

February 27, 2006

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Park development plans for Nice under way

Terre Logsdon - Record-Bee staff

NICE -- The Lake County Redevelopment Agency held the first of two workshops that will allow residents to give their input on how Hinman Square, Hammond Park, Keeling Park and the area's 13 lake access points are developed.

Using aerial maps and scale-size photos, community members in Nice got to add sidewalks, trails, gazebos, ball parks and other options to what the parks in Nice will have. (Record-Bee/Terre Logsdon)

The meeting also served to help residents better understand the challenges of meeting all needs and ideas within the constraints of available money and space.

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Redevelopment Agency Executive Director Andy Peterson welcomed almost 40 people to the workshop, which was held Wednesday evening at the Robinson Rancheria conference center.

In his opening remarks, Peterson spoke about creating a town square for Nice at Hinman Park, which is the geographical center of the town, and renaming it Hinman Square.

He explained that Hinman Park wouldn't be turned into a square until there was an alternative, and now there is with the completion of the purchase of land for Hammond Park.

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"We now have found the right piece of property for a park," he

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said. That 13-acre property borders Hammond Avenue, and includes wetlands, mature oaks, open space and neighborhood access.

Landscape architect Paul Weller and landscape planner Beverly Bass both with Foothill Associates, an environmental consulting, landscape architecture and planning services company facilitated the workshop and led the group through a series of exercises designed to get feedback from the community, while also making residents aware that there are limits to what can be

done at each of the parks.

Each person was given five "park bucks" and asked to use the money to vote on what park amenities was most important for them and the community. Categories were hiking, biking and walking; lake access; park buildings; hard surface activities; special; and turf/athletic fields.

Residents thought turf areas that include open, grassy areas and athletic fields were most important, followed by lake access and hiking, biking and walking trails.

Next were hard surface activities, such as tennis and basketball, then park buildings a gazebo, bandstand or community center. "Special," which could be gardens or other ideas not covered, brought up the rear.

Participants also received 12 dots to place by what they thought was most important for each of the parks, with areas where they could write in other options and vote for those.

In the last exercise, participants actually got to plan what to incorporate into each park.

An aerial photo of the sites, as well as preprinted options that were to scale, were placed on different tables, and everyone got to try and find space for all the options they wanted in each park.

Several people commented on the challenge of fitting a baseball and soccer field in the same park, or finding room for both a bandstand and then seating, which allowed residents to see the challenges.

"It helps people get their hands in it and see the limitations," Bass said, adding that not everything will fit, and the budget doesn't allow for every idea.

Peterson said an inventory will go out to all middle and high school students in Nice to get their feedback. One participant remarked that students' input is critical because what she wanted from the parks would be very different from what a teen needs.

A second workshop will be held April 12 and will incorporate the ideas from the first workshop and the youth inventory.

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