

Do you have a chicken farm and/or a petting zoo?

We have neither, although we almost had both.

In August 1964 the original Foothills Park Master Plan was approved by the city council. A quote from the master plan says, "A primary purpose of the Master Plan is to insure that the irreplaceable wilderness qualities of the park are not lost by overuse or misuse." I can only imagine what a different place Foothills Park would be if some of those recommendations had been followed.

The park entrance wouldn't be much different. There would still be a small building at the gate, behind it there would be a winding "divided auto parkway," lined with specimen trees (most on the list are non-natives), that led the visitor through developed areas of the park.

Vista Hill would not only have had a "small quality restaurant" on it (for those who want to "vicariously enjoy" the park); but also an equestrian center (complete with horse shows, rodeos and surrey rentals "to enjoy the beauties... in the fashion of Granddad's day."), a pitch and putt golf course ("novel but not difficult"), the park headquarters and an arboretum (showcasing plants from around the world).

Boronda Lake would have had a much larger dock with a concession stand for canoe, kayak and sailboat rentals, along with selling bait and renting fishing equipment, the area behind Sunfish Island would be reserved for fly fishing.

From the park headquarters on Vista Hill you could have boarded the "Elephant Train" (think of the tour vehicles at the San Diego Zoo). "On a regular schedule, these trains make the circuit of the park, stopping at all centers of activity and points of interest. Also the trains offer scenic tours, using the service roads and bicycle paths to bring the visitor in to close contact with the great natural beauty of the park" (mind you that was close contact from inside a bus!).

The recreation and cultural center (we call it the Interpretive Center) would have had plenty of space for many types of group meetings and gatherings as well as a youth hostel. Outside there would be fields and courts for playing "softball, football, soccer, tennis, basketball etc. not to mention the swimming pool and artificial stream with waterfalls.

The teahouse (no longer with us) would provide another space for gatherings and had a kitchen to make food preparation easier. Around the teahouse on wooded hillsides were artist studios with display places for artworks for park visitors to wander through. Fine gardens of flowering trees and plants and quiet games (shuffleboard, croquet, badminton etc.) would finish off this area.

The “swampy area” in Deer Valley (Las Tramps Valley towards Towle Camp) has been turned into a network of constructed waterways, pathways, ponds and viewing platforms in order to attract birds and wildlife for visitors to enjoy.

Looking back on the Oakland Hills Fire and closer to home the Liddicoat Fire, aren't we glad we didn't get a eucalyptus forest planted on our sunny ridge tops?

A special treat would await the more adventurous park visitor along Los Trancos Creek – the roving archery range, where “the amateur bowman can practice his art without conflict with other park users.”

I almost forgot the equestrian center would also have housed a model farm complete with “lambs, colts, calves, piglets, chickens, ducks, etc. designed for children but for “the mutual pleasure of all” (this proposed spot is as close as we ever got to having a chicken farm or petting zoo.

I think I like Foothills Park as it is today: less busy.