addition, an existing bus stop is located along Calavo Drive, reducing the need for single occupancy vehicles visiting the site. Once these features are installed, they will contribute to the County’s sustainability goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Funds for this request are included in the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Operational Plan for the Capital Outlay Fund. If approved, this request will result in costs and revenue of \$16,454,000 for the Capital Project 1022858 Calavo Park. Construction costs are estimated at \$8,900,000 including contingency. The remaining \$7,554,000 in project funding is used for acquisition, design, construction management, environmental review, and project administration. The funding sources are General Purpose Revenue (\$10,000,000) and General Fund fund balance (\$6,454,000).

Upon completion of this project, ongoing operations are estimated at \$161,535 annually, with a one-time estimated start-up cost of an additional \$102,500. Operational costs will cover expenses associated with utility costs and maintenance supplies and services. The park is projected to open in FY 2022-23, and these costs and revenue are included in the FY 2022-23 Operational Plan in the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). The funding source will be DPR General Purpose Revenue.

**BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT**

N/A

**ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT**

On August 25, 2020, the Spring Valley Community Planning Group (CPG) voted in favor of the Calavo Park Final Concept Plan, and recommended to include full fencing around the entire park, including the driveway entrance to prevent after-hours trespassing; a covered bus stop on Calavo Road; and night security lighting. The Spring Valley CPG voted in favor of the final concept design by a vote of Ayes – 12, Noes – 0, Abstain – 0, Absent – 3.

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**BACKGROUND**

In 2017 and 2018, the Spring Valley CPG submitted to DPR its annual priority list for the allocation of Park Land Dedication Ordinance (PLDO) funds. The PLDO requires new residential development projects to dedicate park land for its new residents and/or pay park impact fees to provide funds to build parks. The CPG’s top priority for parkland was the acquisition of the approximately 9-acre Calavo Property on Calavo Drive north of Jamacha Boulevard for a community park with various recreational amenities.

The proposed Calavo Park lies within the unincorporated community of Spring Valley, which has a population of 61,232 residents and is served by approximately 45 acres of local parkland. Spring Valley is classified as an AB-1550 low-income community and identified as an underserved community per the County’s 2020 Parks Master Plan. AB 1550 low-income communities are census tracts with median household incomes at or below 80 percent of the statewide median income or with median household incomes at or below the threshold designated as low-income by Housing and Community Development’s (HCD) State Income Limits. The community is served by two planning areas - Valle de Oro and Spring Valley, separated by State Route 94 (SR-94). Local parks within the Spring Valley park service area include County parks, City of San Diego parks, and joint use parks located on school property. Calavo Park falls within the Spring Valley community planning area.

The current local park ratio for the community is approximately 0.7 acres per 1,000 residents, which is below the County’s General Plan goal of 10 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. DPR has been working to provide additional parkland and recreational opportunities within the community to reduce this deficit. The DPR Park Master Plan includes analysis of the existing parkland and recreational amenities within Spring Valley and indicates that acquisition of additional suitable parkland would benefit the community. The proposed park will also help fill recreation gaps for both planning areas of Spring Valley, as identified in DPR’s Capital Investment Model, a data-driven tool utilized to identify recreation deficiencies in the County’s unincorporated communities.

The Calavo Property is located within the former right-of-way of a segment of State Route 54, which is no longer planned to be built under the California Department of Transportation’s (Caltrans) jurisdiction. Caltrans declared the property surplus and put the property up for auction. The Spring Valley CPG identified this property in their 2017 and 2018 PLDO priority lists as possible recreation space for the community. On January 30, 2019 (6), the Board directed staff to explore the feasibility of purchasing the Calavo Property from Caltrans for a future public park or multi-use sports facility. The County sent a letter of acquisition interest to Caltrans on February 6, 2019.

An assessment of the Calavo Property was conducted to determine whether the site would be suitable for acquisition and future park development. Staff reviewed the appraised value of \$6,400,000 and determined that the price was fair and reasonable. The physical attributes of the approximately 9-acre Calavo Property were assessed and determined that the site is suitable for the park, as it is currently undeveloped, has good road access off Calavo Drive, and is located in close proximity to Jamacha Boulevard, a major road identified within the County’s Mobility

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Element. Additionally, the Calavo Property is within one and a half miles of four schools (Loma Elementary, Highland Elementary, Casa De Oro Elementary School, and Monte Vista High School), directly adjacent to a bus stop, is surrounded by high-density residential development, and has the potential for connections to existing trails in the area such as the Sweetwater Loop and River trail. The Calavo Property was also assessed for potential environmental constraints, and staff determined that while the site is undeveloped, it is also disturbed and has low potential to contain sensitive environmental resources that could preclude development of a future park facility. The existing disturbed condition of the Calavo Property combined with accessibility and proximity to schools and homes make this a desirable site for recreational improvements.

On April 10, 2019 (1), the Board authorized the purchase of the Calavo Property, identified as Caltrans Director's Deed DD20613-01-04, from Caltrans for the appraised value of \$6,400,000. Additionally, the Board adopted resolutions declaring that the property will be used for a public purpose as a future park facility and declared a portion of Calavo Drive a County Highway upon the transfer of the Calavo Property to the County. As part of this effort, \$1,000,000 was allocated to Calavo Park for the design and environmental analysis to be completed for the project.

Public Outreach

DPR conducted three public outreach meetings for Calavo Park. The first meeting took place August 21, 2019, where 104 community members attended an in-person meeting at the Spring Valley Community Center to discuss the proposed park location, size, and features. A graphics panel tally exercise was conducted at the in-person meeting where graphic panel boards displayed a variety of photos of park features and were presented to the community members in attendance at the event. Everyone was invited to vote on their preferred features and uses by placing colored stickers on their choices. Those stickers were tallied, and the results were presented to the community during the second outreach meeting.

A written survey was also provided to each attendee which asked a variety of questions, including the types of activities each respondent was most interested in, how often they took part in those activities, and how often they planned to visit the park. Following the August 21, 2019, meeting, the park input survey from the first meeting was posted online from September 1 through October 31, 2019 and allowed community members that were not able to attend the meeting the opportunity to provide input on the proposed park. Promotion of the survey was sent via a mailed flyer within a one-mile radius of the park site, social media posts, and the project webpage. Project stakeholder groups also received the survey via email. It was provided in English with translated versions available upon request. A total of 158 people responded to the online survey. The results of the survey showed recreational opportunity preferences for a place to take kids to play, a place to participate in or watch sports, a place to relax and enjoy the outdoors, and a place to take a dog and socialize with other dog owners. The survey also showed preferences for skateboarding facilities, restrooms, shade trees, walking/jogging, sidewalks and trails. The top preferences from the graphic panels tally exercise showed that the top choices were for a skate park, leave the park undeveloped, baseball, nature play, and picnicking.

A second public outreach meeting with 73 attendees was held at the Spring Valley Community Center on December 3, 2019. Along with the results from the first community meeting and survey,

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two park concepts were presented to the attendees who were then asked to discuss and vote for their preferred plan and park elements. A written survey was provided to the meeting attendees. Like the first survey, the second survey was hosted online following the meeting. Promotion of the survey was sent via a mailed flyer within a one-mile radius of the park site, social media posts, and the project webpage. Project stakeholder groups also received the survey via email. It was provided in English with translated versions available upon request. A total of 180 surveys were completed. The top amenities revealed in the survey were restrooms, skate park, walking/jogging path, shaded picnic areas, and a playground.

On September 10, 2020, a third outreach meeting was held in a virtual forum that focused on the all-wheel area of the park intended to accommodate scooters, BMX bikes, incline skaters, roller skaters, skate boarders, and wheelchairs. An online survey was posted to provide the County with input on the types of features the community was interested in for the all-wheel elements. The main takeaways from the meeting and survey were preferences for shade and water bottle filling amenities; a range of bowls or concrete swimming pool-like structures; snake runs which are serpent-shaped concrete ramps; and a balance between obstacles and open transition space.

*Project Design and Amenities*

DPR worked closely with the Spring Valley community to create a concept plan for the development of Calavo Park that reflects the current and future needs of the community, all ages, abilities, and interests. Community prioritized amenities, identified during the public outreach, that will be included in the project are an all-wheel area, accessible walking or jogging path, dog park, shaded picnic areas, playgrounds, community garden, multi-use field, a pickleball court, restroom building, volunteer pad for a volunteer park host to live onsite with power, water and sewer hookups, and perimeter fencing. Based on standard park design and deficiency of sports fields and courts in the area, additional park elements include a synthetic turf baseball field and sport courts. In addition, the Spring Valley CPG listed on their 2021/22 PLDO priority list an all-wheel park, more community gardens, and pickleball courts as priority recreation amenities for the community, all of which are included in Calavo Park.

The proposed design of the park was developed with the environment and climate resiliency in mind with its proposed over 100 new trees, low water use and drought tolerant plants, and water efficient irrigation. To support the health and longevity of the proposed trees and plants, the project will include an automatic, weather-based irrigation system with flow sensing to alert staff to any issues or leaks in the system and allow the system to adjust based on weather events. The irrigation system includes components designed for efficiency in water delivery and minimal water loss through evapotranspiration. The trees will be irrigated separately from plants which allows for flexibility in prioritization of water use. As the proposed trees mature, they will improve ambient air quality, combat urban heat island effects, increase infiltration during rain events, and provide shaded relief on hot, sunny days. At full maturity, the proposed new trees are expected to sequester carbon dioxide, thus contributing to the County's greenhouse gas reduction goals and aligning with the County's Regional Decarbonization Framework which found that urban greening supports natural sequestration in urban settings. Native and drought tolerant planting areas will assist with stormwater filtration which supports the protection of water quality. The project's low water use

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plant palette and synthetic turf baseball field, along with the automatic, weather-based irrigation system, support County policies for addressing current and future drought conditions.

The park will be open sunrise to sunset, seven days a week with no fees to enter the park. Calavo Park will be maintained by DPR staff before, during, and after park hours, with additional support from live-onsite volunteer hosts. The park will feature several safety and security measures after hours such as open fencing along Calavo Drive to allow for the County Sheriff’s Department to monitor the park while restricting public access; a locked gate entry; and security lighting.

Today’s proposed actions will adopt the California Environmental Quality Act determination and authorize the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting, to advertise and award a construction contract for the Calavo Park project for an estimated \$8,900,000, including contingency. The remaining \$7,554,000 in project funding is used for acquisition, design, construction management, environmental review, and project administration. The funding sources are General Purpose Revenue (\$10,000,000) and General Fund fund balance (\$6,454,000). The total cost for construction of the Calavo Park project of \$8,900,000 was included in the Fiscal Year 2021-22 Operational Plan based on General Purpose Revenue. If approved, project construction will begin in Spring 2023 with completion anticipated in Winter 2023-24.

**ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT**

The Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the Calavo Park project was developed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The MND considered potential impacts from construction and ongoing management of the proposed new park project. DPR circulated the draft MND and Initial Study (IS) for public review from February 14 – March 16, 2022 (Attachment B). Based on the IS, it was determined that the proposed project would not have any significant effects on the environment. Four public comment letters/emails were received during the public comment period, which related to public safety concerns addressed within the draft MND. Staff reviewed the comments, prepared responses, and determined that no additional study or further analysis is required in response to the comments. These letters/emails are included in the MND along with County of San Diego staff responses to the comments (Attachment C).

The MND identified potential project-related impacts to biological resources, noise, and tribal cultural resources. Through implementation of mitigation measures, avoidance measures, and project design features, the proposed project will not cause any significant environmental impacts. A Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (Attachment D) will be adopted to ensure compliance with avoidance and minimization measures in accordance with Section 21081.6 of the Public Resources Code.

**LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN**

Today’s proposed action to advertise and award a construction contract for the Calavo Park project supports the Sustainability and Community Strategic Initiatives in the County of San Diego’s 2022-2027 Strategic Plan by fostering an environment where residents engage in recreational interests by enjoying parks, open spaces, outdoor experiences, and civic activities that enrich their quality of life and contribute to building a region that is thriving.

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Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah Aghassi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "S" and a long, sweeping tail.

SARAH E. AGHASSI  
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A – Vicinity Map

Attachment B – California Environmental Quality Act, Mitigated Negative Declaration

Attachment C – Comment Letters and Responses on the Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration

Attachment D – Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

Attachment E – Statement of Location and Custodian of Record of Proceedings