Canoa Hills Trails
An Open Space Park

Project Overview & Master Plan Concept Review
February 25, 2021
On April 17, 2018, the Pima County Board of Supervisors and the Pima County Regional Flood Control District Board of Directors passed a resolution approving the donation of Canoa Hills Golf Course to the Regional Flood Control District. The resolution states that the retired golf course be converted to a nature park, focusing on “open space and conservation values.” The park was renamed Canoa Hills Trails - An Open Space Park.

Canoa Hills Trails master plan development began in fall, 2019 through a contract with the University of Arizona. The master planning process involved thorough background research, a detailed site assessment, production of design concepts, and the development of a preliminary master plan. Because Canoa Hills Trails is tightly integrated within the Green Valley community, incorporating community perspectives and feedback into park design is essential to ensure the park is well-loved and relevant to the surrounding community. Unfortunately, due to the coronavirus pandemic, community outreach events were postponed from March 2020 until February 2021.

Following is an overview of the master planning process, outcomes, and next steps for Canoa Hills Trails - a 136-acre former golf course in Green Valley, Arizona. Material presented here is current as of February 25, 2021, but is subject to change and should not be viewed as final.
**Site History & Project Background**

- **1984**: Canoa Hills Golf Course opens
- **2018**: Site donated to Pima County Regional Flood Control District for conversion to a nature park
- **2019**: Site improvements begin; master plan development begins; site renamed to “Canoa Hills Trails Open Space Park”
- **2020**: Project delayed due to pandemic; coordination with Green Valley Council to gather community feedback
- **2021**: Gathering of community feedback; continued master plan development
- **2022**: Site improvements completed; site functions as golf course

**Timeline Descriptions**

- **1984**: Canoa Hills Golf Course opens
- **2018**: Site purchased by Borderland Construction
- **2019**: Site improvements begin; master plan development begins; site renamed to “Canoa Hills Trails Open Space Park”
- **2020**: Project delayed due to pandemic; coordination with Green Valley Council to gather community feedback
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**Location and Image Descriptions**

- **Canoa Hills Golf Course, 2001 (Aaron Latham, Arizona Daily Star)**
- **Canoa Hills Golf Course, 2019**
- **Site prior to donation, 2018 (Katy Bottemiller, Green Valley News)**
- **Canoa Hills Trails, 2019**

**Notes**

- Site not maintained; becomes overgrown with low-diversity, early successional communities
- Site owned and maintained by Pima County Regional Flood Control District; restoration of hydrologic function and wildlife habitat begins
The project program aligns with County restoration goals, community recreation needs, background research findings, and the site assessment. The three identified goals and supporting objectives guided master plan development.

1. **Enhance ecological and hydrological function and resilience of site**
   - Preserve existing native vegetation on site and identify areas for sustainable ecosystem restoration and enhancement
   - Manage invasive species and develop a vegetation maintenance plan
   - Re-establish stable stormwater flow paths on site, mitigate erosion hazards, and provide basins to slow subdivision run-off

2. **Promote environmental stewardship through stakeholder and visitor engagement**
   - Meet with stakeholder groups and identify their concerns and potential interest in caring for park
   - Identify specific stewardship tasks and areas for volunteers to focus efforts

3. **Provide passive recreation opportunities for a range of users**
   - Provide accessible trails with interpretive opportunities for visitors with more limited physical abilities
   - Implement longer, more strenuous trails for users desiring a more difficult and naturalistic trail experience
   - Designate interpretive and gathering nodes
A number of organizations are involved in the operation, maintenance, and stewardship of Canoa Hills Trails. Incorporating these entities and their perspectives, services, and limitations is an important consideration in developing a functional and realistic master plan.

Owns, manages, and finances Canoa Hills Trails

Maintains Canoa Hills Trails

Received a small grant to enhance wildlife habitat and interpretation in several areas at Canoa Hills Trails

Assists in coordinating community outreach events to integrate community concerns into park design through the Park Advisory Committee

Oversees the Friends of the Canoa Parks, a volunteer management group which supports Pima County Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation and the 5,000-acre park system through community outreach programs, fundraising, and various community partnerships

Plus…

Friends of the Canoa Parks

10 HOAs adjacent to the site

Neighbors surrounding the site
site assessment

local context
bicycle map
views & character
site ecology
connectivity
Canoa Hills Trails is located between three public parks that host a diversity of recreation opportunities. The West Desert Preserve provides rustic hiking and mountain biking trails for the adventurous, while two maintained baseball fields can be found at Canoa Preserve Park. The historic Canoa Ranch provides un-paved hiking and horse-back riding trails, as well as space and amenities that accommodate large events and gatherings (enhancements to these areas are on-going).

With over 5 miles of well-maintained concrete paths, rolling hills, and open areas loosely canopied with mature mesquites, Canoa Hills Trails could contribute to recreation opportunities in Green Valley by providing accessible and paved walking trails in a nature park setting and space for informal, small-scale gatherings.
Due to safety concerns, bicycling is prohibited at Canoa Hills Trails. However, Green Valley has numerous other bicycling opportunities for those that desire them. Shown here are bicycle-friendly roads (-----) as well as hiking and bicycling trails where motor vehicles are prohibited (-----). Bicyclists should be directed to these areas instead of Canoa Hills Trails.
The parcels east of Camino Del Sol feature direct mountain views looking east. These parcels are generally more spacious and desirable for recreation than the eastern parcels, so enhancements could be focused here. The driving range will be a likely focus area for improvements in 2021, as it requires re-grading to ensure safety for mowing and maintenance.
Old greens are comprised of low-diversity weedy annual communities. Restoration will focus on establishing diverse native communities in these areas.

**Mature Native Communities**
Perimeter spaces host mature native communities that should be preserved. Several exotic invasive species can be found in these areas and should be targeted for removal.

**Mature Canopy**
The existing canopy is composed primarily of mature mesquites which provide shade and wildlife habitat. These areas will be preserved.
Existing concrete paths are in good condition throughout the site. Site circulation will build off of this existing network.

Old asphalt paths on site are in poor condition and need to be replaced.

Box culverts form safe and direct pedestrian connections across Camino Del Sol, allowing similar activities and programming to stretch across separate parcels.

Existing asphalt paths on site are in poor condition and need to be replaced.

Existing concrete paths are in good condition throughout the site. Site circulation will build off of this existing network.

Box culverts

Concrete paths

Asphalt paths
recent & upcoming improvements

previous restoration successes
recent improvements
phasing
Restoration of physical and biological processes is not easy and it takes time. Below are two restoration projects completed by the Pima County Regional Flood Control District that show how restoration may look within the first few years. Please remember this and try and be patient as we work to make Canoa Hills Trails a beautiful restored nature park!
recent improvements

The driving range parking lot was recently re-paved and painted to facilitate access to the site.

Paved pedestrian trails were recently constructed along Camino Del Sol and Calle De La Adelfa to provide safe pedestrian travel between park parcels.
recent improvements

The two non-functional restroom facilities were removed, and one was temporarily replaced with a porta john.

The primary social trail on-site was paved with asphalt to enhance formal circulation.

Removal and mowing of invasive vegetation is on-going. This old golf course pond was recently cleared and is being prepped for native plant installation.
recent improvements

Park rules and map signage was recently installed at the primary entrances to the park.

Grouted rock channels direct water flow and mitigate erosion.

Rip-rap installed along some of the paths slows water flow and addresses erosion occurring under the paths.

Additional recent improvements, not pictured, include the placement of concrete benches and picnic tables throughout the site.
Habitat and infrastructure enhancements will be implemented in phases. Phases are determined by enhancement type and/or location. Three primary enhancements are of concern for the near future and are described here.

### Driving range updates
With steep slopes that make mowing and weed control difficult and unsafe, the old driving range will be a primary focus area for enhancements in 2021. Tucson Audubon Society projects will be implemented in conjunction with driving range re-grading and other updates.

### Pond plantings
Plantings in the old golf course pond features were completed in October 2020. Plantings feature native species that enhance wildlife habitat.

### Tucson Audubon Society Enhancements
Potential areas were selected to mitigate erosion issues and increase stormwater capture. These areas will likely include habitat enhancements as well as interpretive information.
master plan concepts

master plan design concepts
concept 1
concept 2
concept 3
The master plan process produced three design concepts with different themes, layouts, and characteristics. Community feedback on these design ideas will help guide further master plan development.

**Stewardship through Learning**
Parcels programmed by interpretive theme

**Connection & Movement**
Passive recreation and connectivity are emphasized

**Active Recreation**
Focus on programmed recreation

Less maintenance intensive

Less diverse recreation

More restoration focused

More maintenance intensive

More diverse recreation

Less restoration focused
Concept Overview

- Focus on connecting visitors with landscape
- Interpretive signage throughout eastern half of site (east of Camino Del Sol)
- Canopy enhancements increase shade coverage and provide additional wildlife habitat
- All additional trails are decomposed granite to provide a more rustic recreation experience
- Ramadas provide space for private gatherings, wildlife viewing, and small educational events

Stewardship through Learning

Landcover
- Proposed native canopy
- Existing mesquite canopy (preserve)
- Existing plant communities (preserve)
- Restored native plant communities (old golf course greens)
- Proposed Tucson Audubon Society (TAS) habitat improvements
- Potential future restoration area with TAS involvement
- Volunteer group managed pollinator gardens with seating/gathering
- Ephemeral pond (toad habitat)

Infrastructure
- Old Canoa Hills Clubhouse
- Public restroom
- Public parking
- Ramada
- Box culverts
- Existing paths
- Proposed decomposed granite trails

Human history is the interpretive theme of the northeastern parcel. Volunteer-managed gardens display the continued relationship between people and the landscape.

Geologic interpretive signage is found in the eastern central parcel, responding to the existing varied topography and views of the Santa Ritas and mine tailings.

The ecological interpretative theme of the southeastern parcel incorporates the TAS restoration area and existing ecological communities on site.
**Concept 2**

**Connection & Movement**

**Landcover**
- Existing mesquite canopy (preserve)
- Existing native plant communities (preserve)
- Restored native plant communities (old golf course greens)
- Tucson Audubon Society (TAS) habitat improvements
- Potential future restoration area with TAS involvement
- Volunteer group managed pollinator gardens with seating/gathering
- Ephemeral pond (toad habitat)

**Infrastructure**
- Old Canoa Hills Clubhouse
- Public restroom
- Public parking
- Ramada
- Box culverts
- Existing paths
- Proposed paved paths
- Proposed decomposed granite trails

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**Concept Overview**
- Focus on separating different types of passive recreation to avoid conflicts between user groups and to encourage diverse use of the site
- Interpretive area, walking/running trail, nature trail, and gathering area identified
- Additional path connections are both decomposed granite and paved

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A nature trail, appropriate for slower, quieter walks sits along the north of the site. It passes by a potential restoration area and an ephemeral toad pond.

The gathering area features ramadas and picnic tables for small, informal gathering. With low slopes and loop trails of varying lengths, this area is accessible to all.

The interpretive area sits in the center of the site, with ramadas for educational activities and wildlife viewing.

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A walking and running trail is located in the red parcels. Focus on exercise is appropriate here as this area is relatively less scenic than other parts of the park and habitat enhancements opportunities are limited. If feasible, a cross-walk could be installed here to facilitate connection across Camino Del Sol.
**Concept Overview**

- Focus on providing a range of recreation opportunities, including workout stations
- Ramadas in four parcels facilitate gathering throughout park
- All proposed path segments are concrete to maintain accessibility throughout site
- Relatively flat northeastern parcel is dedicated to interpretation, ensuring accessibility for those with limited mobility

**Programmed Recreation**

**Landcover**
- Existing mesquite canopy (preserve)
- Existing native plant communities (preserve)
- Restored native plant communities (old golf course greens)
- Tucson Audubon Society (TAS) habitat improvements
- Volunteer group managed pollinator gardens with seating/gathering
- Ephemeral pond (toad habitat)

**Infrastructure**
- Old Canoa Hills Clubhouse
- Public restroom
- Public parking
- Ramada
- Workout station
- Box culverts
- Existing paths
- Proposed decomposed granite trails

**Workout stations along the trail in the western parcels provide the opportunity for runners to diversify their exercise routine at Canoa Hills Trails.**

**The gathering area features ramadas and picnic tables for small, informal gathering. With low slopes and loop trails of varying lengths, the southeastern parcel is accessible to all.**

**An interpretive trail throughout the northeast parcel features an ephemeral pond, volunteer-managed pollinator gardens, and interpretive signage about local ecology. Ramadas provide space for outdoor education.**

**The hilly trails at the center of the site are perfect for those desiring a more strenuous walking or running experience.**
looking forward

driving range concepts
public questionnaires
visitor use questionnaire preliminary results
next steps & conclusion
Because the old driving range will be one of the first areas for master plan implementation, detailed concepts of this area are in development and will be presented to the Green Valley community in 2021. Mitigating steep slopes is an important focus for these concepts to ensure safe mowing conditions for maintenance staff. Shown here is a preview of one of the driving range concepts.
Visitor Use Questionnaire

The Visitor Use Questionnaire seeks to gain information about how Canoa Hills Trails is used, who it is used by, and what improvements are most important to Pima County residents. The questionnaire features 21 predominantly multiple choice questions and can be accessed online at:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CANOAHILLS

Since this questionnaire opened in early January, over 580 responses have been logged.

Concept Feedback Questionnaire

The Concept Feedback Questionnaire seeks to gain opinions and thoughts about the three master plan design concepts presented today. This questionnaire provides ample space for Pima County residents to describe in their own words what they like and dislike about each presented concept. The Concept Feedback Questionnaire can be accessed online at: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CHConcept
 visitor use questionnaire - preliminary results

These results are PRELIMINARY, and reflect survey results as of 2/19/2021:

• 584 responses
• 89% of responses from Green Valley residents
• 62% of respondents live within 3 miles of Canoa Hills Trails
• 31% of respondents visit Canoa Hills Trails 3 or more times per week on average
• 64% of respondents use motor vehicle parking to access Canoa Hills Trails
• Walking and running are the most common activities site visitors participate in, with 79% of respondents engaging in these activities
• Picnicking and gathering are the most common activities site visitors do not participate in but would like to, with 30% of respondents hoping to engage in these activities
• 60% of respondents focus their recreation in the parcels East of Camino Del Sol, while only 20% predominantly use the western parcels
• Restrooms are the most desired site amenity by respondents
• The most common reason respondents don’t visit Canoa Hills Trails is because there aren’t enough site amenities such as restrooms and drinking fountains
• Overall, respondents rate ecological restoration as the most important project goal, followed closely by recreational enhancements. Over 70% of respondents rated community-building and volunteer opportunities as the least important goal.
Next Steps

- Please submit responses to the two questionnaires by Friday, March 19, 2021
- Results from questionnaires will contribute to further master plan refinement of Canoa Hills Trails
- Finer-scale concepts for the driving range are currently under development and will be the topic of subsequent community meetings
- Video of today’s community meeting will be posted at https://www.youtube.com/user/pimagov
- Project updates, documents, and a PDF of this presentation are posted at: https://webcms.pima.gov/cms/One.aspx?portalId=169&pageId=518494

Conclusion

This presentation serves to update the Green Valley Community as of February 25, 2021 on the recent improvements and plans for Canoa Hills Trails. The success of Canoa Hills Trails depends on the integration of community perspectives restoration goals, and budget and maintenance constraints.
thank you!

questions?