

Chapter 3: Open Space and Parks



Vision Statement

Open space is critical to the long-term viability of a community. Open space can take many forms - from active recreation areas to undisturbed natural lands. In some ways, open space can be seen as a region's "green infrastructure." This infrastructure is critical to a community's overall sustainability.

Isla Vista currently enjoys a system of parks, open spaces, informal trails, and recreational opportunities. In addition, the community is surrounded by recreational options including more than five beach access points, and open space and play fields on adjacent UCSB-owned property. However, within Isla Vista some of the existing parks could be redesigned and reconfigured to better serve the community. Specifically, changes to Isla Vista's downtown parks as well as Estero Park in western Isla Vista, are outlined in this chapter.

IVRPD has worked extensively with the community in the past and adopted a Master Plan for Recreation & Park Usage in 1998. The recommendations provided in this Plan build upon work and research IVRPD has already completed and provide guidance for the future of Isla Vista's parks, trails, and open space.

Goals & Policies

Open Space and Parks Goal: Develop a wide variety of public spaces within Isla Vista to provide community focal points for social and entertainment opportunities, open spaces for recreational activities and species preservation, and improving connections to the ocean and mountains while enhancing environmentally sensitive habitats.

Open Space and Parks Policy 1: The parks system shall be enhanced to meet social and community needs and provide more active recreational places.

Open Space and Parks Action 1.1: The RDA, working with IVRPD, should pursue and create space for active recreational uses, such as sand volleyball or basketball courts on Del Playa Drive, and a skate board park at Estero Park, if feasible.

Open Space and Parks Action 1.2: The RDA should encourage IVRPD in coordination with County Parks Department to maintain parks and open space to provide a safe environment, rehabilitating unusable and potentially overgrown areas.

Open Space and Parks Action 1.3: IVRPD is encouraged to update their public space classification system to facilitate a wide range of open areas from undeveloped natural lands to formal spaces.

Open Space and Parks DevStd 1.4: Open space and parks maintenance strategies should be developed to balance an environment conducive to plant growth and human recreational use that reflects the changing relationship between neighborhood centers and edges.

Open Space and Parks Policy 2: In the Downtown Zone district, park development shall provide a visual center for the community that maintains design elements linked to the history and nature of Isla Vista and compliments commercial businesses.

Open Space and Parks Action 2.1: The RDA should work with IVRPD to expand the function of Anisq'Oyo' Park to create a visually prominent core for the community and downtown and to provide a venue for community events.

Open Space and Parks DevStd 2.2: Landscaping on the northern portion of Anisq'Oyo' Park should be designed to incorporate and enhance access to Pardall Road businesses.

Open Space and Parks DevStd 2.3: Future park planning for Anisq'Oyo' Park should consider moving the amphitheater to meet the following criteria: reduced noise impact from park events reaching Pardall Road businesses; increased sun exposure and visual link to the ocean through south-facing orientation; and enhanced access between Pardall Road and Anisq'Oyo' Park.

Open Space and Parks DevStd 2.4: Enhancement plans for Anisq'Oyo' Park wetland shall incorporate increased use of native plants, improved water quality in the pond, possible realignment, and improved stormwater treatment options.

Goals & Policies

Open Space and Parks Policy 3: Sustainable landscaping shall be applied and native plant use supported on properties designated as open space and encouraged on other public land and private property in the interest of promoting natural resources. When selecting trees and plants consider climate, proposed land use, and site-specific geography.

Open Space and Parks Action 3.1: The RDA, IVRPD, and County Public Works should, where feasible, implement sustainable landscape practices to preserve native species and reduce bluff erosion by utilizing plants that are able to thrive in Isla Vista.

Open Space and Parks DevStd 3.2: Development is encouraged to use native plants and non-invasive plants reflecting the diversity of plants that are able to thrive in this climate.

Open Space and Parks Action 3.3: The RDA should encourage IVRPD to establish education programs for Isla Vista residents and homeowners to encourage sustainable or native landscaping on privately owned lands.

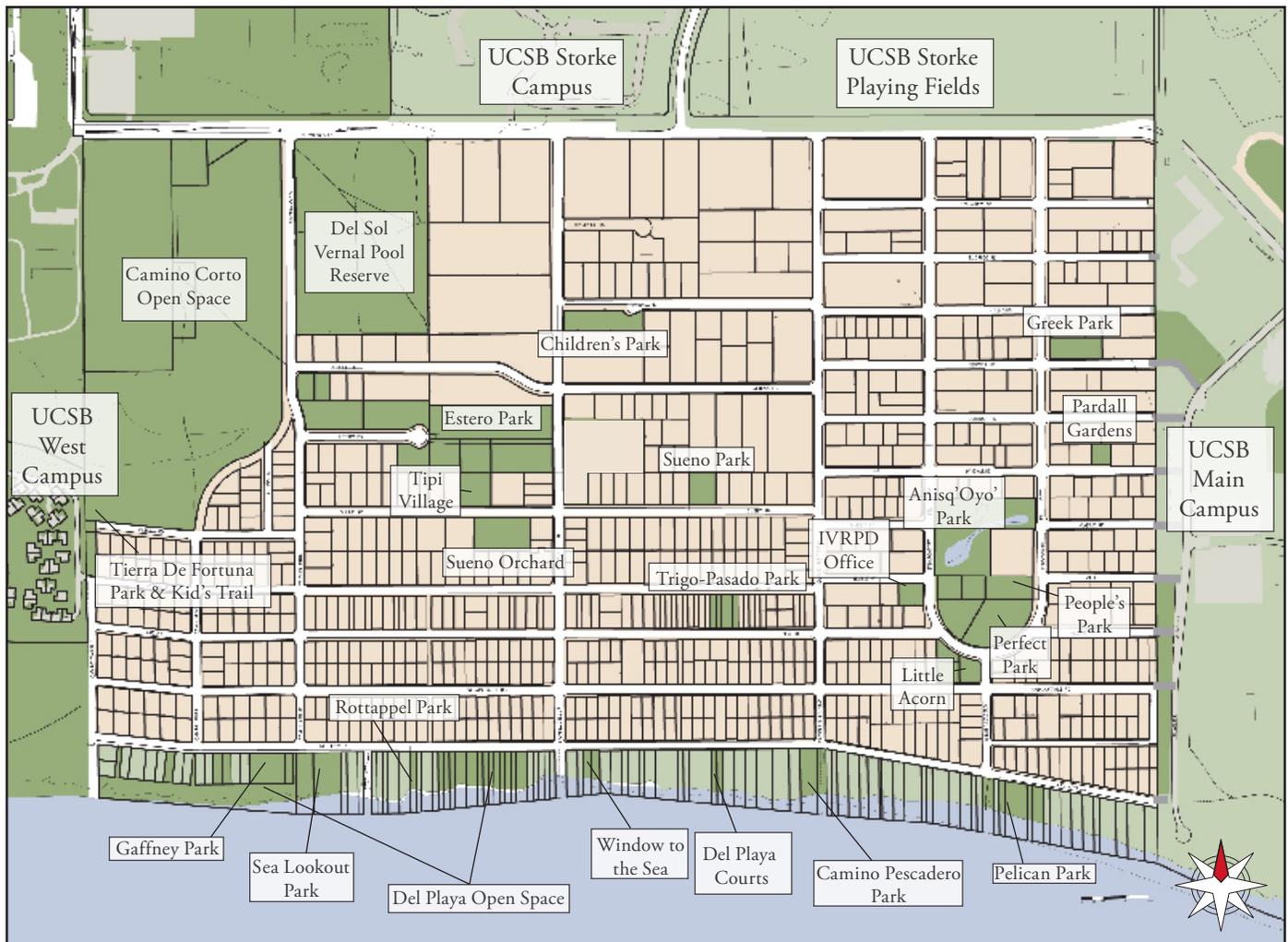
Open Space and Parks Policy 4: The Community's proximity to the Pacific Ocean should be emphasized.

Open Space and Parks Action 4.1: The RDA should coordinate with County agencies to research opportunities to re-open mid-block pedestrian access to the ocean.

Open Space and Parks Action 4.2: Planning and Development shall update Parks, Recreation, and Trails Map #3 for Isla Vista.

Open Space and Parks Action 4.3: The RDA, in coordination with UCSB and IVRPD, shall install "emergency phones" where appropriate, including public trails and parks development.

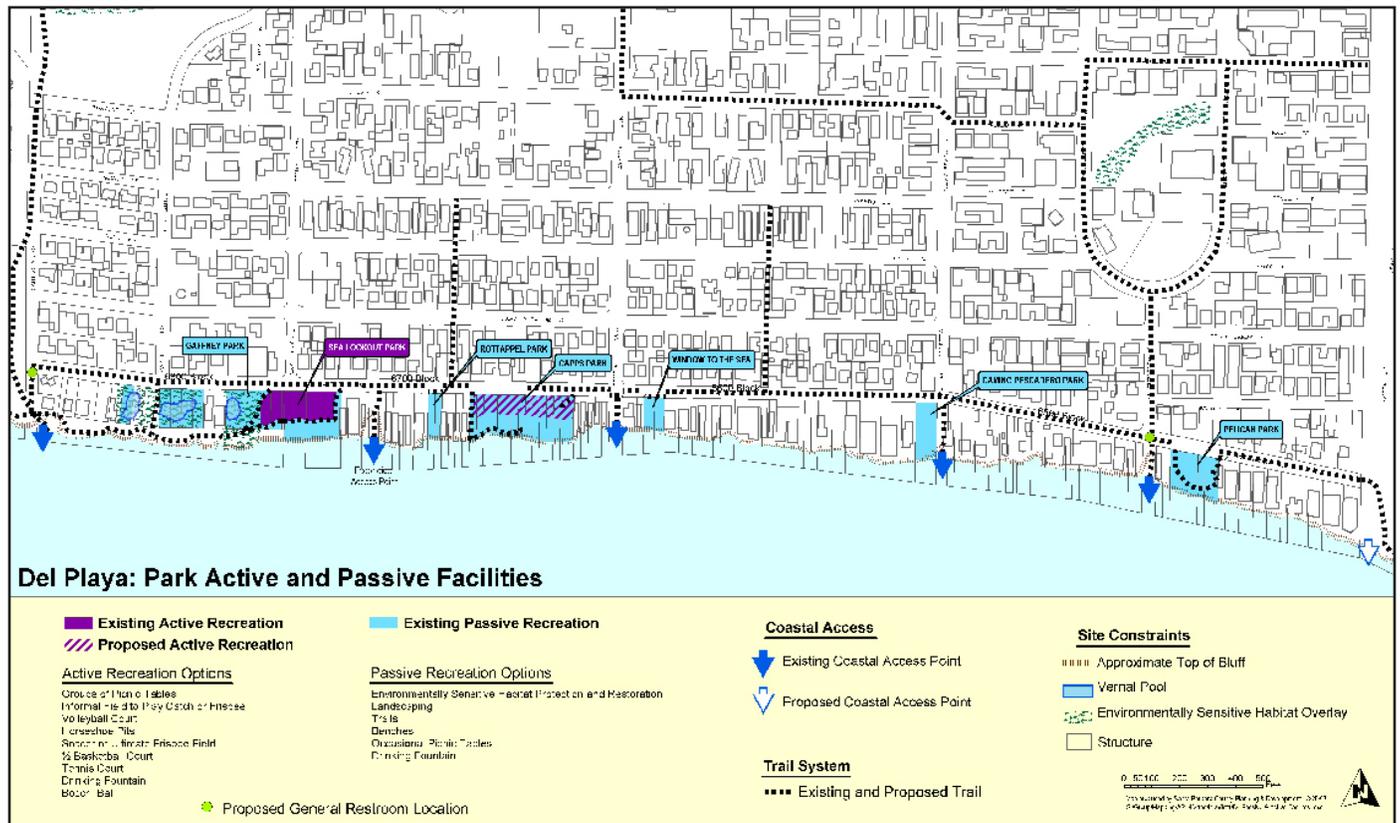
Existing Setting



The community enjoys a park system maintained by the Isla Vista Recreation and Park District (IVRPD), providing both active and passive recreational amenities in a variety of venues. However, a few parks are underutilized and others have areas of dense planting that, while creating places of respite in the urban landscape, can also become uninviting at night.

Open Space and Parks: Del Playa

Active Recreational Space Opportunities



Active and Passive Recreation

The County Parks Department and two 1990's recreation studies identified a general deficit of smaller green playing fields for informal (non-league tournament) recreation throughout the South Coast. The 2000 US Census Report identified 1,293 children (17 years old and under) in Isla Vista who may not have the same access to UCSB facilities as adults in Isla Vista. Additional children's play equipment and playing fields may be desirable.

Less than ten acres of parks are programmed with existing active recreational facilities. Much of the open space acreage is constrained with environmentally sensitive habitat (ESH). For example, Camino Corto Park by Isla Vista School, 20.47 acres, and Del Sol Vernal Pool Reserve, 12 acres, make up a significant portion of the area parkland with resources. Anisq'Oyo Park features a wetland, while portions of the bluffs also feature vernal pools. ESH areas are compatible with passive recreation amenities such as sensitively located walking trails, benches for wildlife watching, and occasional picnic tables.

Since so many acres of parks in Isla Vista are dedicated to ESH use, remaining parkland could be programmed for active use to the maximum extent feasible. Approximately 14% of Isla Vista parkland acreage appears potentially available for active recreation. Possible location for informal active uses, such as an open field for ball play, could be incorporated into park facilities where the natural resources are still preserved.

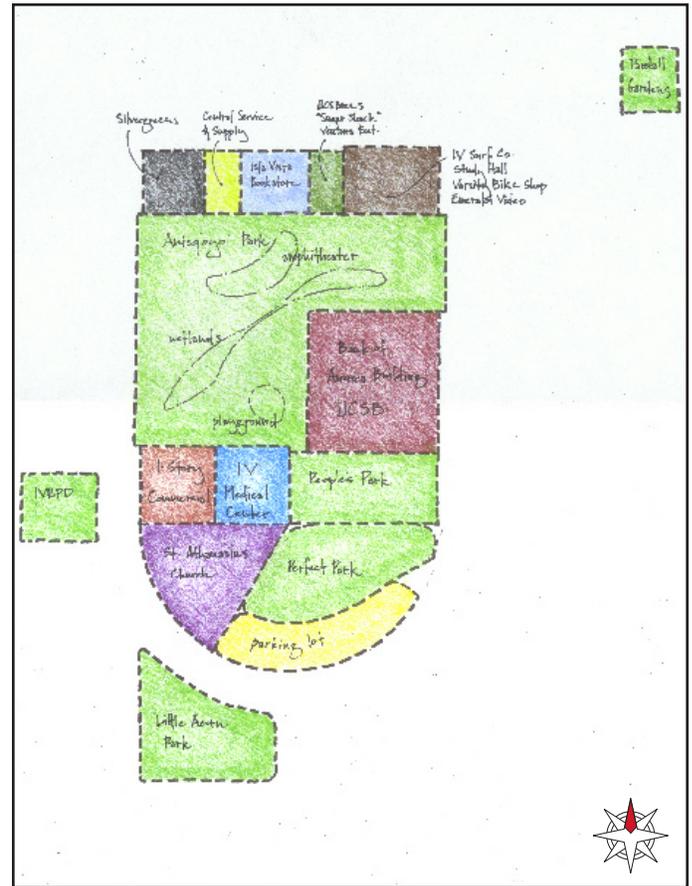
Existing park facilities in Isla Vista

County Park standards are 4.7 acres of park per 1,000 people. Isla Vista has 56.44 acres of IVRPD, County and RDA park property. The population of Isla Vista is approximately 20,000, creating a ratio of 2.8 acres of park land per 1,000 people. This figure does not include Isla Vista beaches, UCSB property (Storke field), nor Coal Oil Point.

The acreage of Isla Vista bluff-top property is approximately 11% percent of the overall park acreage in Isla Vista. Due to the unique nature of the coastal bluff, the amount of active recreation programmed for bluffs needs careful consideration. Uses that can only occur in such a unique natural coastal setting, such as inspirational passive uses should take priority over uses that can be accommodated elsewhere in the community.

Parks System: Downtown

Anisq'Oyo' Park



Existing Downtown Parks & Uses

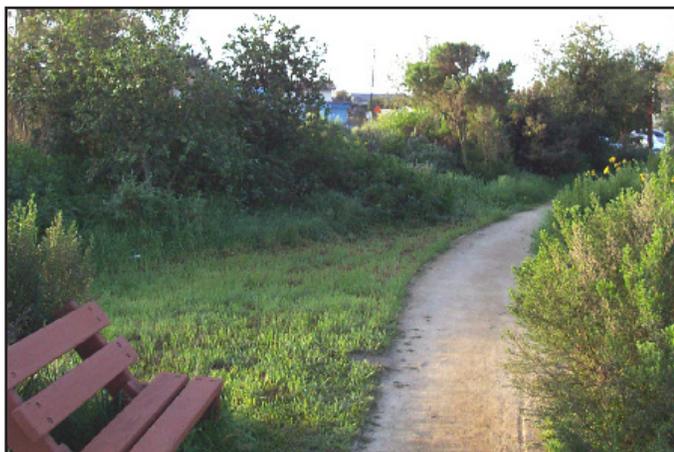
Anisq'Oyo' Park, Perfect Park, and People's Park form a large urban park in downtown Isla Vista. Together they form a significant amenity to the downtown area.

Anisq'Oyo' Park includes a small outdoor amphitheater (1) which has been the location of many community events. The playgrounds (2), at the center of the park, are well used. The extensive man-made pond (3) is an environmentally sensitive habitat, and serves as a home for local wildlife. Perfect Park (4) at the southern end of the loop, provides a picturesque landscape of indigenous plants and pathways. People's Park (5) provides a large expanse of lawn directly opposite the Isla Vista Medical Center. There are also several buildings nearby: St. Athanasius Orthodox Church (6), a small commercial building (7) housing several tenants, the Isla Vista Medical Center (8), and the recently-renovated Embarcadero Hall (9).

Little Acorn Park (10) lies to the south across Embarcadero Del Mar and provides passive recreational opportunities. Pardall Gardens (11), also providing passive recreation space, is located on the north side of Pardall Road.

Parks System

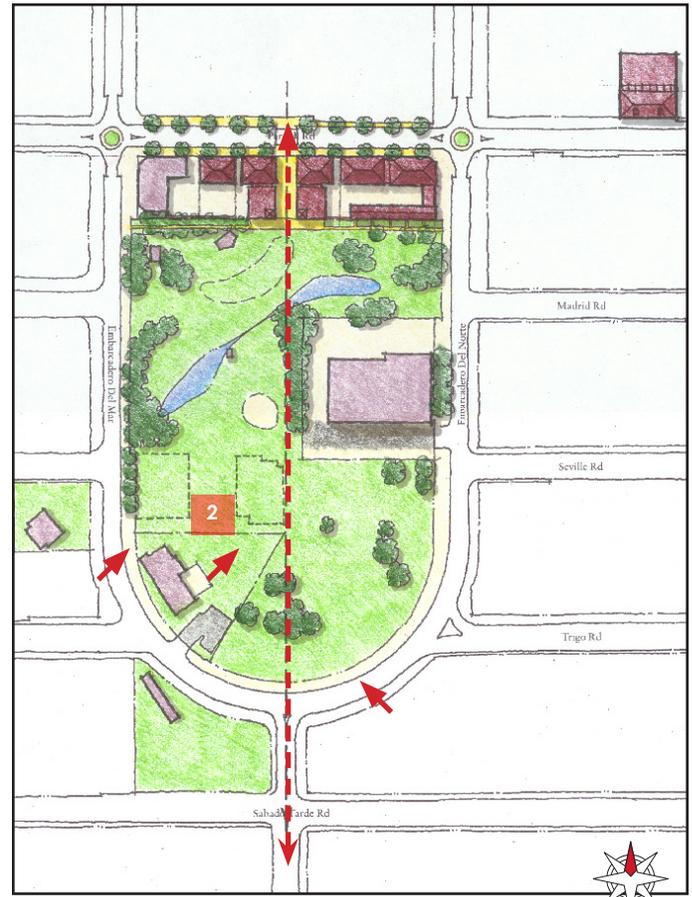
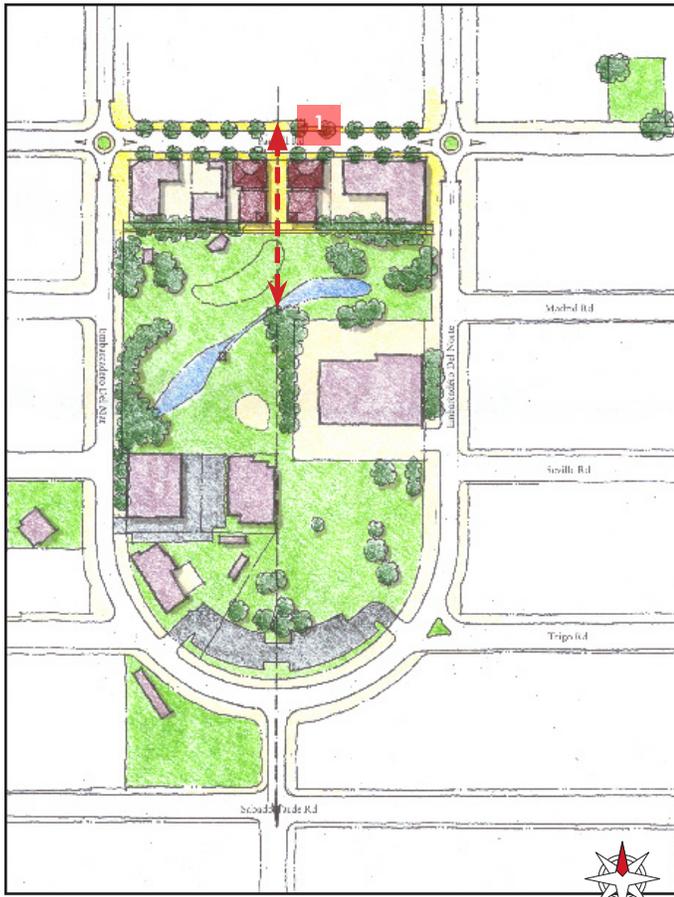
Anisq'Oyo' Park



Clockwise from above left, views of Anisq'Oyo' Park:existing amphitheater in Anisq'Oyo' Park, Playground in Anisq'Oyo' Park, People's Park and medical center, St. Athanasius Orthodox Church, path and seating in Perfect Park, Wetland (Environmentally Sensitive Habitat).

Parks System

Anisq'Oyo' Park



Vision - Establish Pardall Road/Anisq'Oyo' Paseo

Vision - Reconfigure Use of Southern Anisq'Oyo'

Although downtown parks provide many possibilities for active and passive recreation in and around downtown Isla Vista, there were many issues identified during the design process. Many locations in the parks are picturesque, but are heavily planted; these potentially overgrown areas were topics of community concern. Another issue discussed was the poor relationship that exists between downtown retail businesses and the surrounding parks. Along Pardall Road, many businesses actually back onto Anisq'Oyo' Park. The environmentally sensitive habitat within Anisq'Oyo' requires extensive maintenance, especially during the summer months. In addition, due to the pond's ESH designation, its wetland buffer may affect adjacent properties.

During initial phases of downtown revitalization, a new pedestrian paseo (1) should be created in coordination with new, mixed-use retail development along Pardall Road, connecting downtown activity with activities within the park. This proposal is discussed further in Chapter 4.1: Downtown Isla Vista.

Properties inside the Embarcadero Loop (2) should be encouraged to form strategic partnerships that would allow them to relocate - potentially to new, mixed-use buildings facing the park - in order to free up additional land for park expansion.

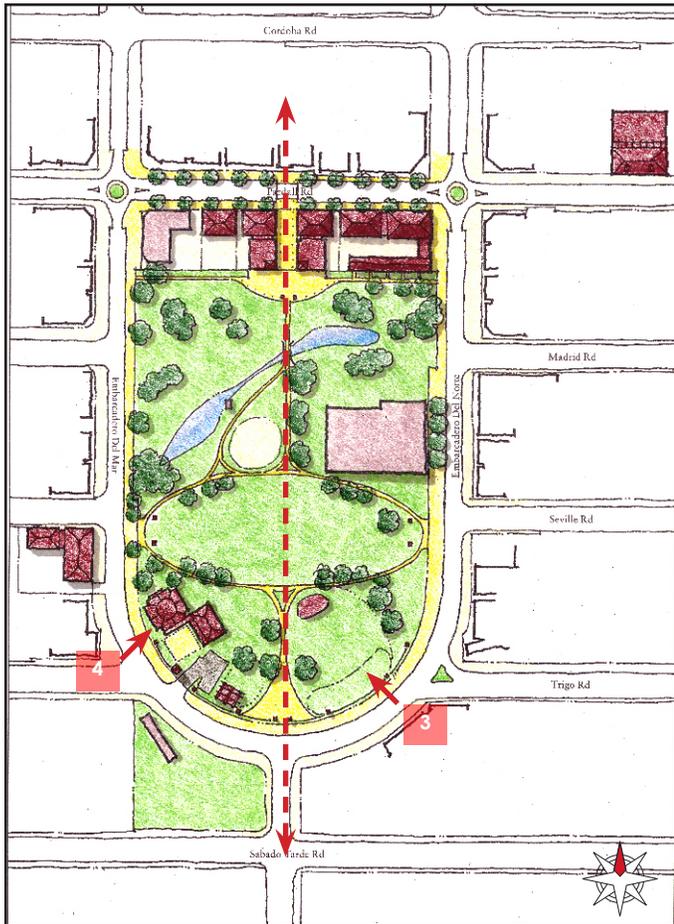
Open Space and Parks Action 2.1:
The RDA should work with IVRPD to expand the function of Anisq'Oyo' Park to create a visually prominent core for the community and downtown and to provide a venue for community events.

See **Downtown Action 2.1**

Open Space and Parks DevStd 2.2:
Landscaping on the northern portion of Anisq'Oyo' Park shall be designed to incorporate and enhance access to Pardall Road businesses.

Park System Components

Anisq'Oyo' Park



Vision - Replace Amphitheater Multi-use Space



Vision - Restoration and Enhancement of Wetland

As the downtown parking management system is implemented, the amphitheater (3) should be relocated to define the southern semi-circular section of the park. A raised platform should be provided for informal social interaction at the south end.

If St. Athanasius Orthodox Church (4) wishes to remain within the park, their church - or a new or renovated chapel - may be easily integrated into such a space as illustrated above.

Enhancement of the environmentally sensitive habitat (5) will be essential to the improved function of the pond, park, and the downtown. The man-made pond constructed in 1974 collects street runoff from the adjacent area. IVRPD adds water to the pond in the summer to maintain surface water from the adjacent area. A fence surrounds the pond and the street inflow channel from the east, and two foot bridges cross the pond. Due to the biological function issues listed on the next page, it is recommended that the wetland be enhanced and reconfigured to improve its function and quality.

Open Space and Parks DevStd 2.3:

Future park planning for Anisq'Oyo' Park should consider moving the amphitheater to meet the following criteria: reduced noise impact from park events reaching Pardall Road businesses; increased sun exposure and visual link to the ocean through south-facing orientation; and enhanced access between Pardall Road and Anisq'Oyo' Park.

See **Downtown Actions 2.1-3**

Park System Components

Anisq'Oyo' Park

Wetland Existing Issues

- Water required in summer and fall to maintain man-made pond.
- Sparse habitat: narrow margin of wetland-associated plants around the pond and small number of trees and large shrubs in transition area from wetland to upland that can provide cover for wildlife.
- Anaerobic conditions are often present in the pond due to runoff containing fertilizer nutrients and human and pet wastes, resulting in algae and bullrush growth.
- Periodic bullrush removal disturbs pond habitat.
- Presence of non-native slider turtles.

Potential Restoration Plan Components

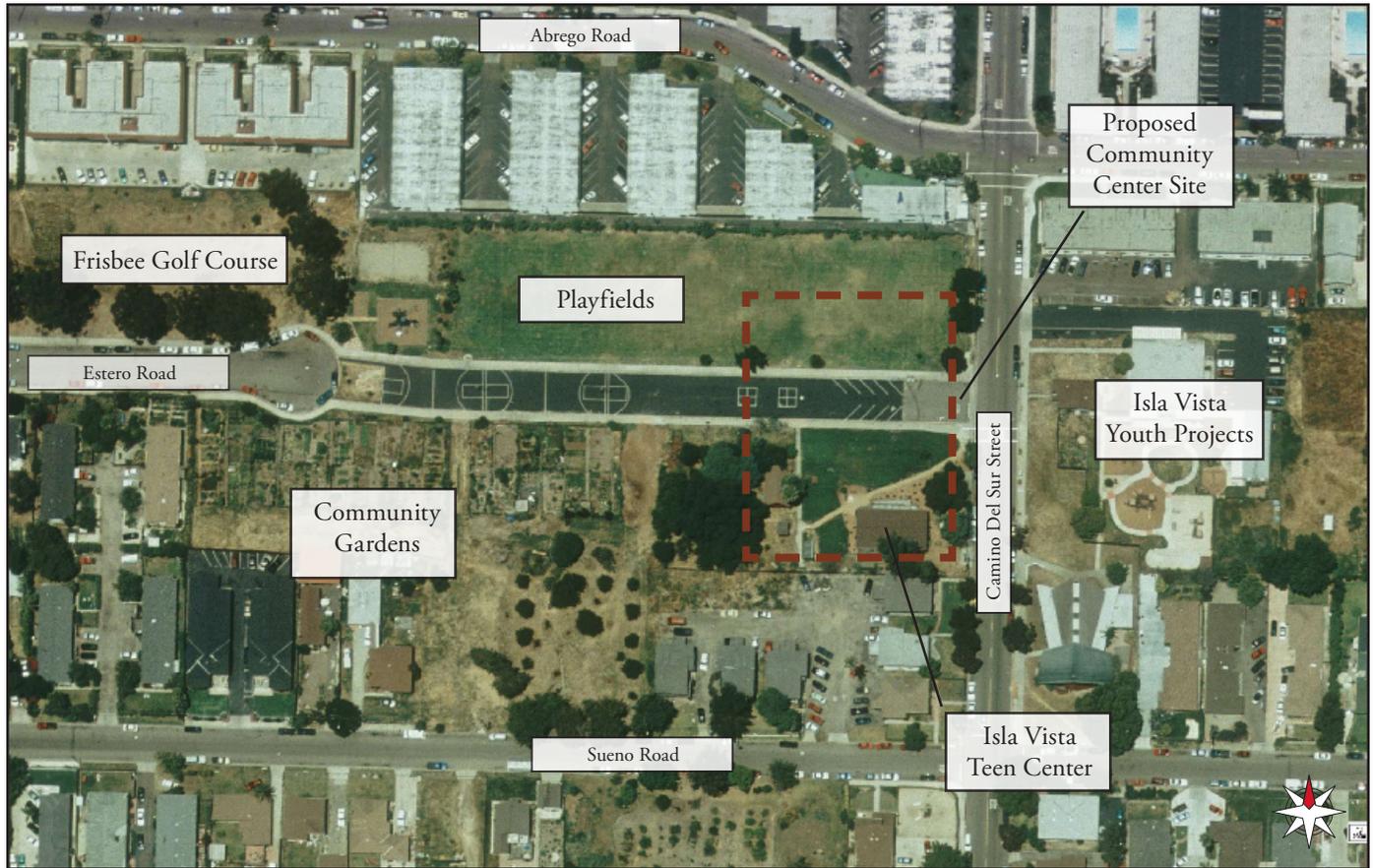
- Plant additional native wetland species.
- Reduce fertilizer input to pond.
- Improve screening or filtration of water entering the pond to reduce pollutants in the pond; possibly design a bioswale for stormwater runoff from downtown.
- Change the pond bottom composition for better filtration.
- Reconfigure the pond to require less water additions in the summer and fall.
- Reconfigure the pond to accommodate areas for additional transitional upland/wetland habitat.

Further study of potential enhancement components will help determine the best way to improve the function of the pond area of the Anisq'Oyo' Park and its relationship to the surrounding community uses.

Open Space and Parks DevStd 2.4:
Enhancement plans for Anisq'Oyo' Park wetland shall incorporate increased use of native plants, improved water quality in the pond, possible realignment, and improved stormwater treatment options.

Parks System: Western Isla Vista

Estero Park



Estero Park, located in western Isla Vista, is a medium-sized park with a variety of passive and active recreational opportunities. Outdoor amenities include children’s play equipment, volleyball courts, basketball courts, a frisbee-golf course and picnic areas. A substantial community garden is also present. Nearby Sueno Orchard contains over one hundred mostly fruit-bearing trees cultivated with organic gardening principles. See page 4-32 for more detailed illustration of the Estero Neighborhood.

Open Space and Parks Action 1.1:
The RDA, working with IVRPD, should pursue and create space for active recreational uses, such as sand volleyball or basketball courts on Del Playa Drive, and a skate board park at Estero Park, if feasible.

Open Space and Parks Action 1.2:
The RDA should encourage IVRPD in coordination with County Parks Department to maintain parks and open space to provide a safe environment, rehabilitating unusable and potentially overgrown areas.

Park System: Western Isla Vista

Estero Park



Recreational amenities in Estero Park



Isla Vista Teen Center in Estero Park



View of Isla Vista Youth Projects



Estero Park Community Gardens

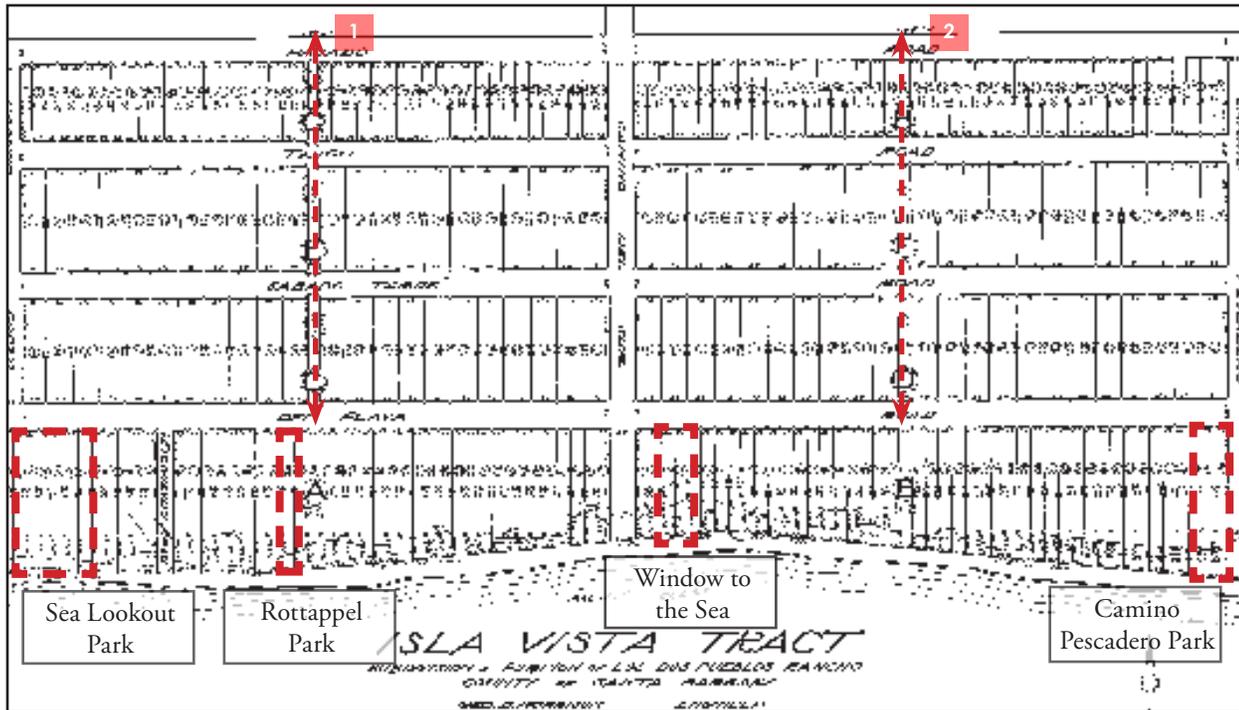
The addition of a new Community Center to Estero Park’s eastern end will provide an opportunity to redesign elements of the park. With the reconfiguration of the basketball courts to the north, the area along the old Estero Road right-of-way can be used for active recreation playfields. The Community Gardens can be improved with the addition of the historic Red Barn to their facilities.

IVRPD’s Tipi Village along Sueno Road is currently underutilized. With the addition of the new Community Center, a new skate park in close proximity to the Isla Vista Teen Center is proposed. Development of the skate park should be undertaken with park improvements to reinforce the connection between Sueno Orchard and Estero Park.

More information can be found in Chapter 4.2: Estero Neighborhood.

Open Space and Parks DevStd 1.4: Open space and parks maintenance strategies should be developed to balance an environment conducive to plant growth and human recreational use that reflects the changing relationship between neighborhood centers and edges.

See **Open Space and Parks Action 1.3**



Passageways/Connectivity

The 6600 and 6700 blocks of Pasado, Trigo, Sabado Tarde, and Del Playa are exceptionally long. In order to increase north-south pedestrian connectivity on these blocks, mid-block pedestrian pathways could be created. Ideally, once created, the easements would be detailed as pathways, encroachments would not be allowed, and street lighting would be added.

(1) Central Isla Vista includes one mid-block pedestrian passage that bisects the long block between Camino Corto and Camino Del Sur. The passage measures approximately 18' in the northerly part of the passage and approximately 20' wide in the southerly part of the passage. If encroachments are cleared, it would allow convenient pedestrian and bicyclist connections between Pasado Road and Del Playa Drive. The western passage ends at Window to the Sea Park. Historic research illustrates that this western mid-block passage existed on the initial platting of the Isla Vista Tract. County ownership of the passages continues, although it has been paved, fenced and is currently used for car parking by adjacent private property owners.

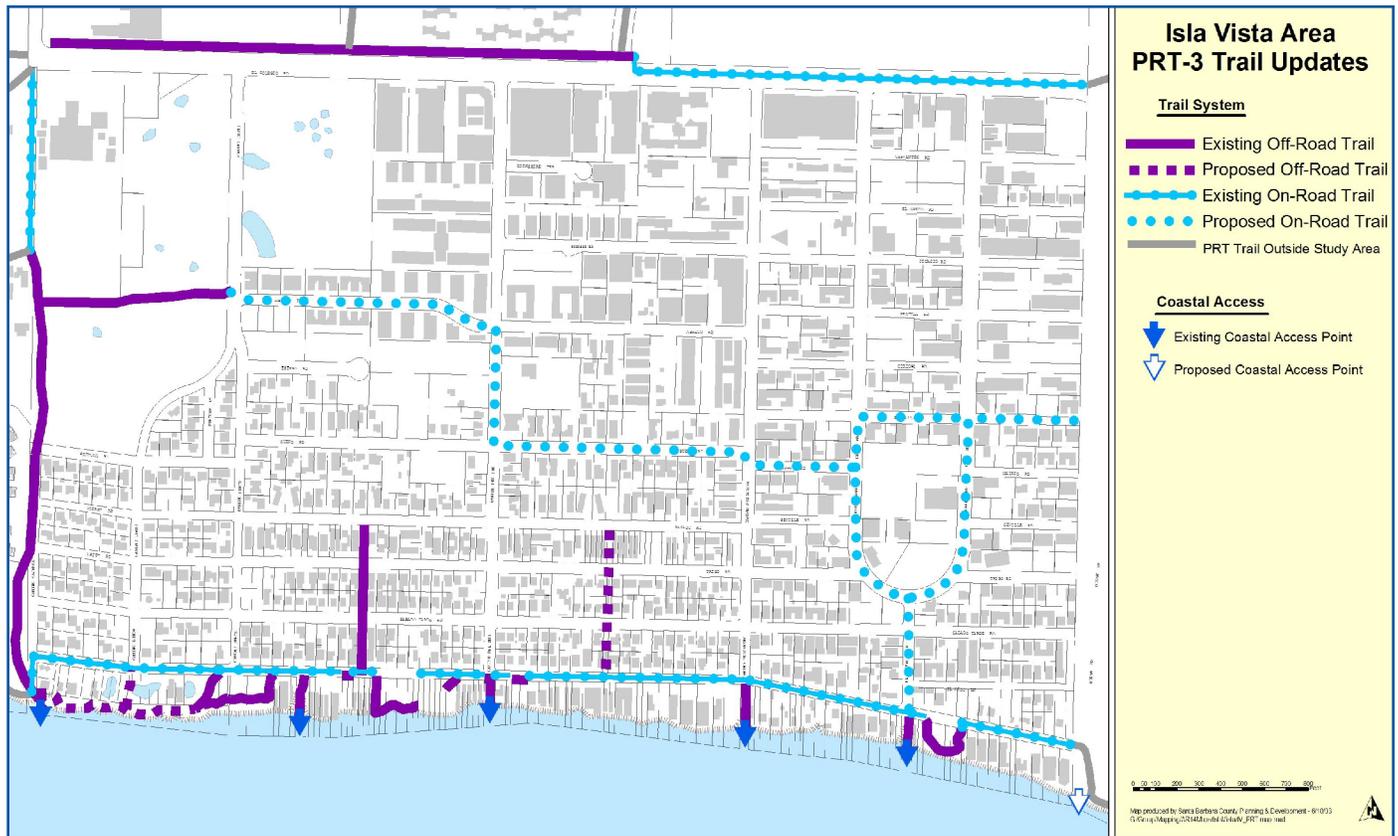
(2) An easement between Camino Del Sur and Camino Pescadero has likely never been held by the County, but as a long-term planning concept, a similar passage here could be a beneficial community objective. However, the proposed passage would be more difficult to establish because of development on the proposed passageway area.

Since the western mid-block passage land is already owned by the County, it should be given a higher priority for implementation.

Open Space and Parks Action 4.1:

The RDA should coordinate with County agencies to research opportunities to re-open mid-block pedestrian access to the ocean.

Streets Action 1.5: The RDA and Public Works shall review and determine methods to rebuild and specially landscape El Embarcadero, and consider stop sign or rotaries at the intersection with Sabado Tarde, with appropriate materials to calm traffic, improve and strengthen access to the ocean, and visually enhance the corridor.



Parks, Recreation and Trails Map

The 1993 Goleta Community Plan updated the County Comprehensive Plan Parks, Recreation and Trails Map (PRT-3). PRT-3, which includes Isla Vista, establishes a planning tool for a proposed network of trails, and identifies existing trail easements and proposed trail corridors. The figure above represents proposed updates to PRT-3 for the Planning Area. The proposed Del Playa trail has been sited to complete perimeter trail routing around Isla Vista and connect with existing trails to the east and west on UCSB property.

A PRT designation of “Existing Trail” means the County has an easement for the trail. This does not mean that the trail is passable or that the trail is a formal trail, sited, and maintained in accordance with County trail guidelines. Trails indicated as either Existing or Proposed on the map designate the existence of, or a proposal for, future formal public access and do not imply that the County or IVRPD maintains or will maintain a trail formally. Most trails in Isla Vista are “informal.” Formal trails, sited and maintained by the County, would likely have different characteristics than informal trails.

The trails update for Isla Vista does not include any proposals for trails on private property, other than the joint-interest County and homeowner parcel at the west end of the bluffs. The jointly owned property may be subject to agreed upon use conditions placed on the property by the joint owners.

The PRT maps create proposed trail locations for long-term (20 years into the future) planning purposes. As a planning document, the PRT maps are not distributed as an “informational trail map.”

***Open Space and Parks Action 4.2:**
Planning and Development shall update Parks, Recreation and Trails Map #3 for Isla Vista.

The trail designation is meant to facilitate access to Del Playa's five coastal access points. Passive recreation that minimizes impact to coastal resources while facilitating the public's enjoyment of those resources is integral to the Coastal Act and Local Coastal Plan.



Specific Trails

Del Playa Drive

A future trail could connect to sidewalks within a safe distance along the bluffs. The trail could connect publicly owned open space parcels with sidewalks on the south side of Del Playa. Sidewalks currently exist along much of the south side of Del Playa, although there are gaps. See Chapter 2: Streets for information regarding additional sidewalks that could be installed to complete a linked trail system.

If, in the future, the proposed Del Playa trail were to be formalized, the following would be expected components of trail formalization, where appropriate:

- Use
- Signage
- Off-Road Trail Surface and Width
- On-Road Trail Improvements
- Landscape and Pavement Improvements
- Bluff Retreat
- Liability

Parks System

Beach Access



Beach Access

Beach access is an important resource to the Isla Vista community. Currently, the existing access point spacing along the Del Playa bluff appears sufficient. However, maintaining these access points from the impacts of erosion and wave action is a continuous task. The County and IVRPD should prioritize continuous funding to ensure existing stairways remain open and accessible to the public.

In the future, as the community grows and funding is available, such as local and state grants, two additional beach access points have been identified.

Eastern End of Del Playa

A previously open informal beach access on UCSB property directly east of the end of Del Playa is proposed as a future coastal access point. This would be a high priority project for new beach access at the western end of Del Playa because it could serve both Isla Vista residents and campus residents along Ocean Road.



Open Space and Parks Action

3.1: The RDA, IVRPD and County Public Works should, where feasible, implement sustainable landscape practices to preserve native species and reduce bluff erosion by utilizing plants which are able to thrive in Isla Vista.

Chapter 2, Streets Action 4.5: The RDA and Public Works shall review and determine methods to rebuild and specially landscape El Embarcadero with appropriate materials to calm traffic, improve and strengthen access to the ocean, and visually enhance the corridor.

Chapter 2, Streets Action 4.6: The RDA, Public Works and County Parks Department should, where feasible, create pedestrian and bicycle routes to connect established trails and coastal routes along the perimeter of Isla Vista.

Catalyst Projects

Improvements to public open space, parks, and trails in Isla Vista will be implemented over time. Specific projects are identified in this chapter that will be developed by the public sector to stimulate private sector investment in Isla Vista, correct infrastructure deficiencies, and enhance the quality of the community's parks, road network, and public plazas.

- Anisq'Oyo' Park Enhancement
- Anisq'Oyo' north park improvements
- Anisq'Oyo' south park improvements
- Long term acquisitions
- Estero Neighborhood Park (see Chapter 4.2)
- Improved Public Access and Trails