



Building a Community Park in Borrego Springs

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

General Information

Borrego Springs will soon have a brand-new park, to be built on the 16-acre parcel at the corner of Country Club and Sunset Roads, across from the post office. County Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) officials are delighted to bring this park to the community of Borrego Springs.

For years, local groups have struggled to make the park a reality. The land was purchased with the idea of creating a park under the County's Park Lands Dedication Ordinance (PLDO) which collects fees from developers for parks. After a review of the past 13 years, only \$250,000 in these fees had accumulated – not enough to realize the vision for the park from 2001. In addition, the PLDO mandates a local maintenance entity to be responsible for ongoing care of the park, and resources could not be identified. County Parks and Recreation representatives are now working to meet this maintenance entity requirement in innovative ways: the team is forming partnerships with other departments and agencies to meet specific site needs and any plans, moving forward, will include space for a dedicated on-site volunteer.

On Thursday, Oct. 22, some 50 members of the Borrego Springs community met with staff from DPR to discuss the design of a new, 16-acre park. The event was held from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at the Borrego Springs Performing Arts Center. This was the second community meeting about the proposed park. The goal was to review the results of a survey that was sent to Borrego Springs' residents in June to solicit feedback on desired amenities.

Survey responses were collected from 400 people with the following results:

- In general, users wanted picnic tables, shade trees, shaded benches, water misters and an off-leash dog park.
- For youth, the top three preferred amenities were swings, a playground and water misters.
- The top three preferences for adults were picnic tables with BBQs, outdoor exercise equipment and a bandstand stage area.
- Seniors ranked a shaded event area, bandstand area and a bocce ball court/lawn bowling at the top of their list.

From this feedback, two design concepts were developed and presented, based on environmental factors and the resources and space available. The information was also available on the DPR website for two weeks.

DPR sent an updated design concept to the County of San Diego Department of General Services (DGS). DGS will oversee the hiring of a Design-Build Enterprise (DBE) to produce a final design. The final design will be shared with, and approved by, DPR leadership as well as presented to the Borrego Springs' Sponsor Group at a future meeting.

FAQs are included in the following pages. If your concerns are not addressed, feel free to contact Jessica Geiszler with County Parks at 858-966-1331 or jessica.geiszler@sdcounty.ca.gov.

Answers to Your Questions

What type of amenities will be a part of this new community park?

The designs we presented are preliminary, and may not reflect the final design from DGS's contracted Design-Build Enterprise. However, DPR used survey results to come up with two design concepts featuring many of the amenities that were prioritized by local residents: In general, users wanted picnic tables, shade trees, shaded benches, water misters and an off-leash dog park; for youth, the top three preferred amenities were swings, a playground and water misters; the top three preferences for adults were picnic tables with BBQs, outdoor exercise equipment and a bandstand stage area; and Seniors ranked a shaded event area, bandstand area and a bocce ball court/lawn bowling at the top of their list.

Are the amenities locked in, or will they change?

The amenities listed in the design concepts are just concepts, based on survey feedback, emails from residents and comments received during two community meetings. These concepts have been forwarded the Department of General Services (DGS) for sharing with their contracted Design-Build Enterprise (DBE). The DBE will use the concepts we presented, and the feedback we shared from residents, to design a new design concept. The final design will be shared with, and approved by, DPR leadership as well as presented to Borrego Springs' residents at a future community meeting.

Will all of the amenities that were presented in the community meeting be included in the final design? What about others?

The final park design may not include all of the proposed amenities, and new amenities could be added. Amenities might also be placed in different locations. The final design will be shared with, and approved by, DPR leadership as well as presented to Borrego Springs' residents at a future community meeting.

Will there be citrus trees in the park?

The project scope that we shared during the last community meeting included an orchard of "unknown" fruit trees – for example, almonds and pomegranates. There will not be any citrus trees in the park. All of the trees and plants that are being considered are drought-tolerant and native to the region.

Why are you proposing an orchard when we're trying to conserving water?

The orchard feature was added to the design concepts following the first community meeting in April, where shade was a #1 concern. The proposed orchard would use water catchment elements present in many Middle Eastern countries to provide water to trees that indigenous to areas with atmospheric and environmental conditions that are similar to those in the Anza-Borrego Desert. These trees would provide the community with valuable shade, as well as opportunity to learn about innovative ways to grow vegetation *without* impacting the local ground water.

Are you using potable groundwater?

The County understands the Borrego Springs community's concern about using potable ground water for the park. Following the State of California's and local water boards' water restriction policies, the plan for the park is to incorporate innovative techniques to catch water from condensation and other technologies. Additionally, plants and trees under consideration are drought-tolerant with a focus on shade trees, which are consistent with the community's #1 request for maximum shade in the park. While plant selections have not been made, there will be no citrus trees in this park.

What decisions were behind the parks topographic features?

During the first meeting, our team communicated that the new community park would lie in a flood plain. Knowing this, we employed sound principles of civil engineering to design a park that is capable of withstanding high-volume water flow (i.e. flash floods) – so if the area were to be inundated with water, the park would survive with minimal damage.

Why wasn't a park bathroom included in either design?

Resource limitations will prevent us from placing a restroom on site (and the maintenance that is required to keep it open. One of the most difficult issues to resolve in building a park in Borrego Springs is the requirement by the Governing Board Policy, prior to construction, to establish a maintenance entity. This ensures that all of the resources required for maintenance are in place, before construction begins. It is expensive to maintain a restroom year-round. The cost includes labor as well as materials like cleaning products, paper products and resources like electricity and water.

What does our park have to do with the new library?

The Library has graciously offered to open their restroom to park users during the park's open hours. It's not a perfect fix, but it's a good one that will allow us to direct available resources toward park benches, shade, an amphitheater, a stargazing area and other potential park amenities. The construction of a new library is happening at the perfect time for us to combine resources and put them toward a single restroom facility. This will allow both County entities to share the maintenance costs. By doing so, we can add more park amenities. The library may also be able to enhance their community offerings with the savings they will receive from this shared expense.

So we're partnering with the library?

The park and library are being built in partnership as one project. In previous attempts to construct a park with restrooms, the community has not been successful in establishing a maintenance entity that can cover the costs of maintaining a restroom. By working together on building a park and library, we believe we have found a way to lower maintenance costs to a point where construction of a park can move forward. A key part of this strategy is to share a bathroom with the library that can be accessed from the outside. Establishing a safe passage to the bathroom from the park is a top priority for all County agencies.

It's not safe to cross the street to use the restroom. What you doing to fix that?

Community concerns related to road use, speed limits, parking and safe restroom access have been documented and relayed to DGS as they take this project to the next phase. Specific traffic concerns, and issues and decisions regarding roads will be made much closer to the park's completion, and with the assistance of other County departments.

Will the park have an on-site volunteer?

Yes, DPR plans to place one on-site volunteer at the park. On-site support will be coordinated through our volunteer liaison, with guidance from the operations team. Part of this individual's responsibilities will include trash removal, restroom cleaning and other routine park maintenance duties.