

**Morongo Valley  
Community Services District**

**Master Park Strategic Plan**

**Attachment 2d**

**MORONGO VALLEY COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT****MASTER PARK STRATEGIC PLAN THRU THE YEAR 2013****1. PURPOSE OF THE MPSP**

- Outline the Community's Identified Priorities for Infrastructure Improvement of Morongo Valley Community Services District (MVCSD) Park Facilities
- Guide future growth & improve infrastructure within our scope of authority and within areas of responsibilities.
- Retain attributes that make Morongo Valley unique as identified by the residents during planning process for the MV Community Plan update of the Morongo Valley during Park Project Workshops and in monthly MVCSD Director's meetings.

**2. SCOPE OF THE MASTER PARK STRATEGIC PLAN**

The Morongo Valley Community Plan published in August 2006, sets goals and policies for the MV, distinct from those applied countywide and addresses how the County of SB will address growth while retaining the attributes that make MV unique. Local residents spent many hours offering input, identifying priorities and describing the manner in which they would like to see the Morongo Valley grow. The MFSP strives to avoid repetition of the Community Plan in this document, but draws on the desires of the residents expressed in the Community Plan and MVCSD Park Committee workshops.

The scope of the MPSP encompasses the MVCSD's physical plant both current and future. Infrastructure improvement; increased opportunity for recreation; improved public safety; were all areas identified as areas the Community would like improved, enhanced or expanded. This document will act as a master planning guide to set forth priorities for capital, infrastructure and select equipment needs for short and mid term park plans. The development, implementation and general financing are addressed for the park and recreation projects and programs in the Morongo Valley.

**3. COMMUNITY BACKGROUND***Location*

Morongo Valley is located in the south-central portion of San Bernardino County, in the southern Mojave Desert. The Morongo Valley Park plan covers approximately 44 square miles. The general planning area is bordered by the Sawtooth Mountains on the north, the Town of Yucca Valley to the northeast, Joshua Tree National Park to the east, Riverside County on the south, and the San Bernardino Mountain Range on the west.

*History*

The Serrano Indians and Cahuilla tribe from the Shoshonean division (Takic) of the Uto Aztecan language family occupied the Morongo Basin until the small pox epidemic decimated the majority of their society in the 1800's. The area was first inhabited by non-Indians in 1873, when the de Crevecoeur family homesteaded in the general area of the present-day Covington Park/Big Morongo Canyon Preserve. Hans Frederick Birand de Crevecoeur, his wife Margarethe Thomsen and their stock of sheep and cattle took advantage of local water and adequate natural vegetation for grazing.

Homesteading continued in the valley until after the turn of the century and peaked in the early 1930's. For the last 60 years the area has been primarily residential in nature, attracting a mix of

retirement aged residents and working families who express a strong desire to retain a rural character while providing modern services.

The Morongo Valley CSD was formed in 1958 and currently oversees the Fire Department, Parks, library and street lighting - most other services are provided by the County. MVCSD is an independent district whose main source of funding for the Morongo Valley CSD is from property tax allocations and a benefit assessment restricted to support fire suppression services.

#### *Description of the Plan Area*

Morongo Valley is situated at an elevation of approximately 2,538 feet above sea level. Within the District, three geological faults have been identified: Pinto Mountain; Dry Morongo and Morongo Valley faults. All three are considered to be active systems, although no large earthquakes are known to have occurred in recent history. The Valley has no major perennial streams ground water supplies are limited to natural recharge from seasonal precipitation.

#### **4. GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

To continue to provide and expand upon recreational and park related programs and projects as prioritized by the residents of the Morongo Valley.

#### **5. DESCRIPTION OF CSD PARK FACILITIES**

##### *Covington Park*

Covington Park is comprised of 5 acres deeded to the Morongo Valley CSD in 1962, to be used for public park or place of resort and recreation. Covington Park's hardscape includes: two tennis courts; a skate park; a Community Building; an snack stand/storage area; a children's playground; a pavilion; bbq's and assorted picnic tables.

The Community Building is the hub of many programs and home to many local organizations: Senior Nutrition lunch program; the Artist Colony gallery space; the Children's Library, art and theater program; the Morongo Valley Youth Commission; Chamber of Commerce; Morongo Valley Youth Sports League; several annual events; CSD Board of Director's meetings and the Firefighters' Auxiliary. The Community Building is a designated local EOC and is available to rent, at cost, for private events.

##### *Gun Range & Morongo Valley Park*

Gun Range, located in the eastern part of Morongo Valley is approximately 35 acres, a small portion of which is utilized as an outdoor gun range. The Range is leased to the Yucca Valley Gun & Rod Club. The Club erected shooting platform, dug a well, installed a parking area and a small office/storage area on the shooting platform. The Range is utilized by local law enforcement agencies, Club members and local residents.

Morongo Valley Park is a 5 acre parcel, located between the Gun Range and Highway 62. This day use area is comprised of 6 spots for vehicle parking and picnic areas among native desert landscaping. Each picnic area includes a picnic table, bbq and 2 boast shade structures.

##### *Women's Club*

The Women's Club was deeded to the MVCSD in 2000 by the Chamber of Commerce. The structure sits on 1.25 acres and is the first Community building erected in Morongo Valley. The Building, which once housed a school house, was built in 1947, on land donated by residents and constructed by volunteers with donated materials. It is currently not open to the public but future plans include reviving the use as a Community Hall, installing exhibits featuring local history and developing programs in conjunction with the neighboring Elementary School.

### *5 Acre Parcel*

A 5 acre parcel located between the Elementary School and Women's Club does not yet have a name. The parcel was purchased at a discount with Bond Act monies to allow us to expand planned programs and projects under development for the Women's Club. Many intriguing ideas have been proposed for this space: event space; sport fields; a running track, old west sets; and a fitness/dog trail. These will be considered in earnest after the financing of the Women's Club is secure.

### *San Bernardino Park lands -- long term lease*

San Bernardino County Park Lands have been leased, long term for many years. The approximate 35 acres contain a baseball field, a practice field, and a small building housing the snack stand and bathrooms. The vast majority of this acreage is left in its natural state and crossed by undesignated trails made by wildlife and enhanced by the foot traffic of birdwatchers.

## **6. FUTURE PLANS & IMPROVEMENTS**

### *Covington Park*

Covington Park future plans include: installation of new restrooms; ADA accessible sidewalks connecting the pavilion and playground to the parking lot; development, design and construction of the skate park expansion and installation of a volleyball court. Upgrades to the Community building heating and air conditioning system, new benches, tables, new signage and other small capital projects have also been proposed for consideration. The volunteer led development of the Children's Library in June 2007, filled a needed niche for Morongo Valley youngsters. Expansion of the programming is underway to include weekly art and theater instruction, special monthly presentations and a teen employment program.

### *Gun Range & Morongo Valley Park*

The High Desert Rod & Gun Club's long term lease of the Gun Range expires in September 2008. At this time, no improvements for the Gun Range are under consideration by the MVCSD. The Morongo Valley Park may receive some small equipment improvements, such as repaint & repair shade structures, however, no specified time is currently designated for these improvements.

### *Women's Club*

The Women's Club future plans include refurbishing and renovating the existing structure to return it to use as a community building for local groups and programs. The Community has a need for a local cooling/heating center. This building may be utilized in that capacity since the other park buildings do not offer air conditioning. Multi-function usages and programming for this building include: meeting space; museum-like displays and community computer access. No date has been set to begin the improvements.

### *5 Acre Parcel*

The 5 acre parcel near the Women's Club and Elementary School will be home to a fitness trail for use by walkers and pet owners. This option will allow us to consider other proposed uses in the future, while providing a level, safe area for the public to walk. Initial plans may also include some interpretive signage related to local botany.

A rubberized .25 mile track was proposed for consideration for this property or on the adjacent, Morongo Valley Elementary School. Event space, sports fields, historical facades and other multi-function spaces were proposed for this parcel. This parcel will build out, after determining revenue streams and soliciting input from the community.

*San Bernardino Park lands – long term lease*

A few small improvements are planned for the acreage leased from the County of San Bernardino. We would like to install a prefabricated sealed vault restroom, in addition to the existing restrooms, which continuously malfunction due to a collapsed leach field. A request was recently made by the Morongo Valley Youth Commission to clear a field of dried Russian thistle and use the area for BMX bike riding. The majority of the acreage would be maintained in its natural state and provide habitat for local wildlife and birds since so much of their habitat was lost in recent wildfires. Some trails for unmotorized activities may be proposed in the future and planned in conjunction with the County of San Bernardino and Bureau of Land Management. The Community Plan expresses a desire for intra-community hiking and equestrian trails, traversing federal and state lands. Meetings will be held at a future date, with affected agencies and the Morongo Basin Open Space Committee to determine lead agencies, to coordinate and prioritize a trail system.

**7. FUNDING & RESOURCES**

*Funding*

The expenses for planned capital improvements will be covered by a mix of grants, contributed labor, equipment and materials. Some small amounts of general operating monies may be expensed to meet cash, matching grant requirements.

Short term projects (in next 3 years) for Covington Park include: Sidewalks; bathrooms; volleyball court; skate park and playground expansion and upgrade of general visitor amenities. Financing has been secured via Bond Act monies, additional funding is projected to be acquired from volunteer labor, donated materials, additional grants, gifts designated to the park fund, and general operating funds. A CDBG grant was secured to fund the teen development program and Children's Library expansion.

Women's Club improvements will be financed via grant funding, donated materials and volunteer labor. Equipment, furniture and programming needs will largely be met with donations.

The short-term plans of a fitness trail, for the 5 acre parcel, near the MV Elementary School will be improved with Bond Act monies.

The restroom upgrade planned for the County of San Bernardino lands will be funded with a CDGB grant. The clearance of the field for BMX usage will be accomplished with donated equipment and labor arranged by the Morongo Valley Youth Commission.

*Resources*

The CSD staff is comprised of 1 full time grounds man, a combination paid/volunteer fire department, a part/time office worker and 1 general manager.

The Morongo Valley is a model for what can be accomplished with a spirit of volunteerism, small town willingness and jack of all trades know-how. The Board of Directors has a proven track record of spearheading many volunteer projects in their free time. The Covington Park Pavilion; Skate Park; Fire Station 461; Covington Park Playground Baseball field and many large-scale projects such as annexation studies and research for alternate revenue stream options have been led by our current Directors.

**8. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

Park Workshops were held to solicit resident input and assign priority for planned projects. Projects using the Bond Act grant monies as their main funding vehicle were ranked in order: sidewalks; bathrooms; fitness trail; skate park expansion; general park amenities (benches; bleachers; shade structures) and Women's Club improvements. Projects to be funded via volunteer labor or other means were also ranked: park lighting; Covington Park Snack Stand rehab; field clearance for BMX access; volley ball court and Community Building upgrades.