



# Verde Lakes Community Park

# Strategic Development Plan

September 7, 2024

## Purpose

This Strategic Development Plan outlines the goals for the collaborative development of the Community Lake Community Park, referred to herein as the "Park," a joint initiative between the Town of Camp Verde (hereafter, the "Town") and the Verde Lakes Recreation Corporation (hereafter, the "Corporation"). This document details the strategic objectives to be achieved and provides a conceptual framework for the action steps required to meet those objectives.

## Park Lease and Operation

The Town currently holds an ongoing cooperative lease agreement (see attached) for the Park property, which permits the Town to operate the Park as a Town recreational site. The lease for the larger Park parcel may be terminated by either party with a twelve (12) month notice.

## Park Property Description

The Park consists of two contiguous land parcels totaling 6.79 acres: Parcel #404-15-267D (6.56 acres) and Parcel #404-15-267C (0.23 acres). Situated at 3012 S. Aspen Way in the Verde Lakes neighborhood, these parcels are owned by the Verde Lakes Recreation Corporation, a 501(c)(3) organization, under a Warranty Deed from 1982. The property has historically served as a membership park for local residents. Deed restrictions mandate that the property remains a recreational area, or ownership reverts to the original owner.

Bounded by Hilltop Drive to the north and S. Aspen Way to the east, the Park is accessible by vehicle and foot from both streets. It is adjacent to private residential properties on the west, south, and northeast sides. A fragile split-rail wood fence runs along S. Aspen Way, with various private fences marking the residential boundaries.

Two small ponds within the Park are fed by an irrigation ditch in the northeast corner. Water flows from the smaller "upper pond" to the larger "lower pond" through a concrete spillway and pedestrian bridge, contingent on water availability. The ponds are bordered by an earthen embankment and have accumulated several feet of silt, with undercut and eroded banks. Several large cottonwood trees around the pond perimeter have fallen or died due to water supply issues or root undercutting. The remainder of the Park features smaller mesquite and other trees and shrubs.

Since entering into the cooperative lease agreement in spring 2021, the Town has undertaken significant tree and brush removal and routine maintenance. Improvements include installing rule and identification signage, replacing hazardous picnic tables and benches, installing new picnic tables and benches, adding perimeter pipe-rail fencing along Hilltop Drive and the southern property line, and defining a parking area with boulders. The Town has also installed two concrete BBQs, a corn hole set, and rebuilt a horseshoe pit. A collapsed culvert near the S. Aspen Way entrance has been replaced, and a large hazardous tree in the area has been removed.

Additionally, the Town commissioned a professional land survey to establish definitive park boundaries

and topography to aid in future planning and construction. Some boundary encroachments on the south and west sides will establish new property boundaries due to their age.

The Camp Verde Parks & Recreation Division (hereafter, "Parks & Rec") is responsible for park usage and programming and leads planning for amenity improvements. The Camp Verde Public Works Department and Town Engineer (hereafter, "Public Works") handle restoration and construction around the ponds and address water supply issues. The Camp Verde Maintenance Division (hereafter, "Maintenance") manages daily park upkeep and supports Parks & Rec in implementing amenity improvements. The Public Works Director serves as the primary liaison between the Corporation and the Town.

## Strategic Goals

This Strategic Development Plan (hereafter, "Plan") identifies the following goals to enhance public benefit from the Park:

1. Facilitate a cooperative effort between the Town and the Corporation to establish a Town ownership plan or a long-term lease agreement for the Park. This will enable the Town to provide consistent funding and direction for amenity construction, park restoration, and ongoing maintenance.
2. Collaborate to authorize, fund, install, and maintain various recreational and support amenities as determined by public and staff input, guided by Town recreation plans.
3. Work together to improve the physical condition of the ponds and enhance the water supply to maintain adequate water levels for public enjoyment.

### **Strategic Goal #1: Ownership or Long-Term Lease Agreement**

The Town and Corporation will work together to establish a Town ownership plan or a long-term lease agreement, enabling the Town to secure funding for park development and maintenance.

#### *Action Steps*

- The Corporation will draft a long-term lease agreement for the Town's consideration.
- The Corporation will meet with the Town Manager and Public Works Director to discuss and negotiate the lease terms, with the finalized agreement reviewed by the Town Attorney.
- Once agreement terms are settled, the Parks & Recreation Commission will review and provide recommendations for approval within 60-90 days.
- The Town Council will then review and vote on the agreement within 60-90 days following the Commission's recommendation.
- The Town and Corporation will engage in ongoing discussions to explore a potential purchase option in the future, ensuring both parties align on long-term goals for park development and land ownership.

## **Strategic Goal #2: Development and Installation of Park Amenities**

The Town and Corporation will collaborate to fund and install various recreational and support amenities, ensuring they align with the Park's vision and community input.

### *Design Principles for Verde Lakes Community Park*

- **Vision:** The Park will maintain a natural setting with moderate development, guided by the Camp Verde Recreation Master Plan and user feedback.
- **Users:** The Park will cater to individuals, families, and small groups, emphasizing passive, informal recreation.
- **Environment:** Native, drought-tolerant plants will be used, and improvements will be designed to blend with the natural landscape and neighborhood.
- **Design Restrictions:** Large group activities, enclosed buildings, and high-intensity facilities (e.g., sports fields, extensive lighting) are not compatible with the Park's vision.

### *Preliminary Appropriate Improvements*

- Park signage (identification and rules), access control fencing, picnic tables, benches, small play structures, walking/interpretive trails, restrooms, drinking fountains, security lighting, corn hole, and horseshoe games.

### *Inappropriate Improvements*

- Irrigated sports fields, large enclosed buildings, extensive parking lots, and large area lighting.
- #### *Action Steps*
- Parks & Rec will continue to seek funding authorization for amenity improvements based on public input and council direction.
  - The Town and Corporation will monitor grant opportunities to support the Park with minimal matching funds.

## **Strategic Goal #3: Pond Restoration and Water Supply Improvement**

The Town and Corporation will work together to restore the ponds and ensure a reliable water supply, preserving the Park's riparian character.

### *Action Steps*

- Stabilize pond edges to protect existing trees and prepare for future lining.
- Remove accumulated silt to deepen ponds, improve storage capacity, and support potential firefighting needs.
- Work with the Corporation to clarify water rights and implement drainage improvements to support pond water levels.
- Seek council approval to engage in water rights discussions, ensuring the ponds remain a viable water source for emergencies.