



August 10, 2022

To: Supervisor Susan Gorin

Via email:

Re: Larson Park Funding

Dear Supervisor Gorin,

While researching Larson Park's history to write this letter in support of infrastructure improvements, we received a lot of help from county employees - Mundo Murguia described the master plan, Melanie Parker explained the history of the park, and Kathleen Culhane has researched funding attempts. It is clear a lot of work has already been done and it was also indicated repeatedly that you are a champion for Larson Park. However, the point remains that Larson Park has not received the money necessary to bring it up to date. While we know you are already a champion for us, we hope this letter can help you convince the Board of Supervisors and any other key players to come aboard and find the funding needed to enact the Larson Park Master Plan.

Larson Park is situated in the heart of the Springs along Sonoma Creek and next to Flowery Elementary school. Nestled in a neighborhood, it sometimes seems like it has been forgotten. The tennis courts are cracked (even though they are used daily by the pickleball players), and the soccer field is not-quite regulation size. While there was once a real bathroom, now there is only a dirty port-a-potty. Little League baseball games used to be played there, where a snack bar provided refreshments for the crowd. Gone are the Little League games and snack bar. Despite all this, the park is still heavily used as a community gathering place, but it sends a message that the people who use this park do not matter enough to have nice infrastructure.

Larson Park is one of two public parks in the unincorporated part of the Valley known as the Springs, the other being Ernie Smith Park. The census tract Larson Park is in has a Human Development Index (HDI) of 4.44 out of 10, as determined by the Portrait of Sonoma report. The HDI is an analysis of various factors like income, health, and education, used to compare quality of life. It is the lowest HDI in the Valley. Census data shows this is one of the most disadvantaged tracts in Sonoma County. The people with the most



need are receiving the fewest benefits when the only park walkable from their house is in a state of disrepair.

We understand funding is complicated, but we implore you to prioritize finding the funding for this park. From the information shared with us, in 2019 the County applied for a state grant for funding but did not make the cut. Maxwell Park, located 1.7 miles away in the city of Sonoma, has received funding for improvements recently even though it is arguably in better condition than Larson and located in a higher income area. We would ask that whatever creative measures funded Maxwell be reproduced to find funding for Larson. Our community needs access to quality outdoor recreation close to home. A local scientist, Dan Levitis, pointed out that Larson is perhaps the only public place in the Springs to get into natural water by accessing Sonoma Creek. The views of the eastern hills are majestic, and the park is a place for all people to experience nature and sports, from toddlers on the playground, to teens on the soccer field, to retirees on the tennis courts playing pickleball.

In the interim, we would request additional attention to the port-a-potty to keep it clean. It is heavily used and needs more attention than it is currently receiving. In addition, we request a hand washing station.

Thank you for your consideration of our requests, both large and small. We also want to thank Assembly Member Mark Levine for his earmark on Larson Park. Authored by councilmember Hannah Perot.

Sincerely,

Maite Iturri
Chairperson
Springs MAC

CC: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, Sheryl Bratton - County Administrator, Bert Whitaker - Sonoma County Regional Parks Director, Melanie Parker - Sonoma County Regional Parks Deputy Director, Steve Ehret - Sonoma County Regional Parks Park Planning Manager, Kathleen Culhane – Sonoma County Regional Parks Executive Assistant, Parks and Rec Advisory Committee, Assembly Member Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, Senator Mike McGuire, Senator Bill Dodd, Assembly Member Marc Levine

The Springs Municipal Advisory Council represents the people of the Springs in Sonoma Valley as the voice of the community to elected representatives. SMAC is committed to engage with all community members in meaningful and inclusive ways to promote the health and wellbeing of the Springs.

Springs MAC: Larson Park Letter of Support
August 10, 2022



Enclosure:

Sonoma Index Tribune article:

<https://www.sonomanews.com/article/opinion/editorial-larson-park-deserves-some-love/>

Sonoma Index Tribune letter to the editor:

<https://www.sonomanews.com/article/opinion/letters-to-the-index-tribune-editor-aug-5-2022/>

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