



CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: November 13, 2023

ITEM TITLE: Consideration of Adopting a Resolution Designating City-Owned Parcel APN 051-061-200 Consisting of Approximately 6.93 Acres as Lands Added to the Area of Eaton Park and Designating City-Owned Parcel APN 050-561-030 Consisting of Approximately 37.9 Acres as Lands Added to the Area of Big Canyon Park.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt Resolution designating APN 051-061-200, consisting of approximately 6.93 acres as lands added to the area of Eaton Park and designating APN 050-561-030, consisting of approximately 37.9 acres as lands added to the area of Big Canyon Park.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

There are no fiscal implications with this item.

BACKGROUND:

The proposed Resolution would add the area of parcel APN 051-061-200 to Eaton Park's boundaries and add the area of APN 050-561-030 to Big Canyon Park's boundaries. Eaton Park and Big Canyon Park are connected by a trail that crosses Brittan Avenue. Both parks have diverse terrain, views of the western hills and San Francisco Bay, and consist of beautiful, natural open space with meandering trails, natural vegetation, and varied wildlife.

Eaton Park

Eaton Park currently consists of 57.6 acres. It is generally located in the hills west of Eaton Avenue, north of Oak Creek Lane, and south of Brittan Avenue.

APN 051-061-200 (the "Eaton Parcel") consists of approximately 6.93 acres. It was conveyed to and accepted by the City as a gift from various owners including Ella McNutt McDowell and Loene Cook Swensen, Branko and Rose Muzinich, and the Estate of Ella M. McDowell in a series of deeds from 1967 to 1977. This parcel is currently zoned Open Space and a portion of this parcel is leased to the 4-H program site under a lease with the University of California. The Eaton Parcel has trails integrated with those located in the current Eaton Park. A search of City records does not reveal why these areas were not made part of Eaton Park when they were first conveyed. Since Sierra Club volunteers built the first trail connecting Eaton Park to Big Canyon Park in the 1970s, the Eaton Parcel has functionally been part of the park. Over the last ten years the City developed its Hillside Trail Plan and added trails on this parcel, integrated with the trails established in the 1970s.

The entrance to the park is located at the end of Eaton Avenue where the City has a park kiosk sign and a trailhead is already located on the Eaton Parcel. Under this proposal, the park's size would increase to 64.53 acres, or by 12 percent.

Big Canyon Park

Big Canyon Park currently consists of 16 acres located along the northern side of Brittan Avenue. In 1979, APN 050-561-030 (the "Big Canyon Parcel") was conveyed to the City by the Zerimar Investment Company, the developer of this area of San Carlos. The Big Canyon Parcel is currently zoned as Open Space. The Big Canyon Parcel consists of approximately 37.9 acres. The Big Canyon Park boundaries would increase to 53.9 acres or 2.37 times its current size. Over the last ten years, the City developed its Hillside Trail Plan, added trails, and integrated with the trails established in the 1970s at Big Canyon Park.

ANALYSIS:

The proposed Resolution would incorporate the Eaton Parcel into the boundaries of Eaton Park and the Big Canyon Parcel into the boundaries of Big Canyon Park.

The City's General Plan designates both the Eaton Parcel and Big Canyon Parcel as Open Space. Under the City zoning ordinances, Open Space lands can have trails and related facilities and are intended to remain in their natural state.

Municipal Code Section 12.12.010 E. defines an "Open Space Park Facility" as any parcel or area of land managed, controlled, or operated by the City that is essentially unimproved or in its natural state with minimal or no above ground improvements provided by the City, other than trails and trail heads.

The adoption of the proposed Resolution would not change the use of these two parcels other than to designate them as part of the adjacent park. Making these areas part of the adjacent park would provide additional protection from conversion to uses other than park or open space. There are no plans to make any changes to the open space park facility use except those consistent with trail uses.

Municipal Code Section 18.40.030 K. recognizes the breadth of facilities considered to be park and recreation facilities, and specifically trails, wildlife preserves, and related open spaces.

General Plan

The City has several actions and policies that support the adoption of the proposed Resolution.

ACTION PR-1.4 Strive to provide a minimum of 2.5 acres of traditional parkland for every 1,000 residents. Adding nearly 43 acres to existing parks will move the City towards this goal.

POLICY PR-2.4 Continue to maintain City-owned open space trails and connections to regional trails. The proposed Resolution is consistent with this goal. Should additional trail opportunities and connections become available, access to these parks will be enhanced and could become part of a larger trail network in the future. Additional connecting trails would be part of this effort.

POLICY PR-2.5 Promote the development of publicly accessible urban trails throughout the city to provide access to the natural environment and facilitate nonmotorized transportation options.

Adding the Big Canyon Parcel and the Eaton Parcel will be consistent with his policy. The City may become eligible for grant funding with a park designation.

ACTION PR-2.8 Extend and improve trails in Big Canyon, Eaton Park, and Arguello Park. Should additional trail opportunities and connections become available, access to these parks will be enhanced and could become part of a larger trail network in the future. Additional connecting trails would be part of this effort.

POLICY PR-5.5 Continue to support community events, volunteers, and non-profits. The proposed Resolution would not affect the existing 4H facility on the Eaton Parcel. Municipal Code Section 12.12.270E Permits cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, or other animals within the boundaries of any park facility with express written approval of the Director. The current lease also allows continued use by the 4H Club programs.

CEQA

The adoption of this Resolution is exempt from CEQA under the existing facilities exemption (Section 15301), "Actions by regulatory agencies for the protection of the environment" (Section 15308). No changes are proposed to the use of the parcels. The commonsense exception also applies to the proposed action. Although there is no transfer of ownership proposed, this Resolution is also consistent with Sections 15313 and 15316 as the Resolution will underscore that the land will remain in its natural condition and will become part of an existing open space park facility.

ALTERNATIVES:

The alternatives available to the City Council include:

1. Adopt a Resolution designating APN 051-061-200, consisting of approximately 6.93 acres as lands added to the area of Eaton Park and designating APN 050-561-030, consisting of approximately 37.9 acres as lands added to the area of Big Canyon Park; or
2. Do not adopt the Resolution; or
3. Provide staff with alternative direction.

Respectfully submitted by:

Gregory J. Rubens, City Attorney; and

Al Savay, Community Development Director

Approved for submission by:



Jeff Maltbie, City Manager

ATTACHMENT(S):

1. Resolution