

PIONEER PARK MASTER PLAN ADOPTED DECEMBER 12, 2012



**City of Nevada City
Pioneer Park Master Plan
2012**

City Mission Statement

The City of Nevada City is dedicated to preserving and enhancing its small town character and historical architecture while providing quality public services for our current and future residents, businesses and visitors.

City Vision Statement

Nevada City, nestled in the Sierra foothills, will be a vibrant, uniquely beautiful small town that balances art and culture, historical preservation and progress.

Parks & Recreation Department Mission Statement

The Nevada City Parks & Recreation mission is to provide a system of parks, trails, recreational facilities, programs and services that will enrich the lives of our citizens.

City Council Members

Duane Strawser, Mayor
Sally Harris, Vice-Mayor
Robert Bergman
Terri Anderson
Jennifer Ray

Planning Commissioners

Evans Phelps, Chair
John Parent, Vice-Chair
Greg Wolters
Bob Wright
Dix Sullivan

Nevada City Staff

David Brennan, City Manager
Dawn Zydonis, Parks & Recreation Supervisor
Cindy Siegfried, City Planner
William J. Falconi, City Engineer
Verne Taylor, Public Works Director
Hal DeGraw, City Attorney

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Introduction

In 2008 the Recreation Committee created a list of goals for the committee to accomplish. One of those goals was to “create optimum use criteria for Pioneer Park”. With this goal in mind, the Recreation Committee decided that there should be some basic information in place first:

- What facilities do we have at the park?
- What facilities do we want at the park?
- How did the existing facilities come to be?
- How do we decide if a new facility is needed?

In addition to this, the City is often approached by a person or group who would like to fund or encourage a specific facility or improvement at the park (ie: Eagle Scout projects, Soap Box Derby, Non-profit organizations). The Recreation Committee felt that it is important to have a procedure for reviewing these proposed projects and making sure that it is a proper fit within the park.

Timeline of Master Plan Process

A sub-committee was created by the Recreation Committee to begin the process. The sub-committee consisted of citizens who live near the park, two members of the Nevada City Lions Club, and Recreation Committee members.

June 24, 2010: Sub-committees first meeting. The sub-committee listed the strengths and weaknesses of Pioneer Park; thinking about the park from the perspective of various age groups.

August 27, 2010: Recreation Committee meeting, sub-committee members attended the meeting and created a vision statement for Pioneer Park.

October 14, 2010: The sub-committee organized a Public Workshop to obtain input for the Pioneer Park Master Plan. The public meeting was not well attended, but good discussion took place about the pros and cons of Pioneer Park and emails were received from people who could not attend the meeting.

April 13, 2011: City staff met to review the information that had been discussed and presented at previous meetings. This was important to the process to review needs of the park from the perspective of maintenance staff, police and fire. At this meeting, the Pioneer Park Survey was created which began the process of collecting public input on the Master Plan.

May 11, 2011: City Council meeting - Master Plan process was presented with information about how staff planned to move the project forward.

May – August 2011: City staff collected Pioneer Park surveys. The goal for the survey was to learn the following:

- What does the community like about Pioneer Park?
- What does the community NOT like about Pioneer Park?
- Who’s using the park?
- What are the needs/wants of the community in relation to Pioneer Park?
- How can we optimize use of the park?

The surveys were made available to the public at city meetings, on the City’s website, at a booth during the 2011 Soap Box Derby, and were also made available to customers at City Hall and the swimming pool. The greatest response to the Survey came from residents when it was included with their Utility Billing.

September 2011: The surveys were evaluated and a summary of the survey results was created. (Appendix A)

September 15, 2011: City Staff were given a chance to review the information and comment on the survey results and outline for the Master Plan.

September 2011: Completion of the Record of Survey for Pioneer Park (map is attached in Appendix B)

October 4, 2011: The Planning Commission held a special meeting at Pioneer Park. They were provided a brief history of the park by William J. Falconi, City Engineer, a description of maintenance needs by Verne Taylor, Public Works Director and program information by Dawn Zydonis, Parks & Recreation Supervisor. The Commissioners were also given a tour of Pioneer Park, including the boundaries of the park as recently remapped through an official Record of Survey performed by Nevada City Engineering.

October 20, 2011: Planning Commission meeting the survey results and summary were presented for feedback and input. The result of this meeting was a focus on safety at Pioneer Park. The public that attended the meeting and spoke about the park were concerned about safety and illegal activity at the park. The Commission felt it was important to address these safety issues immediately and made the following recommendations to City Council:

1. Create a map with designated walking trails throughout the park. The map will designate several loop trails and include the distance for each loop. The map would be posted at strategic locations throughout the park. One way to discourage poor use of the park is to have a presence of positive activity in the park.
2. Request that the police department identify a Focused Intense Enforcement Program that could have an immediate impact on the park.
3. Change the current ordinance regarding the park hours of operation. Currently the park is open 7:00am to 11:00pm; with the exception of the tennis courts which close at 10:00pm. The Planning Commission recommended the park hours be changed to “sunrise to sunset”.
4. Research cost-effective lighting options for the tennis court parking lot and picnic areas to improve the lighting, with the intent to reduce vandalism.

Since that time, a map of walking trails has been posted throughout the park and the police have increased their presence in the park. The City Council did not recommend changing the hours of the park or increasing lighting in the parking lot. They would like to evaluate how the police presence affects the park.

December 11, 2011: Survey results, summary and outline for the Master Plan were presented to City Council for feedback and input.

December – February: Staff compiled information and drafted the Master Plan.

February 1, 2012: A Draft of the Pioneer Park Master Plan was shared with staff and they were asked to provide feedback.

March 15, 2012: A Draft of the Pioneer Park Master Plan was presented to the Planning Commission for feedback.

March 28, 2012: A Draft of the Pioneer Park Master Plan was presented to the City Council for Review & Discussion.

December 12, 2012: The Final Draft of the Pioneer Park Master Plan was presented to the City Council for adoption.

Purpose and Intent

The purpose and intent of this Master Plan is to:

1. Formally review the history of Pioneer Park
2. Create a Vision Statement for Pioneer Park
3. Address current uses and management practices
4. Promote a process for making decisions about the future of Pioneer Park
5. Encourage orderly and planned parks & recreation services which are consistent with the General Plan to preserve the natural beauty and history of Pioneer Park.
6. Create a Pioneer Park Priority List that will be reviewed and updated annually.

History of Pioneer Park and Facilities

Between 1933 and 1935 discussions at City Council meetings indicated a strong interest in building a swimming pool and community hall. These two things were the driving force behind the development of a park in Nevada City. The boundaries of Pioneer Park have changed and expanded since that time. The historical maps in Appendix C show the various proposed and evolving boundaries of the park. Below is a brief history of each of the facilities that currently exist at Pioneer Park.

Swimming Pool

The discussion about a swimming pool in Nevada City began as early as 1926. The project did not come to fruition until 1933 and the facility was completed and opened in June 1935. Funds for the swimming pool were provided by the State Emergency Relief Administration (SERA) and the construction was mostly completed by Work Progress Administration (WPA) laborers. The swimming pool has had several upgrades and changes over the years. The original pool included a kiddy pool, there were few chemicals used to keep the pool clean and the bathhouses were much larger than what exists today. Currently there is no kiddy pool, an office building has been added which contains the snack shack and equipment storage space, the bathhouse has been reconstructed and is connected to the pump room with the filtering and heating equipment for the pool. The fence line was moved back to allow more sitting space for patrons at the pool. The tiered rock walls and landscaping above and below the swimming pool were part of the original design of the park. Those have not changed much over the years.



Swimming Pool: 1940's (Historic photo from blog)

Seaman's Lodge

A community hall was desired in the City and a park seemed like the ideal location for such a facility. As the park was developed, the community hall was part of the plan. At some time before 1935 the community hall was constructed. The Hall was given the name of Seaman's Lodge in February 1936. Mayor Alphonse Seaman was very involved in the development of the park, so the building was named after him, following his death. During this same time the Boy Scouts were interested in building a facility for their activities. In October 1936 the Scout Council took lease on Seaman's Lodge. They managed the facility and had first choice of dates and times for use.

Although the kitchen was not included with the original construction and it has been updated several times over the years, the building has generally remained the same since its construction.



Staff photo

Caretaker's Cottage

In August 1935, many SERA projects were being dropped or left incomplete due to lack of funds. The City agreed to house the WPA and SERA offices in Seaman's Lodge in exchange for keeping City projects in process, which included the construction of the Caretaker's Cottage. During the time that the offices were housed in Seaman's Lodge, their desks and equipment would be moved against the walls if the building was needed for a community event. Currently the Caretakers Cottage is rented for residential use.



Staff photo

Little League Fields

In the late 1940's, the lower field of Pioneer Park was created. The creek was diverted around the field to make an open space for playing baseball. Although not represented in the maps presented in Appendix C, the playground was originally located where the upper Little League Field now sits. Between 1968 and 1974 the playground was moved to its current location and the upper field was constructed with funds from community donations. The reason for this move of the field was because the lower field was too soggy to play on.

The Nevada City Little League manages and maintains several structures in the park. The Snack Shack adjacent to Seaman’s Lodge was constructed by and is fully maintained by Little League. They also store equipment in the white “firehouse” maintenance shed, and the storage areas below both sets of bleachers. Little League has their own maintenance equipment and is responsible for the items stored in these areas.



Staff photo

Carriage House

In May of 1935 the Native Sons of Golden West requested space at the park for storage of wagons and other vehicles that had been in use in Nevada City and elsewhere in the county until replaced by motor transportation. That project request was finalized in 1977. In December 1977 a drawing contest took place to design the Carriage House that stands at Pioneer Park today. Although the winner of that contest was announced in 1977, the construction did not take place until 1980. The Carriages were moved into the structure in August 1980. Ideally these carriages would be moved to the Narrow Gauge Railroad Museum. If that were to happen, this space could be utilized for further recreational activities or a rentable space for private functions.

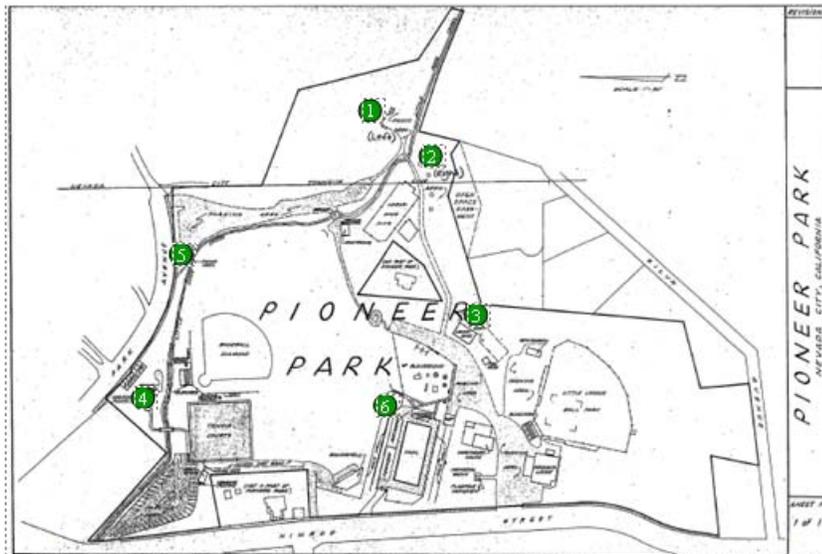


Staff photo

Picnic Areas

There are multiple picnic areas throughout the park. Each was constructed at different times. The numbers below refer to the map immediately following the descriptions.

1. Picnic-left: A rentable picnic area with two large BBQ's, cement serving counters, a small sink with running water, tubs for drinks and picnic tables. This area is believed to be the only picnic area that was constructed when the park was first created.
2. Picnic-right: A rentable picnic area with two large BBQ's, a cement table, drinking fountain and picnic tables. There are sinks in this area as well, but do not include running water and are decrepit. The horseshoe pits are on the same side of the creek as this area.
3. Upper Picnic Area: A rentable picnic area with one large BBQ and picnic tables. This area doubles as the Petanque Court simply by moving picnic tables.
4. Handicap Picnic Area: This picnic area has two picnic tables that are easy for wheelchairs to approach and sit at. There is one small BBQ and a drinking fountain.
5. Roadside picnic area: This area has one small BBQ and two picnic tables.
6. Field picnic area: This area is at the bottom of the stairs below the playground. There is one small BBQ and two picnic tables. The picnic tables are moved around frequently by park patrons.



Picnic-Left: 1950's (Historic photo from blog)

Tennis Courts

According to an article in The Union Newspaper on November 13, 1935 it states cement tennis courts were being constructed at the Pioneer Park with help from WPA. However, the tennis courts do not appear to have been constructed at the time. They do not appear on any park maps until the 1974 “Proposed Park Plan”. It is believed that the project was cancelled by the WPA and the courts were later constructed with funds from the John J. Looser estate.



Staff photo

Playground

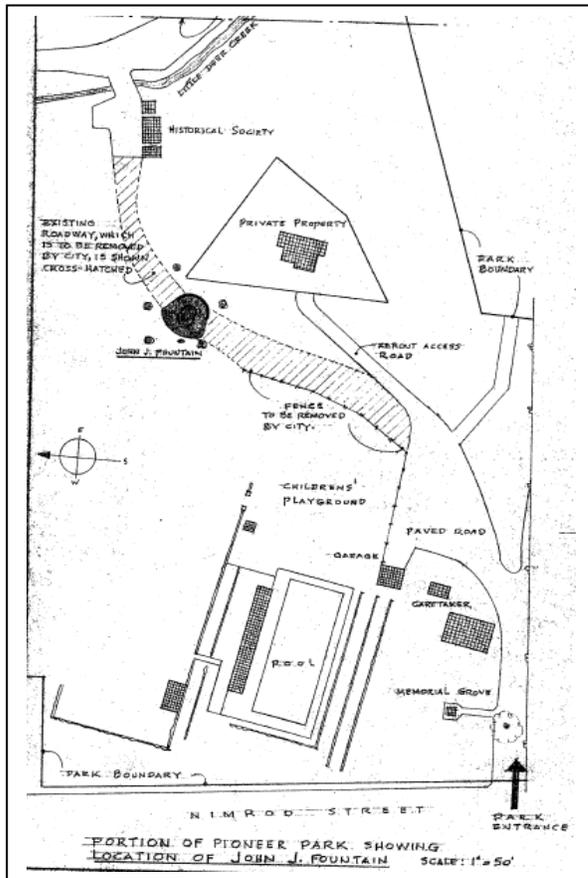
In reviewing the maps it is difficult to determine when the playground was first constructed. The playground has had several updates and changes over the years. The current structure that contains the largest amount of playground equipment was primarily funded by the Nevada City Lions Club and installed with volunteer labor. As part of the Master Plan process a playground inspector check the safety standards of the playground. Recommendations from his report have been included on the Pioneer Park Project List (Appendix E).



Staff photo

Fountain

The fountain was installed in 1976 with funds from the John J. Looser estate. The fountain was designed by architect Francis Lloyd and the metal sculpture was created by artist Norman Grag. The fountain was placed in the middle of an existing city street that ran through the park. The placement of the fountain resulted in an intentional redirection of the road. The following map shows the plan for the fountain installation.



Staff photo

Currently the fountain is not used due to high maintenance needs and liability issues. This area is a viable recreational space and can be more efficiently utilized with the removal of the fountain. The City is sensitive to the fact that the fountain was a gift to the City, therefore when removed; the fountain will be safely stored at the City Corporation Yard until a better location is decided upon.

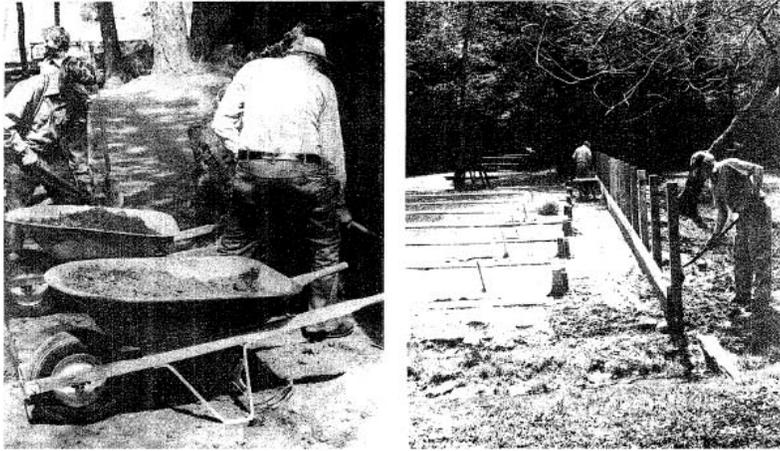
Bathrooms

There are four sets of bathrooms throughout the park.

1. Park Avenue parking lot
2. Tennis court parking lot
3. Playground – attached to pool office, but available to patrons outside of the swimming pool fence.
4. Upper Little League Field: This facility is primarily used during Little League games and is maintained by Little League

Horseshoe Pits

Twelve Horseshoe Pits were constructed in 1979 with volunteers from the Nevada City Lions Club. Funding for the project was provided by the Nevada City Lions Club in cooperation with the City. There is a local horseshoe club that has helped to maintain the courts and held tournaments over the years. The Club has lost membership, but is working hard to recruit new members.



Installation of horseshoe pits (photo from April 25, 1979 – The Independent)

Bandshell

The Bandshell was dedicated in May 1991 and approval to occupy by the county was granted in February 1992. The Bandshell is utilized by the Nevada County Concert Band. Efforts should be made to encourage more events at this location to optimize it's use during the summer.



Staff photo

Basketball Courts

There are three basketball courts next to the upper Little League Field at Pioneer Park. The courts were constructed in 2007 and were funded by the Nevada City Lions Club. The courts also serve as extra parking during Little League games and special events at the park.



Staff photo

Petanque Court

The original court was constructed in 2005 with funding from Les Moutegnards de Petanque (The Mountain Men of Petanque), a local group that meets to play the sport and actively attends other events and tournaments. The Petanque group purchased the decomposed granite for the surface of the court and the City Public Works Crew constructed the court. The group is willing to have the court relocated to the Upper Picnic Area, so that something else can be developed in its current location. The Upper Picnic Area is made of the same material and can continue to be used as a picnic area by other members of the public. The group has contributed funds for signs explaining the game and donated Petanque equipment for public rental during the swimming pool season. This further enhances public use of the Upper Picnic Area.



Staff photo

Field

As mentioned earlier with the Little League Field history. The large field at Pioneer Park was created by redirecting the creek and bringing in fill material to flatten out the space. This took place in the late 1940's. This work may not have been completed before this time because the equipment needed (a grader) were not self powered until after World War II. Before that time, there were graders, but they were powered by animals.

Although the creek was diverted, there is a lot of water in the field. This is evident by the fact that the Little League field was moved. Also, the Pioneer Park survey results show that park patrons would like to see the drainage on the field fixed. The field is often too soggy to play on and can be unsafe for the Little League players who continue to use the lower field. In 2006, the city was awarded a Brownfield's Assessment Grant. The Friends of Deer Creek (now Sierra Streams Institute), completed the assessment work required by the grant,



Staff photo

including soil samples from the Pioneer Park field. The results of those samples showed that there are higher than normal levels of arsenic throughout the grassy field. This will need to be taken into consideration if work is done to the field to fix the drainage problem.

Deer Creek

As previously mentioned, the creek once ran through the middle of the grassy field that currently exists at the park. It was redirected in the late 1940's to allow for the construction of the ball field.

In 2003 the Friends of Deer Creek (now Sierra Streams Institute) removed non-native plants from along the creek (mostly black berries) and replanted native trees and shrubs. There are no restrictions regarding the use of that area, other than to be ecologically sensitive to the work that has been completed.

Some interesting history about the creek is that the Nevada City Lions Club used to stock trout in the creek and held a fishing derby for children each year.



Children playing in Deer Creek (photo from August 1, 1973 – The Independent)



Staff photo

Maintenance Shed

There is a maintenance shed located near the playground. This shed is used to store maintenance equipment and supplies for park use.

Bocce Ball Court

An official sized bocce ball court was constructed in 2011 as an Eagle Scout project. The court was funded by the profits of the 2011 Soap Box Derby held as a benefit to Pioneer Park. The Eagle Scout project included a sign explaining the game and will donate Bocce Balls for public rental during the swimming pool season. This further enhances public use of the area.



Vision Statement for Pioneer Park

The Recreation Committee met on August 27, 2010 to create a Vision Statement for Pioneer Park. This is the statement that was created.

Pioneer Park will continue to be a vibrant element of Nevada City and a family friendly place where the community gathers freely in a beautiful, open and safe setting.

The Pioneer Park survey results supported this Vision Statement by stating that they liked the park the way it is; especially the creek, beauty and openness of the park.

Current Uses

Rules & Regulations

The following rules are posted at Pioneer Park and supported by the City's Municipal Code.

1. No alcohol allowed without permit
2. The park is closed 11:00pm-7:00am, with the exception of the Tennis Courts which close at 10pm.
3. No overnight parking or camping without authorization.
4. Smoking is not allowed anywhere in Pioneer Park.
5. No household trash may be disposed of in the park
6. No skateboarding or similar devices allowed.
7. Horses and motor driven cycles prohibited.
8. Children are the responsibility of their parent or guardian.

Programs & Regular Users

City programs that currently take place in the park are summer camps and swimming pool programs. Pool programs include swim lessons, Junior Lifeguard Camp, birthday parties, water exercise and lap swim.

Long-time, regular users of Seaman's Lodge and other areas of the park include, but are not limited to:

- B&T Club
- E Clampus Vitus
- German American Club
- Nordic Skiers of Nevada County
- Sierra Nevada Group - Sierra Club
- Sierra Nevada Canoe & Kayak Club
- Boy Scouts of America
- Cub Scouts of America
- Nevada City Lions Club
- Nevada County Concert Band
- Nevada City Little League
- Horseshoe Club

Seaman's Lodge, the Bandshell and three of the Picnic Areas are available for the public to reserve and rent for private or organizational events. These spaces are reserved on a first-come, first-served basis.

Current facilities

The facilities that currently exist in Pioneer Park are:

- Seaman's Lodge
- Little League Fields (2)
- Snack Bar by Seaman's Lodge (maintained by Little League)
- Basketball Courts (3)
- Caretakers Cottage
- Maintenance Sheds (2 – one belongs to Little League)
- Swimming pool with office, bathhouse and pump room
- Playground
- Carriage House
- Picnic/BBQ Areas (6 – 3 can be reserved, 1 is handicap accessible)
- Bocce Ball Court
- Petanque Court
- Horseshoe pits (12)
- Bathrooms (4 – one is connected to the pool office & one is maintained by Little League)
- Decorative fountain
- Bandshell
- Tennis Courts (2)
- Large grass field

Management Practices

The following chart shows most of the regular maintenance at the park and the associated costs as of 2012.

What	When	Cost
Swimming pool: repair, paint and fill	Annually – Apr/May	\$10,000
Sand replacement in playground	Annually	\$1,500
Picnic table repair & replacement	Annually – spring	\$5,000
Paint bleachers at the ball fields	Annually or bi-annually	\$1,000
Strip and wax floors at Seaman's Lodge	Bi-annually	\$1,000
Resurface tennis courts	It is recommended that public tennis courts be resurfaced every 3-5 years. The courts were resurfaced in 2009.	\$30,000
Garbage, mowing, weed-eating, general repair	Daily or weekly	

Policies for use are provided to any individual, group or organization who is renting a facility at Pioneer Park. All other park patrons are expected to follow and respect the rules and regulations posted at the park entrances and around the park.

Future or planned uses

Projects that are included on the Pioneer Park Project List (Appendix E) should be considered a priority for the Park. However, several past projects were proposed and developed by local non-profits, community groups and private donations. These projects have helped to develop the park and the City benefits from the ideas and efforts of these groups. If a person or organization approaches the City with a project or development idea for Pioneer Park that is not included on the Project List, the City will need to determine if it is a good fit for the park and does not conflict with current plans. The City's **Proposed Project Submission Form** (Appendix D) will be completed by the person/organization making the request and submitted to the City Manager. The City Manager will review the project with staff and provide direction.

Ideally to help cover the costs of maintaining the park, the rentable spaces of the park should be utilized whenever possible to increase revenue streams. The Parks & Recreation Supervisor is currently working on a Marketing Plan for all City facilities. In addition there are some changes that have been included on the Pioneer Park Project List that could make these facilities more attractive and desirable to rent. Those changes include;

- Upgrades to Seaman's Lodge
- Removal of the non-functioning sinks in Picnic-right and a permanent table or structure installed that is similar to Picnic-left
- Installation of a permanent structure next to the BBQ's in Picnic-right
- Having the Upper Picnic Area double as the Petanque Court
- Renovations of the bathrooms
- Drainage of the field has the potential of making the Bandshell a more desirable location for not only music events, but also private functions.

There are several areas where space is available for future development if needed. At this time, no specific changes are being recommended for those spaces, but the locations are highlighted on the map in Appendix F.

Dog Park

It should be noted that at the December 14, 2011 City Council meeting, staff were directed to research possible sites for the location of a dog park. Among the sites researched were areas within Pioneer Park and adjacent to Pioneer Park. The property adjacent to Pioneer Park (10313 Park Avenue) is too steep for a dog park and available space within the park is too small to provide a valuable and functional dog park.

Pioneer Park Project List

Appendix E is the Project List for Pioneer Park. The list is updated and approved annually by the City Council. Projects will be completed when needed and/or when funding is available. Items on the list that have an asterisk (*) will have further explanation attached. It is understood that the projects on the Pioneer Park Project List would need sufficient funding, completion of detailed environmental impact studies and public review before proceeding with construction or development.

Appendix E also includes projects that have been completed at Pioneer Park during the last 5 years.

The City updates its Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) every 5 years. Projects from the Pioneer Park Project List will be included on the City's CIP as appropriate.