



**COUNTY OF LAKE**  
**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**  
Planning Division  
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Item #1  
9:05 AM  
March 12, 2020

## **STAFF REPORT**

**TO:** Planning Commission

**FROM:** **Scott De Leon**, Community Development Director  
Victoria Kim, Assistant Planner

**DATE:** January 27, 2020

**SUBJECT:** **Middletown Trailside Park Improvements, IS19-36, GPC19-03**  
Supervisor District 1

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Vicinity Map
2. Agency Comments
3. Initial Study IS19-36
4. Proposed Mitigation and Monitoring Plan

### **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Lake County Public Services Department proposes improvements to 107-acre Middletown Trailside Park, primarily for passive recreation opportunities including restoration to wetlands, meadows, and other habitat after the devastation from the 2015 Valley Fire. Staff recommends approval of the Mitigated Negative Declaration and General Plan Conformity Report.

### **II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Applicant: County of Lake Department of Public Services

Location: 21044 Dry Creek Cutoff, Middletown

General Plan: Public Facilities

Zoning: "O - SC" Open Space – Scenic (adjacent to Highway 175)

### **III. PROJECT SETTING**

Existing Uses and Improvements: The property is existing Trailside Park, which suffered devastation from the 2015 Valley Fire.

Topography: The site is relatively flat.

Soils: According to the soil survey of Lake County, prepared by the U.S.D.A., the soil in the project area is Jafra loam with 2-5% slopes (soil unit 144). The soils consist of loam derived from mixed rock sources. The permeability is moderately slow, surface runoff is slow, and the hazard of erosion is slight.

Fire Protection: South Lake County Fire Protection District; State Responsibility Area

#### **IV. PROJECT ANALYSIS**

The project area contains evidence of the 2015 Valley Fire, including many downed, burned and dead trees; burned stumps and snags; and roads created during fire debris clean-up. The area contains approximately 86 acres of valley oak woodland habitat disturbed by wildfire and fire debris cleanup. Some large trees survived the fire, and ponderosa pine and valley oak currently occur in small, scattered patches in the eastern portion of the property. The majority of the project area is made up of small valley oak saplings, with an understory of manzanita, poison oak, medusahead, big quaking grass, bristly dogtail grass, and oats. About 16 acres of ruderal/disturbed habitat is made up of an extensive system of roads/trails, a parking lot, a dog run area, and a local art installation trail. Aquatic features within the area comprise about 4.6 acres and include intermittent streambed, seasonal wetlands, and seasonal wetland/swales.

##### ***General Plan Conformance***

The Lake County General Plan includes goals, policies, and implementation measures supporting recreation and open space resources:

1. Goal OSC-1 of the Lake County General Plan is *“To preserve and protect environmentally significant habitats, enhance biodiversity, and promote healthy ecosystems throughout the County.”*

**The proposal includes wetland overlooks with boardwalks and bridge crossings; interpretive signage at key environmental and cultural locations; and other associated improvements such as a native plant demonstration garden.**

2. Goal OSC-6 is *“To provide a parks, recreation, and open space system that serves the recreational needs of County residents and visitors, including a regional non-motorized recreational trail system.”*

**The proposal includes pedestrian/equestrian/bicycle paths that serves the recreational needs to the residents and visitors.**

3. Policy OSC-6.2, Park Amenities, indicates that *“The County shall provide a broad range of active and passive recreational needs within community parks. When possible, this should include large trees for shade, active sports fields and facilities, community center/recreation buildings, multi-use areas and trails, sitting areas, and other specialized uses as appropriate.”*

**The proposal includes pedestrian/equestrian/bicycle paths to serve active recreational needs. Also, picnic pavilion, shaded benches and nature play area are proposed for passive recreational needs.**

4. Policy OSC-6.10 recommends that the County “*strive to obtain adequate funding to improve and maintain existing parks as well as construct new facilities, including a regional trail system with linkages, and should consider adopting a park mitigation fee ordinance.*”

**The Department of Public Services is seeking grant funding (California Wildlife, Coastal, and Park Land Conservation Act) for the park improvements.**

5. Goal T-4 of Lake County General Plan is “*To encourage the development of a safe, continuous, and easily accessible trails system.*”

**The proposal includes pedestrian/equestrian/bicycle paths with a safe, continuous and easily accessible trail system.**

#### ***Middletown Area Plan Conformance***

Middletown Area Plan Objective 3.7.1 is to “*Provide residents and visitors with opportunities to experience the county’s scenic settings and corridors, parks and recreational opportunities as bicyclists, motorists, hikers and equestrians.*” Also, Policy 3.7.4a recommends “*Preserve open space and increase recreation areas by developing a park lands acquisition program.*”

**The proposal includes pedestrian/equestrian/bicycle paths. Ecological art displays along certain trails, a horse arena, horse parking, and a dog park are proposed.**

Middletown Area Plan Objective 5.3.7 is to “*Upgrade and expand parks and recreation facilities to encourage more public use and enhance recreational opportunities.*” To that end, Policy 5.4.7d is to “*Encourage development of new trails, and enhance existing public access trails whenever feasible.*”

**The proposal includes expanded parking lot, event center, and picnic areas with the existing restroom enhanced with solar panels. The upgraded and expanded parks and recreational facilities will provide active and passive recreational opportunities to the residents and visitors.**

Middletown Area Plan Objective 5.5.5 in regards to Open Space indicates that “*To enhance and protect the recreational opportunities for the future residents and visitors of Lake County.*”

**The proposal includes diverse amenities including pedestrian/equestrian/bicycle paths, a horse arena, horse parking, a dog park, event center, and art installations for the County residents and visitors.**

#### **V. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

A Biological Resources Assessment was prepared for this project. Recommendations provided in that assessment were incorporated into the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Initial Study and the Mitigation and Monitoring Plan to reduce impacts to sensitive species potentially existing in the project area. A Cultural Resources Assessment was prepared for the project. Tribal Consultation was held with Middletown Rancheria. Department of Public Services indicated that they would be entering a monitoring

agreement with the Tribe. Implementation of, and compliance with, project conditions of approval and with the mitigation measures outlined below would avoid or reduce potential impacts to less than significant levels.

#### 1. AIR QUALITY

Work practices shall implement standard fugitive dust control measures consistent with the rules and regulation of the Lake County Air Quality Management District at all times during construction to reduce the impact of fugitive dust emissions to a less than significant level in staging areas, work areas, and adjoining roads. Vehicles and equipment shall be well-maintained and in compliance with State emission requirements. The permit holder must file notification with the Lake County Air Quality Management District at least 14 days prior to beginning of development activities.

#### 2. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Prior to ground disturbance, a qualified biologist/botanist shall conduct pre-construction surveys for special-status plants, frogs, and birds. Mitigation measures specify avoidance measures if any special-status species are detected during the surveys. Permits shall be obtained from California Department of Fish & Wildlife, Regional Water Quality Control Board, and US Army Corps of Engineers.

#### 3. GEOLOGY AND SOILS

The project design shall incorporate appropriate BMPs consistent with County and State storm water drainage regulations to the maximum extent practicable.

#### 4. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS and WILDFIRE

Any spills of oils, fluids, fuel, concrete, or other hazardous construction material shall be immediately cleaned up. All equipment and materials shall be stored in the staging areas away from the creek; vehicles and equipment shall receive proper and timely maintenance.

Brush shall be cut and removed and grass shall be mowed in the staging areas. Vehicles and equipment shall be maintained and operated in a manner to prevent hot surfaces, sparks or any other heat sources from igniting grasses, brush or other highly combustible material.

### **VI. RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Staff recommends that the Planning Commission:**

##### **A. Adopt a mitigated negative declaration IS19-36 for GPC19-03 with the following findings:**

1. Potential environmental impacts related to the project have been mitigated to insignificant levels by CEQA mitigation measures specified in the Mitigation and Monitoring Plan.
2. The project has potential to result in adverse impacts to wildlife and, therefore, is subject to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife filing fee.

3. This project is consistent with the Lake County General Plan, Middletown Area Plan and Zoning Ordinance.
4. As mitigated, this project will not result in any significant adverse environmental impacts.

**B. Approve GPC19-03 with the following findings:**

1. The project is compatible with surrounding land uses.
2. The project is consistent with the Lake County General Plan goals and policies related to Transportation and Circulation and to the health and safety of the residents and property of Lake County.
3. The proposed project is consistent with the Middletown Area Plan policy to develop adequate public access within the Planning Area.
4. An initial study has been performed pursuant to CEQA requirements and a mitigated negative declaration has been filed.

**Sample Motions:**

**Mitigated Negative Declaration**

I move that the Planning Commission find on the basis of the Initial Study IS19-36 prepared by the Planning Division and the mitigation measures which have been added to the project, that the Middletown Trailside Park improvements, as applied for by the Lake County Department of Public Services, will not have a significant effect on the environment and therefore a mitigated negative declaration shall be approved with the findings listed in the staff report dated January 27, 2020.

**General Plan Conformity**

I move that the Planning Commission find that General Plan Conformity GPC19-03 applied for by the Lake County Department of Public Services for Middletown Trailside Park improvements in Middletown is in conformity with the Lake County General Plan with the findings listed in the staff report dated January 27, 2020.

Reviewed by: MD