

Meriam Park Guiding Principles & Plan Objectives

The plan for Meriam Park comes from the tradition of great American neighborhoods. It has been designed with a network of connected streets, a range of housing types and a mix of commercial and civic uses. We believe that neighborhoods designed and built in this manner provide the best human habitat over the long term. However, over the last couple of generations, we have learned to pay greater attention to the natural setting of our neighborhoods, towns and cities. We have become more aware of the importance of natural resources and have achieved a greater understanding of the impacts to foundational natural systems and critical natural habitats.

As urbanists, we believe in the power of thoughtful and careful design at all scales (region, city, neighborhood, street, block, lot and building) to provide robust, adaptable, long-term physical framework for community. We also believe that with good design the values of environmental protection and urban growth can be successfully integrated at each of these scales. The Chico General Plan has established goals and policies intended to bring about a proper integration. More recently, the effort to articulate the best practices of neighborhood development within the natural setting has resulted in the publication of a draft rating system.⁽¹⁾ It has been stated that good environmentalists should make good urbanists, and vice-versa, as they both understand systems, diversity, connectivity and interdependence. We agree. The following list of guiding principals and objectives for Meriam Park is intended to articulate the core values and goals of the plan, and to provide a framework for evaluating its merits.

1. Establish Compact, Complete and Connected Neighborhoods characterized by:

- Efficient use of onsite or adjacent road and public service infrastructure, schools, transit service, bike routes and parks.
- A network of connected streets designed to provide direct and safe connections for pedestrians and bicyclists as well as motorists.
- A commercial and mixed-use core with commercial, retail and civic activity for residents and the broader Chico population.
- Mixed uses, mixed housing types, and sufficient overall density and commercial/civic activity to support transit.



2. Reinforce Community Character by:

- Designing streets as both functional thoroughfares and public amenities.
- Enhancing the public realm by providing inviting open spaces and places for formal and informal interaction among residents and the broader Chico population.
 - *Neighborhood Parks and Greens.* Establish small-scale parks and greens within a 3-minute walk of all residents.
 - *Little Chico Creek Greenway.* Provide restored and enhanced habitat and passive recreational uses.
 - *Plazas and civic places.* Create additional landmarks and public art within Meriam Park and Little Chico Creek Greenway.
 - *Habitat Preserve.* Set aside an open space preserve for endangered species and vernal pool habitat in the northwest portion of the project site.
- Preserving and enhancing cultural markers as references to the past, and frame important view corridors and vistas of the foothills.

3. Protect Environmental Resources at the regional and local level by:

- Preserving regional open space and critical habitat by reinforcing the compact form of the city.
- Reducing air quality impacts of new development by developing compact neighborhoods and a mixed-use commercial core.
- Enhancing energy efficiency of new development at the building scale using efficient building orientation, design, materials and construction practices.
- Protecting high quality onsite habitat through preservation, and compensate for loss of lower quality habitat with offsite acquisition and restoration.
- Restoring and enhancing habitat values in Little Chico Creek, and providing opportunities for low-impact recreational uses for the community.
- Reducing impacts to water quality using best design and management practices.

4. Provide Continuity, Connectivity & Safety by:

- Making improvements to the major corridors (20th St., Bruce Road, Notre Dame Blvd.) traversing the site to heighten visibility and accessibility.
- Creating a connected street network that reduces auto dependency, diminishes intersection congestion, and provides enhanced emergency response.
- Provide supervision of streets and other public space through thoughtful building placement and orientation.
- Establishing a model along Little Chico Creek for enhancing and integrating regional greenways throughout the Chico urban area.

5. Provide Housing Choice and Workplace Opportunity by:

- Integrating a wide range of housing types for a broad array of households, incomes and life stages.
- Offering a mixture of building types for commercial activity that respond to near-term market demands and provide adaptability to long-term economic trends.

⁽¹⁾ LEED-ND. Leadership in Energy Efficient Design for Neighborhood Developments Rating System, by the US Green Building Council, Natural Resources Defense Council and the Congress for the New Urbanism, draft September 2005.

