

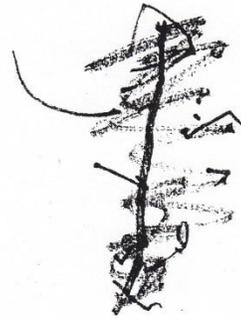
# Caper Acres User Study

## A Component of the Master Plan for Future Renovation



California State University, Chico  
Department of Geography and Planning  
Site Planning Class - Spring 2014

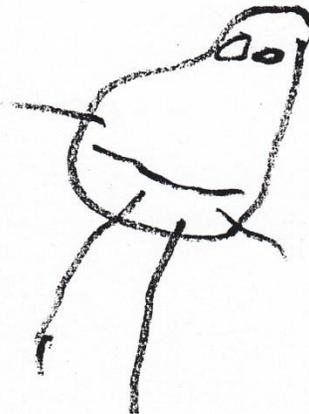
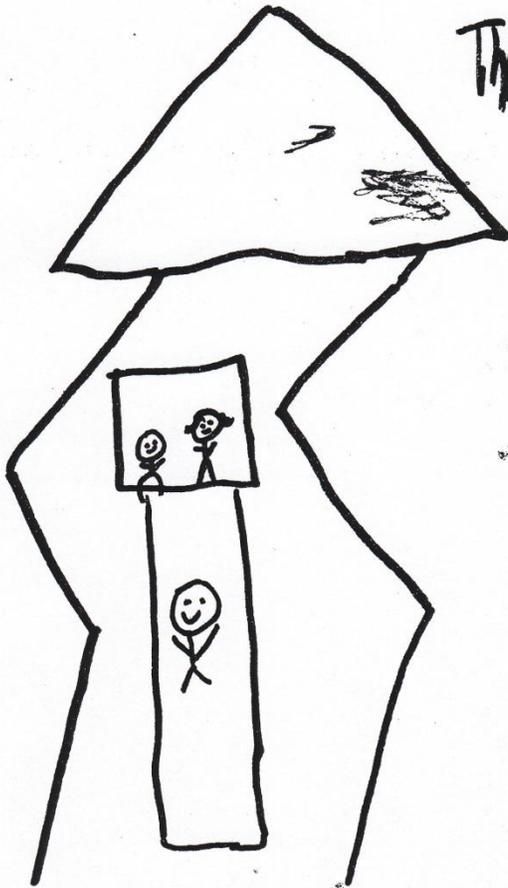
DEAR PARK PEOPLE  
Please Fix the Crooked  
House



and open up  
THE HUMPTY DUMPTY  
PARK.

THANK YOU

MARISA  
DONNELLY



March 1995 letter to the Bidwell Park and Playground Commission after winter storms destroyed the Crooked House and damaged other Caper Acres amenities

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## INTRODUCTION

### Acknowledgments

The instructor and students would like to recognize the following people for their assistance during the preparation of this study:

- Dr. Dean Fairbanks, Chair, Department of Geography and Planning, California State University, Chico (CSUC)
- Dan Efseaff, Park and Natural Resources Manager, City of Chico
- Amy Huberland, Assistant Coordinator, Northeast Information Center, CSUC
- Dr. John Mahoney, Biological Sciences/Department of Human Subjects in Research, CSUC
- Greg Melton, Landscape Architect, Melton Design Group
- Brad Pierce, GIS Analyst, City of Chico
- Marsha Osborne, Administrative Support Assistant, Graduate Studies, CSUC

The children's playground, Caper Acres, located in lovely Bidwell Park will forever be in my mind's file cabinet of wonderful memories. It is a special place that becomes almost magical when happy children with wide smiles and sounds of laughter skip and run through its castle-like entrance. As a young mother driving from Paradise to Chico with children excitedly chatting about what playground equipment they'll



run to first, I was grateful that the City of Chico provided such a wonderful activity center for youngsters. Thirty-five years later, I watched my grandson gliding down the slide of the Crooked House and carefully selecting the underground route he'd take in Bunker Mine. Déjà vu, yes. Grateful? You bet.

Choosing to work on a class project that would benefit the City of Chico Park Division and Bidwell Park and Playground Commission was an easy decision. Former Park Services Coordinator, Lise Smith-Peters, is a friend and I had worked as a Bidwell Park

volunteer with Lise. Additionally, as the Principal Planner and land use consultant for the City of Chico over a span of fifteen years, I was well-acquainted with the City's financial crisis and the loss of Bidwell Park staffing in addition to other deep cuts in the City's budget. When Lise suggested I help with a proposed Master Plan for Caper Acres, I knew I had my spring 2014 project focus for Geography 428, Site Planning.

Greg Melton, Landscape Architect, was selected by the City of Chico to prepare the Master Plan for Caper Acres. Ironically, Mr. Melton and I were both graduate students enrolled in CSUC Geography Department's Site Planning class in 1992. As discussed with Park and Natural Resources Manager, Dan Efseaff, the class researched the history of Caper Acres in addition to preparing and conducting a "User Study" both of which will be helpful for the preparation of the Caper Acres Master Plan.

Caper Acres Playground, has been, and will be for years to come *"...not just another typical small children's play area filled with equipment. Rather, it has been and can be an even more "magical" land for young children...away from other distractions and the outside world."* (Fred Brooks, EdD. Department of Recreation And Parks Administration 1976-2000; Professor and chairman of the Department of Recreation and Parks)

It's been a joy and a new memory working with my students on the user survey and report and to once again, spend time in the fantasyland of Caper Acres.

*Pam Figge*, Instructor



Nancy, Maryssa, Richard, Eric, Drew and Victoria  
in the Caper Acres Birthday Ring # 1

## Course Objectives and Project Approach

The Geography and Planning Department at CSUC offers Geography 428 - Site Planning as a "service learning" class during spring semesters. This course provides an opportunity for students to study, research and participate in the local land planning process. Students apply theoretical concepts and land use planning methodology to conduct field research and collect secondary data for a specific planning project.



The Site Planning class, under my direction, has produced studies and reports for local government and small communities within Butte County since 1995. Students working outside the academic setting are exposed to "real world" situations without the protective insulation one finds within the university walls. This valuable learning experience provides a link between the university resources and the surrounding community.

The project objectives were to:

- Conduct cultural and historical research of the Caper Acres Playground using both primary and secondary methods;
- Draft a "User Survey" and conduct a face-to-face questionnaire at the playground which would be beneficial in ascertaining user preferences and limited user characteristics;
- Analyze survey results and graphically present findings;
- Formulate recommendations based on survey findings and observations;
- Provide an overview of potential funding for the improvement and maintenance of Caper Acres;
- Prepare a hard-copy report and make a public presentation to the Bidwell Park and Playground Commission.

## Research and Survey Report Preparation Teams

Students conducted primary research initially as a class to observe existing conditions including both the natural and built environment. Secondary research was conducted to collect data about the cultural and historical background of Caper Acres by visiting Special Collections (CSUC Meriam Library), City of Chico Building and Park Division files (see appendices for the results of the City of Chico Building Division files research), Northeast Information Center (NEIC), Chico Museum, Chico Heritage Association, the Chico Enterprise Record files and a general Internet search.

All the students, working in pairs, administered a face-to-face questionnaire survey to adult users within the confines of the Caper Acres playground over a one-month period. See User Survey section of this report for information about the survey instrument and process.

### ***Field Reconnaissance Data***

Marshall McCrary  
Maryssa Fraley

### ***Historical and Cultural Background***

Nancy Lor  
Maryssa Fraley  
Alexander Fearn

### ***Mapping***

Richard Baron  
Drew Short

### ***Existing Plan Policies and Funding***

Alexander Fearn  
Marshall McCrary

### ***Survey Design, Keyboarding***

Victoria Birdseye  
Maryssa Fraley (editing)

### ***Environmental Setting***

Nancy Lor  
Drew Short

### ***PowerPoint***

All Students

### ***Sense of Place***

Richard Baron

### ***Graphic Work and Design***

Marshall McCrary  
Drew Short  
Maryssa Fraley

### ***Survey Tabulation***

Nancy Lor  
Maryssa Fraley



Alex Fearn, Nancy Lor, Drew Short, Maryssa Fraley, Humpty Dumpty, Richard Baron, Marshall McCrary and Victoria Birdseye

### Limits of Study

The Study was defined by area, temporal and fiscal limits. The project targeted the children's playground - Caper Acres. Information regarding the use of other Lower Park facilities such as Sycamore Pool, Baseball fields, horseshoe pits was collected in the User Survey; however, the study area was specifically limited to Caper Acres.

The class provides the students with an opportunity to function as a professional consulting team. However, the learning curve must be established through lecture and instruction, leaving a narrow window for the actual project work. Within an academic setting and semester schedule, the ability to gather data, analyze it and produce a working draft for public view followed by a final draft is not possible. Therefore, our draft document is the final rendition. Typographical errors, human mistakes, and omissions are to be expected and of course, forgiven!

Fiscal limitation is a reality for both local government and university campuses. This study was prepared using the limited resources and facilities of CSUC and a special course fee paid by the students. We are grateful for the Department of Geography and Planning resources and the administrative support for the production of useful reports and studies to help Northern California small communities plan for their futures.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

Melton Design Group has mapped the existing physical conditions of the Caper Acres playground and immediate surroundings. The class prepared for the User Study by becoming familiar with the playground, its facilities and amenities. The Existing Conditions section of this report includes: Sense of Place; Project Site Location and Description; Environmental Setting; Narrative Description of the Playground Features; City of Chico General Plan: Parks, Public Facilities and Services Element and the Bidwell Park Master Management Plan; Vandalism and Constraints and Opportunities.

### Sense of Place

#### "Connection"

What is a Sense of Place? It is a combination of characteristics that makes a place special and unique.

*"Sense of Place" involves the human experience in a landscape, the local knowledge and folklore.*  
(ArtofGeography.com)

*"Sense of place" is a reflection of emotional security; it reinforces the sense of self, our connection with others before us, and timelessness, an appreciation of our surroundings."* (Figge)



Children laughing! Children running! Parents watching their children, meeting other parents! That is what happens at a playground every day. Caper Acres is such a playground located in Lower Bidwell Park in Chico, hugged by trees and a natural environment. Caper Acres has a "sense of place" that is historical, nostalgic and

emotional. Caper Acres represents for many people a sense of continuity, connection and community.

When you accompany your child into Caper Acres, you are immediately immersed into a “Storybook” fantasyland complete with play areas such as “The Big Cheese”, the “Castle”, the “Crooked House”, the “Sea Serpent”, and the “Bird Cage.” There is plenty of room between areas to run and play the games that children love. Large Sycamore and Valley Oak trees provide shade and coolness during the hot summer days that typifies Chico.

Parents and grandparents, community members and visitors from neighboring towns connect with each other as they watch their kids playing. Caper Acres is a meeting place for children and adults alike. They can meet new friends, meet up with old friends, and share their memories, lives, and experiences. This special place creates a unique community where multiple generations of family and friends can share memories, experiences, and commonalities of their lives.

Caper Acres is within a natural environment filled with trees, wildlife, plants of all kinds and a running stream nearby that makes Bidwell Park such a gem for the City of Chico. And, it is also connected to One Mile Recreation Area with its Sycamore Pool, picnic areas, hiking and biking trails that allow people to connect and be a part of nature.

Caper Acres has a history that begun in the 1950’s through the efforts of the Chico Junior Art Club (later the Chico’s Women’s Club) and other organizations to create a children’s playground in Lower Bidwell Park. Caper Acres has evolved over the years, but has retained the character and identity intended by the originators of the playground. You can sense that continuity when you hear grandparents say they have “been coming to Caper Acres for 45 years and now are bringing their own grandchildren” or “I remember the Cheese when I was growing up.” Continuity over a long period of time and childhood memories gives Caper Acres that “sense of place.”

With a “sense of place” there is the feeling of connection. Caper Acres is easily accessible by walking, biking or driving. Within the playground you can visually connect to the picnic areas, the baseball fields, the lush areas adjacent to the creek and the neighborhood that borders the park. The natural setting connects the human experience of being in nature with the daily routines and lives of those who enter the playground or live nearby. Take a short walk down a path from Caper Acres and experience the wonder of sitting next to a natural stream. Connect with nature through the changing colors, and the annual progression of seasons from spring through winter.

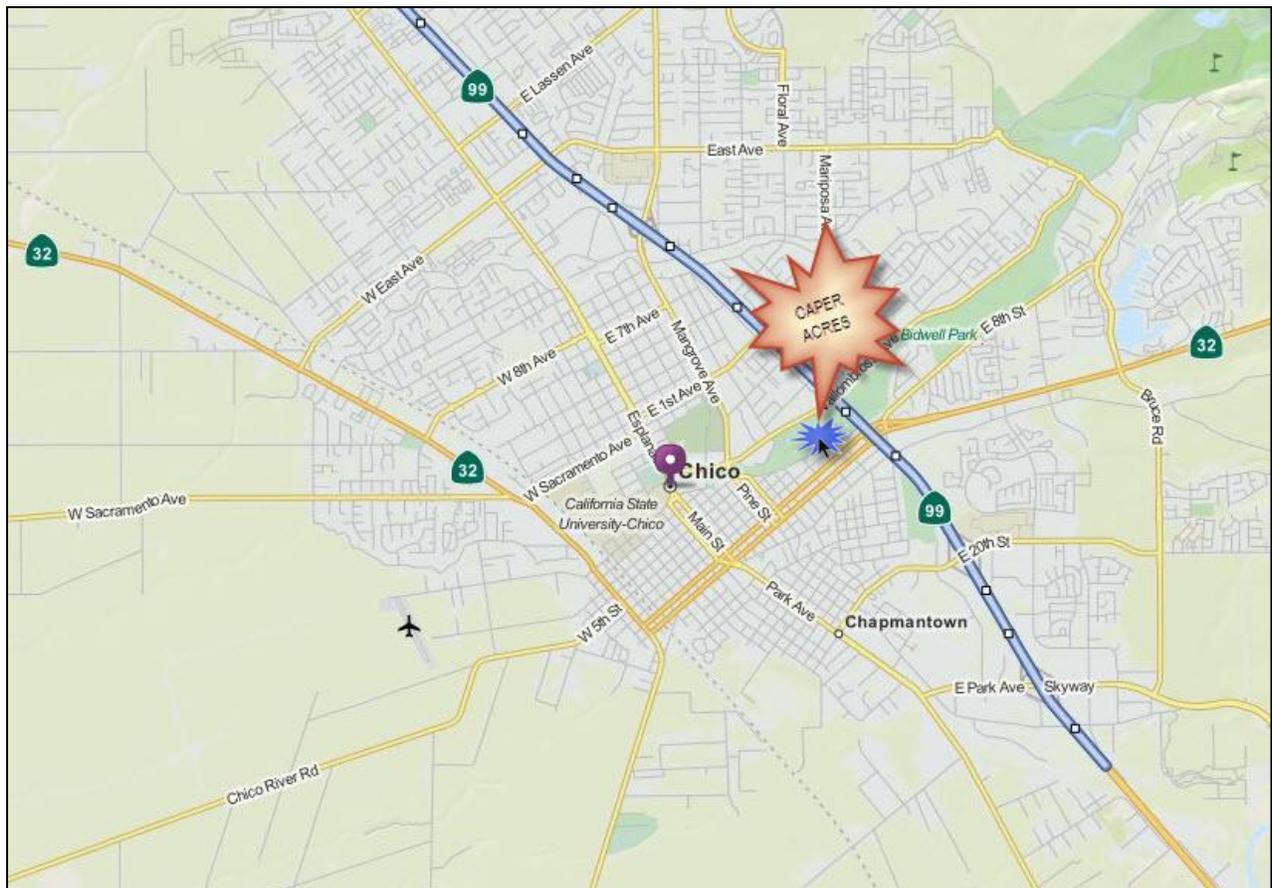
Big Chico Creek represents the timelessness and the pervasiveness of nature in a busy, changing world. In Caper Acres, one appreciates the intentions of the founders to create a fantasyland for children and their families in an environment that embraces the

outdoors, the elements of nature, and brings people together as community to make memories, sharing a piece of history.

### Project Site Location and Description

The project site, Caper Acres playground, is located in Lower Bidwell Park One Mile Recreation Area within the municipal limits of the City of Chico, Butte County, California.

The entire Bidwell Park (Upper and Lower sections) is bisected by the Big Chico Creek riparian corridor. "Lower Park's valley oak population is one of the largest in the state, representing a habitat type that was once prevalent in the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys before the arrival of modern agriculture. Lower Park's flat terrain and thick canopy of trees provide ample shade for visitors." (Existing Condition, Final Bidwell Park Master Management Plan Update)



## CAPER ACRES PLAYGROUND and LOWER BIDWELL PARK



Sources:  
City of Chico, GIS Department  
Cal Atlas NAIP program  
<https://projects.atlas.ca.gov/projects/naip/>

1 inch = 333 feet  
Projection: California State Plane, NAD 83, Zone II



Lower Park is a part of the larger Bidwell Park, regional-scale parkland comprised of 3,670 acres. Bidwell Park is the third largest municipal park in California and the twenty-sixth largest in the United States. (The Trust for Public Land)

Lower Bidwell Park contains the most accessible and developed areas of the park and includes a community swimming pool fed by Big Chico Creek (Sycamore Pool), horseshoe pits, barbecues and picnic areas, a baseball field, the Chico Creek Nature Center, Sycamore Grove where outdoor events are held such as the annual Endangered Species Fair, and the World of Trees Independence Trail.

Caper Acres is an approximately three (3) acre playground area serving children of 12 years of age and younger. An adult must accompany all children that enter the "Storybook" playground through its castle-like entrance. A beloved playground for more than 40 years, children play among the Crooked House, Humpty Dumpty sandpit, Bunker Mine, "Big Cheese" and other fantasy structures Tuesday through Sunday from 9 a.m. until sunset.

## CAPER ACRES PLAYGROUND



Sources:  
City of Chico, GIS Department  
Google Earth Map

1 inch = 57 feet  
Projection: California State Plane, NAD 83, Zone II



### Environmental Setting

Chico is located on flat valley land (Sacramento) to the west and sloping foothills (Sierra Nevada) to the east. The majority of Chico's built development has been on the flat elevation of the valley floor. The adoption of the Butte County/City of Chico greenline effectively placed a limitation on the City of Chico expanding further to the west. The "greenline," serves as a boundary between urban and agricultural uses. It was adopted in 1982, and further refined with the Chico Area Land Use Plan in 1990. (Butte County General Plan 2030, Land Use Element) The greenline redirected growth to the east and higher elevations. Most recent growth within the City of Chico has occurred to the east as the elevation starts to climb.

The east and southeastern areas of Chico consist of opening sloped ridges crossed by abrupt, rocky canyons with thin, patchy fine-grained layers of silts and clays. Underneath this layer are lava deposits. Lava flow remnants are evident on the mountain slopes as they continue down into the valley.

Areas around Big Chico Creek and Little Chico Creek consist of sand, clay, silt, and gravel deposits. The project area, Caper Acres within Lower Bidwell Park, is characterized as having Vina-Farewell (VA-FD) soils, Group two (2) of seven (7) classes of soil found in the region. This type of soil is found deep in the ground and has a well-drained (percolation) system. It has moderate shrink, a low possibility for erosion and high productive soil for agriculture. Lastly, its liquefaction potential is moderate.

Caper Acres abuts the Big Chico Creek habitat corridor and is within 600 feet of the bank of the creek. The project area lies within a habitat type that is classified as a lower perennial riverine – valley oak riparian. A general characterization of this habitat area is low velocity water drainage with established floodplains and perennial water flows. Within this habitat, valley oaks are widely present.



Mentioned previously, Caper Acres lies within a lower perennial riverine – valley oak riparian habitat. However, there are also non-native plants and imported soil within the boundaries of Caper Acres. Species such as the sweetgum tree, *Liquidambar*, have been planted as well as non-native grass species in various area of the playground. Bentonite clay was introduced to prevent soil erosion particularly on the mounds created for the Bunker Hill Mine tunnels. The use of this clay has resulted in the pooling of water because of its low permeability in areas adjacent to the playground. When large rain events occur, it leads to flooding and the closure the Mine. Additionally, low areas within the playground; retain storm water resulting in standing water for a period of time.

## Narrative Description of the Playground Features

The playground of Caper Acres is an all encompassing facility with varied playground equipment, open green space, and enclosed picnic areas for birthday celebrations. Within the playground, visitors will find equipment of a custom design that sets Caper Acres apart from other children's playgrounds. There are no mass produced jungle gyms, castles, or slides. All of the features and playground equipment are one of a kind. It is this custom design that attracts visitors from all over the region. Virtually every piece of the space has a unique character to it.

The custom design avails itself as a visitor enters the playground, walks across the unique bridge, and under the arch of a castle wall. Directly after entering, a visitor will notice the same design in Locksley's castle, a perennial favorite of younger kids. The medieval castle is designed with battlements to walk along the top of castle wall and several nooks and crannies to explore. Adjacent to Locksley castle is a hand crafted and painted Humpty Dumpty who rests atop a semicircular high wall of a sandbox. Behind the Humpty Dumpty sandbox are a set of swings able to accommodate four kids. Also in immediate view upon entering the playground, is the birdhouse, a multiple level slide structure with both a short slide for the younger kids and a higher spiral slide for older kids.

The central area is often where activity clusters on the Dragon and Ship playground (Nico Project). This miniature playground is especially well-suited to younger children and toddlers due to the all weather cushion material covering the entire area. The center piece, a miniature pirate ship, has short slides and the surrounding elements include a tunnel artfully decorated to resemble a fairytale serpent. On the far side of the Dragon and Ship area is the quaint Crooked House which beckons kids to climb the stairway to a third level landing. From this top landing, children can slide down a tall, old-fashioned, straight slide. Leaving the Crooked House slide, kids notice the Big Cheese at the back of playground with its holes on all sides characteristic of a giant block of Swiss cheese. Also, beyond the Nico Project in the back of the playground, is Bunker Mine. The small mountain that rises out of the playground like a volcano welcomes kids with multiple entrances into its tunnel complex. Entering kids come upon a front arch of mining timbers transporting them to the old west.

Among the other features of Caper Acres are the birthday rings that accommodate not only the kids, but the whole family and all their friends. Birthday Ring #1 is a picnic area able to hold events of up to 40 people and is located on the front left of the playground as visitors enter. Birthday Ring #2, is a smaller setting which holds 20 and is located to the rear of the playground opposite from visitor's entrance. Naturally, the namesake of

these spaces is the most common event with families celebrating kids' birthdays year round. These picnic areas can be reserved for as long two hours for free.

Even the restrooms are part of the fairytale as they are built in a castle motif located to the right of the entrance. The main drinking fountain is in front of the restrooms and another shaped as the head of a lion in front of Locksley castle. Unfortunately, abuse has taken a toll on the lion fountain over the years, and it is no longer functioning; albeit, children still find fun in playing around and in the lion's mouth!

There is ample seating in the playground with 11 benches evenly distributed around the playground. In addition, there are seven light posts that follow the paved path for illumination. However, one fixture is currently non-functioning. Visitors leaving and entering the playground may notice and use the bicycle racks. They can accommodate 16 bikes, flanking the outside of the Caper Acres entrance. As well as Bidwell Park regulations, there a few additional rules to follow in Caper Acres. Barbeques, bounce houses, and piñatas are restricted in their use within the playground. In addition, dogs and bicycles are not allowed at any time in the playground. All visitors over age 12 need to be accompanied with a child to remain within Caper Acres. The Caper Acres playground is open from 9:00 am to sunset every day except Monday.

#### City of Chico General Plan: Parks, Public Facilities and Services Element and the Bidwell Park Master Management Plan

Parks and recreational opportunities are important components of a community and are therefore, included in the guidelines set forth by a city or county general plan. This is for good reason, as parks offer relief from a stress-filled life, protection of natural resources, places to exercise, and for community members to interact.

A general plan is required by California state law to address the physical development of a community. The plan serves as a city's constitution and a body of facts for decision-makers to consider as the community grows. General plans identify existing land use, allow for public input on their city's future, and assist in planning for future development by setting policies to reinforce the community's goals. A general plan provides the bridge for taking community vision and turning it into a reality.

Often, park and recreation goals, policies and actions are included in the jurisdiction's Open Space Element and/or Land Use Element. More recently, parks and recreation has been given its own separate element. Approximately, a third of cities and two-fifths of counties in California have adopted a separate parks and recreation element. Sometimes the parks and recreation guidelines are grouped under the Open Space or Land Use Elements or in the case of the City of Chico, the Public Facilities and Services Element.

The Chico General Plan classifies all parks into five categories: Mini Park/Tot Lots, Neighborhood Parks, School Parks, Community Parks, and Regional Parks. Bidwell Park is a designated a Regional Park. The Regional Park classification denotes parks that are usually at least 50 acres in size and serve the entire City or region. While regional parks can provide for varying intensities of recreation activity, a portion of a regional park is generally maintained in a rustic setting for non-intensive recreation use.

Chico residents have identified the maintenance and enhancement of the City's parks, greenways, recreation and open space resources as a key component in quality of life and overall community wellness.

"The City is responsible for the management, operation and maintenance of the 3,670-acre Bidwell Park. In 2008, the City Council adopted the Bidwell Park Master Management Plan (BPMMP) which sets forth the City's vision for the Park and establishes policies and practices for operation and management of the Park." (PPFS)

Bidwell Park is designated as Primary Open Space (POS) and Secondary Open Space (SOP). According to the Open Space Element of the Chico General Plan for directing decisions and protecting resources of Bidwell Park, the City is guided by the Bidwell Park Master Management Plan. Significant open space resources are owned by the City of Chico including: Bidwell Park; Foothill Park Preserve; Bidwell Ranch; Teichert Ponds; Lindo Channel; and the Comanche Creek Greenway. Policies regarding open space resources including Bidwell Park are contained the Open Space Element, the Land Use and Parks, Public Facilities and Services Elements.

*Bidwell Park Master Management Plan (BPMMP) - Relevant Guidelines for the Caper Acres Master Plan*

- Decision-Making and Management

Goal: Implement a coordinated and efficient decision-making and management process with defined roles and responsibilities by the City Council, Bidwell Park and Playground Commission, and City Staff, and with periodic review and input by the public.

Objective: Management and Classification -5. Develop management plans for specific Park areas, consistent with goals, objectives, implementation strategies and guidelines presented in the BPMMP.

Implementation: Decision Making and Management -4. Opportunities for better public outreach such as media announcements, public notices regarding issues pertaining to the Park, and contacting of known park users groups should be identified and implemented in conjunction with important potential management changes.

- Land Uses

Goal Land Use -1: Manage Park use and the distribution of facilities to meet the changing needs of the Park users while continuing to protect the Park's natural and cultural resources.

- Visitor Uses

Goal: Continue to provide for a wide variety of visitor uses including quality recreational opportunities for users of all abilities.

Objective: Visitor Uses -3. Periodically evaluate desired uses by seeking feedback from user groups and community

Implementation: Visitor Uses -1. The City should use the evaluation of visitor use numbers, visitation patterns (activities, seasons, time of day), visitor demographics, and visitor interests to establish quantified baseline information on Park use.

- Park Resources

Goal Park Resources -1: When integrating human activities into the Park, recognize the complexity of the ecological communities in Bidwell Park and surrounding areas.

Goal Park Resources -2: Integrate ecological communities, physical and biological resources, and cultural resources with human activities, where appropriate. Use interpretive programs to promote proper stewardship of resources.

- Biological Resources

Goal Biological Resources: Conserve, protect, and optimize natural resource functions and values in the Park and maximize their integration with natural resources in surrounding areas.

Objective: Plants -1. Utilize native plant materials for Park landscaping and re-vegetation to the maximum extent feasible.

Implementation: Plants -11. Interpretive signage describing the importance of native plant communities and special-status plant populations should be installed.

- Recreation Facilities

Objective: Recreation Facilities -1. Design facilities to support activities and avoid or minimize adverse environmental effects.

- Playgrounds

Objective: Playground -1. Provide safe and ADA accessible playground facilities that meet a portion of the local demand, in balance with other parks in the community.

Guidelines: Playgrounds Guideline -1. Caper Acres playground shall be maintained, preserved, and used as a model for other playground facilities within the Park.

Implementation: Playgrounds -1. Caper Acres playground shall be maintained, preserved, and used as a model for other playground facilities within the Park.

Implementation: Playground -2. The need for increases or decreases in playground facilities should be periodically assessed based on demand, with priority given to meeting much of the increased demand at other parks in the community.

- Interpretive and Educational Resources

Goal: Inspire short and long-term stewardship of Park resources through interpretation of natural systems and cultural resources.

Objective: Interpretive and Educational Resources -6. Provide child and family-friendly opportunities to learn about Park resources and appropriate uses.

- Aesthetic Resources

Objective: Visual Resources -3. Use native plants for landscaping in Bidwell Park with few exceptions.

Implementation: Visual Resources -2. Creative/artistic elements should be incorporated into Park facilities and programs.

- Recreational Resources

Goal -1: Provide diverse recreational opportunities for a variety of user groups consistent with the vision for Bidwell Park.

Goal -2: Maintain designated developed recreation areas in Bidwell Park consistent with the goals and objectives of the BPMMP.

- Definitions: Developed Facilities

For the purposes of the BPMMP, developed facilities are defined as facilities that require or result in substantial disturbance or removal of natural (e.g., plants, wildlife, soils, and hydrology), cultural, visual, aesthetic or other resources. Examples of developed recreational facilities include golf courses, playing fields, children's play parks, turf areas, swimming pools, tennis courts, and other sports facilities. Examples of other developed facilities include roads and power lines.

- Volunteers

Objectives: Volunteers -1. Expand and develop the volunteer program utilizing the wealth and breadth of the community's resources to accomplish various tasks pertaining to Park maintenance such as invasive plant control, restoration, vegetation, species and water quality monitoring, trail maintenance, Park patrol and others.

Objectives: Volunteers -4. Provide interested groups and individuals with meaningful and useful opportunities for volunteering in the Park.

Implementation: Volunteers -4. Community groups that assist in improving Bidwell Park should be supported.

Implementation: Volunteers -5. The development and implementation of an internship program should be considered.

## Vandalism

Vandalism is a regular problem for parks and recreation departments. So, it's no surprise that lower Bidwell Park has been a regular victim over the years. More specifically, Caper Acres has been vandalized multiple times. Recently, in April of 2011 significant damage was inflicted on the playground equipment with Locksley Castle being especially noted by park officials. Another incident happened in November 2010 when the castle bathrooms were badly damaged as well as the interior safety wall of the crooked house. Both incidents closed the area for at least two weeks.

Sources: Chico Enterprise-Record



Residents and city officials have expressed concern and possible solutions to the perennial issue. Relatively inexpensive solutions include additional lighting and using community volunteers to patrol during the daytime hours. The volunteers would partner with park rangers for back-up to apprehend persons defacing or damaging city property. Solutions for night hours include a front gate which will not stop all vandals, but can serve as a deterrent to prevent most vandalism. Progressively a more expensive solution is the use of surveillance cameras. This suggestions could create a problem with controversy over privacy. This topic is especially cogent as a redesign and renovation of Caper Acres is currently in the planning stage. The BPPC and park staff have the opportunity to increase safety and reduce vandalism through design and program enhancement. An excellent source for addressing problems in public spaces is "Dealing with Crime and Disorder in Public Parks" Response Guide No. 9 (2009). Sponsored by the University at Albany, State University at New York, the Problem-Oriented Policing Inc. is under the direction of Michael S. Scott, a clinical professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Law School and formerly chief of police in Lauderhill, Florida.

## Constraints and Opportunities

The consultant for the Caper Acres Master Plan (Melton Design Group) conducted a Constraints and Opportunities analysis for the project. The student team also prepared a brief analysis to better understand the project objectives and to formulate survey questions.

### Constraints:

- Existing Boundaries  
The current space of the playground is fixed by the fence line and is not proposed for change.
- Access  
There is a limitation to access of auto travelers because the parking area is limited to the current space which will not be expanded. In addition, the streets in proximity to the playground have a low vehicle capacity.
- Vegetation  
Mature trees consisting of Valley Oaks and California Sycamores could be designated protected which will limit position, size, and dimension of new play equipment.
- Financing/ Budget  
The resources available for new or rehabilitation projects are limited to the City of Chico budget limitations which also include normal maintenance costs and overhead.

### Opportunities:

- Public Welfare and Enjoyment  
A redesign of the current playground provides an opening to address safety, amenities including seating and restrooms, and the overall experience of visitors. Some playground structures need repair and/or renovation. Updated and new design features could be incorporated into the playground.
- Drainage  
The current condition of the playground provides no conveyance system for storm water subsequently causing pooling of standing water which leaves a muddy landscape. Improvements could alleviate some of the current drainage problems.

- **Additional Financing**  
There is a possibility to elicit public support for fundraising (historically, the majority of the Caper Acre improvements were financed through citizen/service club fundraising); collecting parking fees and/or an additional tax which provide additional funding for long-term maintenance.
- **Infrastructure Improvement**  
The project is an opportunity to upgrade existing lighting and water facilities and/or sewer service.
- **Sense of Place**  
While the playground is currently well-known in the area for its identity there is potential to maximize usage through a more distinct design. Incorporating local themes that reflect the natural beauty of Bidwell Park would reinforce the setting of the playground and the history of the Park.
- **Access**  
Current bicycle racks accommodate 16 bikes on the outside of the entrance to the playground which could be increased modestly.

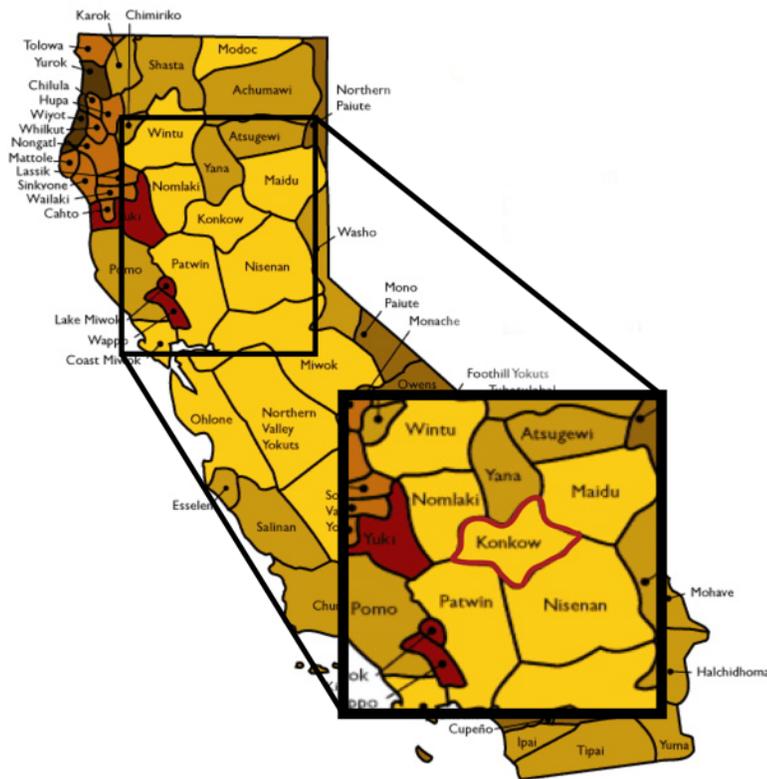
## **CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL SETTING**

### Cultural Background

Chico is situated in an area of cultural resources and historic buildings. The historic structures are predominately located in the downtown area, along the Esplanade, and south of California State University, Chico campus.

The Chico community lies within a distinct geography detailed with sloughs, river channels, and alluvial plains. The various features of the landscape allow for a mixture of plant and animal species. The vast amount of plant and animals in this area allowed human habitants to obtain food and materials to sustain their existence and for trading for resources they lacked.

The project area lies within a territory that is ethnographically claimed by Konkow who lived by the abundance of local plants and animals. The Konkow represents a division of the Maidu language. According to Lori Harrington, archeologist, the Konkow inhabited the lower portions of the Feather River, generally west of Richbar, extending southwest past Honcut Creek and westerly nearly to the Sutter Buttes. Their area included a portion of the Sacramento River drainage extending from Butte City in the south to Vina in the north and continuing east into the Sierra Nevada Mountain foothills between Chico and Oroville. (*An Archaeological Evaluation of Annie's Glen Project Butte County, Chico, CA, 2007*).



Source: [www.nahc.ca.gov/cna.html](http://www.nahc.ca.gov/cna.html)

The Konkow neighbors were the Maidu in the northeast, Yana in the north, the Patwin in the south, the Nomlaki in the northwest, and the Valley Nisenan in the southeastern border. They traded with many of their neighbors for resources they weren't able to gather and collect. Some of the resources included obsidian, shell beads, and abalone shells. The Konkow settlements were located close to water and natural resources, generally preferring areas of ridge-crest flats or terraces that are mid-slope elevation. They preferred hunting and fishing on higher elevations along with

collecting plants. They used various tools to help gather food

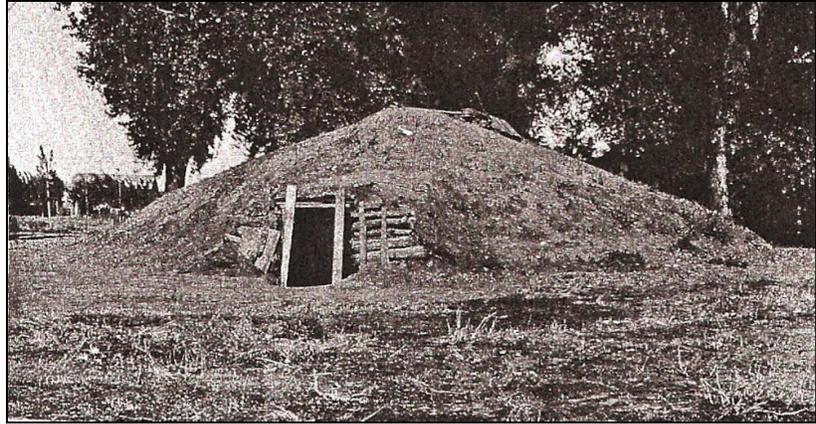
resources. These included: bow and arrows; traps; slings; blinds; clubs; and, nets. The Konkow settlement pattern is described as a village community. It included several villages with a ceremonial earth-covered lodge of subterranean assembly. It was until after the gold discovery in 1848 at Coloma that Konkow came into contact with Euro-Americans. (Sturtevant)

### Archaeological Sites

A visit to the Northeast Information Center (NEIC) was conducted by a student researcher on February 5, 2014. The NEIC is a component of the eleven offices of the California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) established by the California Office of Historic Preservation. CHRIS maintains an inventory of California's historical and cultural site resources.

According to the research, Caper Acres sits on a non-archaeological area; however, there are some recorded archaeological sites in Lower Bidwell Park. There are 18-recorded sites of prehistoric occupation in Lower and Upper Bidwell Park. The region appears to have been occupied as early as 5000-6000 BC. Sites include cultural resources like middens, bedrocks, lithic scatters, housepits, and milling stations.

Lower Park contains a few recorded sites. Site #1 had evidence of scattered lithic materials such as arrowheads, scrapers, flakes, bone fragments, shells, and core tools. The soil texture within this site was gravelly with black coloring; thus, it contained some partial deposits of charcoal. Site #2 had

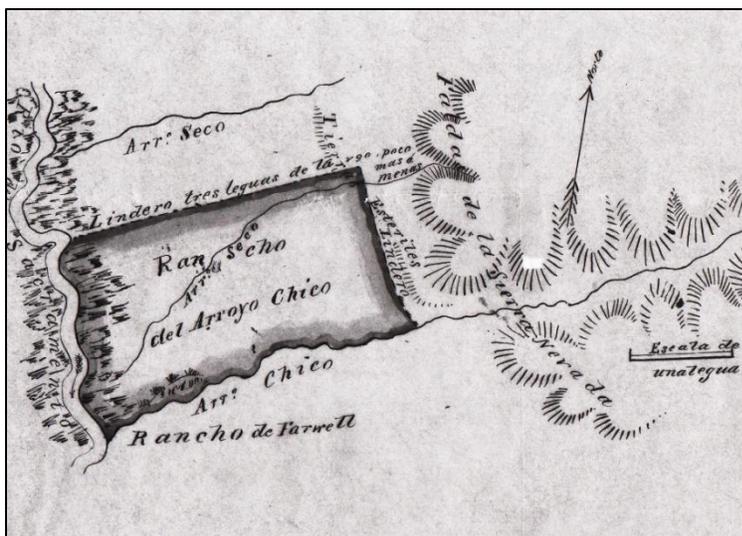


Maidu subterranean shelter (Riddel)

evidence of a village site with housepits. It also had some deposit of middens and Basalt flakes. Site #3 contained numerous flakes, groundstone flakes, housepits, and cores. This suggested habitation in this site (NEIC). Site #4 consisted of a village with midden deposits dating back to prehistoric time. The last site in Lower Bidwell Park had no recorded cultural resources. However, it has a known prehistoric habitation site (NEIC, *Archaeological Inventory Survey: Proposed Sycamore Pool Dam Replacement Project*, Jensen, 2007).

### Historical Background

The historical background of Caper Acres cannot be recounted without a brief introduction to the generous deeding of land that we know as Bidwell Park. Annie Kennedy Bidwell, temperance and women's suffrage supporter, and widow of John Bidwell, granted 1,902.88 acres to the City of Chico on July 10, 1905. The granting of the land was the wish of her late husband "General" Bidwell as he was known who had acquired his property (two separate purchases) through an original Mexican land grant



"Rancho del Arroyo Chico." (Gillis and Magliari)

Annie's written deed to the City of Chico is very long as it fully described the land boundaries with its directional nuances. It was written by her nephew, Guy R. Kennedy, a local lawyer. The deed is so detailed, that today, a self-guided walking tour could be conducted using these directions if so desired.

The deed set forth several provisions (paraphrased here) including:



First, that no parties will use the land for making or selling intoxicating liquors;

Secondly, the property is to be used as a public park and pasture land could be rented to make money for the maintenance of the park;

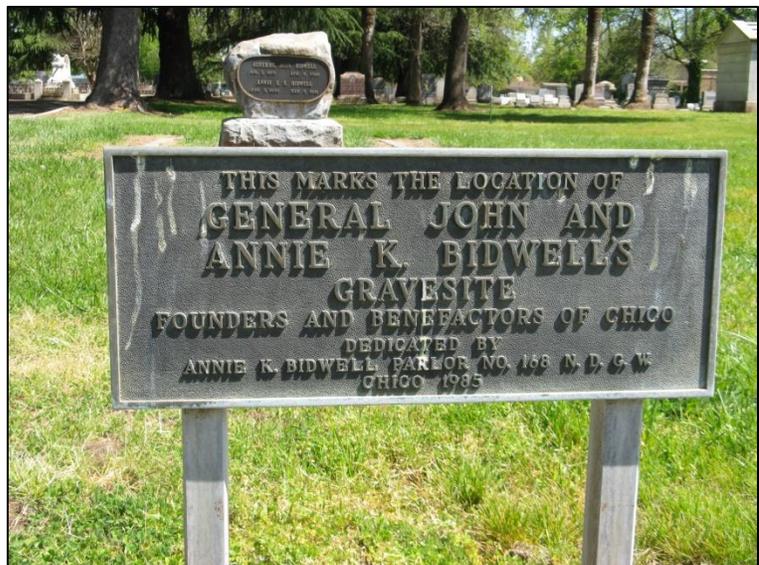
Thirdly, the beauty of the park as well as the preservation and protection of the waters of Chico Creek, including all trees, scrubs, and vines and shall be sacredly guarded;

Fourthly, no hunting of animals and birds will be permitted unless it is to remove those with noxious natures and habits.

Fifth and lastly, no public picnics will be held on Sundays.

If any of these conditions were broken, the deed would revert to the first party, being Annie Bidwell or her heirs. She also made it clear, that the gift was from her and John Bidwell, to the City of Chico as a token of their love and affection. She believed that the land was the grand work of God and that it must be preserved to his glory for the happiness and pleasure of the people of Chico for all time. On May 11, 1911 she deeded another 301.76 acres along the north side of Upper Park to become effective upon her death.

John Bidwell died April 4, 1900. Annie lived almost eighteen years after his passing. Annie died March 9, 1918. They are buried in the Chico Cemetery in their beloved community.



Through the 20th century, additional acreage was added to Bidwell Park and improvements were made in both Upper and Lower Bidwell Park.

In Lower Park, a dam was constructed in 1923 and 1924 named the 4th Street Pool and later renamed "Sycamore Pool" on the suggestion of Chico Junior Art Club (Lyndon)

### *Caper Acres - The Beginning*



Chico Junior Art Club (later changed to the Chico Women's Club in 1960) spearheaded the drive to establish and construct a children's playground in Lower Bidwell Park - "Caper Acres." The Chico Junior Art Club (the Club) was established in 1913 and Annie K. Bidwell was a founding member. The first President of the Chico Art Club pictured to the left, was Margaret Marsh. In 1933, the Chico Women's Club completed their clubhouse located on the corner of Pine and Second Streets. The Club was most active during the 1950s, 60s and 70s. (Chico News and Review) After a few decades of declined membership, the club has re-established itself as a dedicated and important service club for the Chico community.

### **1950s**

In early 1957, members of the Club discussed the concept of an imaginative children's playground to be constructed in Lower Bidwell Park. Club members toured children's playgrounds with Colin Jackson, the Bidwell Park Superintendent at the time, to gather ideas for the playground. They visited Pixie Woods in Stockton and Oakland's Fairyland playgrounds. In August 1957, the City Park Commission reached an initial agreement on a plan for a playground aimed at partnership with the Park District for the enjoyment of the community. (Chico Enterprise Record)

In February 1958, the Club sponsored a contest to name the future playground. Six-year old Carla Norlie was awarded \$5 for her submission of "Caper Acres" as the name for a "children's fairyland playground" to be established in Bidwell Park. Pictured right is Carla receiving her award money from Mrs. James Fitzsimmons, President of Chico Junior Art Club. (Chico Enterprise Record)



In April 1958, members of the Club investigated areas within Lower Bidwell Park to locate a new children's playground. The original site initially

selected was between Second Street and the Pine Street Bridge. Eventually, the Club settled on a site nearer the Sycamore Pool. (Chico Enterprise Record)

The Club began a fund drive with the Native Daughter's of the Golden West, Annie K. Bidwell Parlor in 1959 going door-to-door to raise money for the new playground. Club members identified the need for eight sponsors to implement construction plans for the play equipment. To raise money for the project, the Club sponsored Walt Disney films at the Senator Theater; held a community dance at the Chico Elks Club where attendees danced to the music of Glen Keyon and his five piece orchestra and partnered with the City of Chico's Mayor Marsh Pine to declare a "Caper Acres Week."

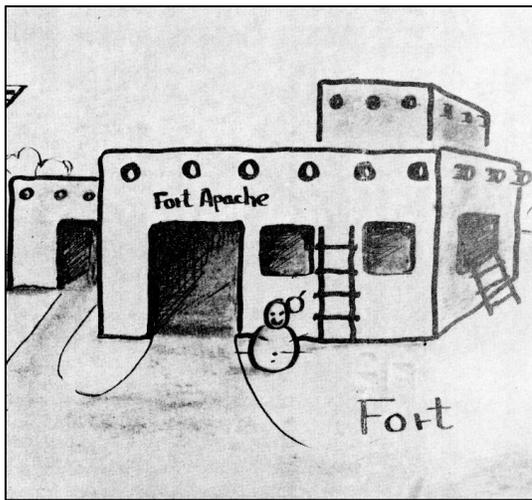
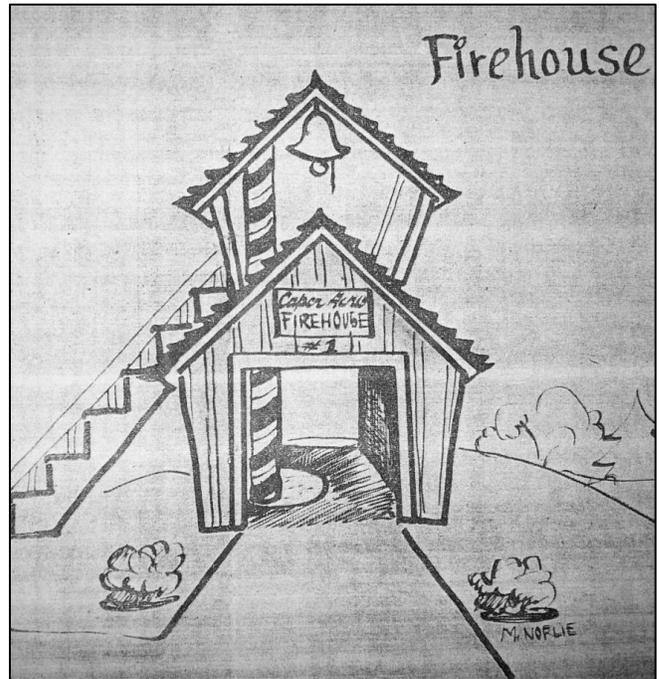
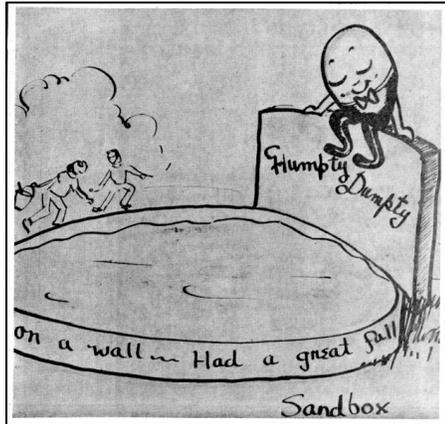
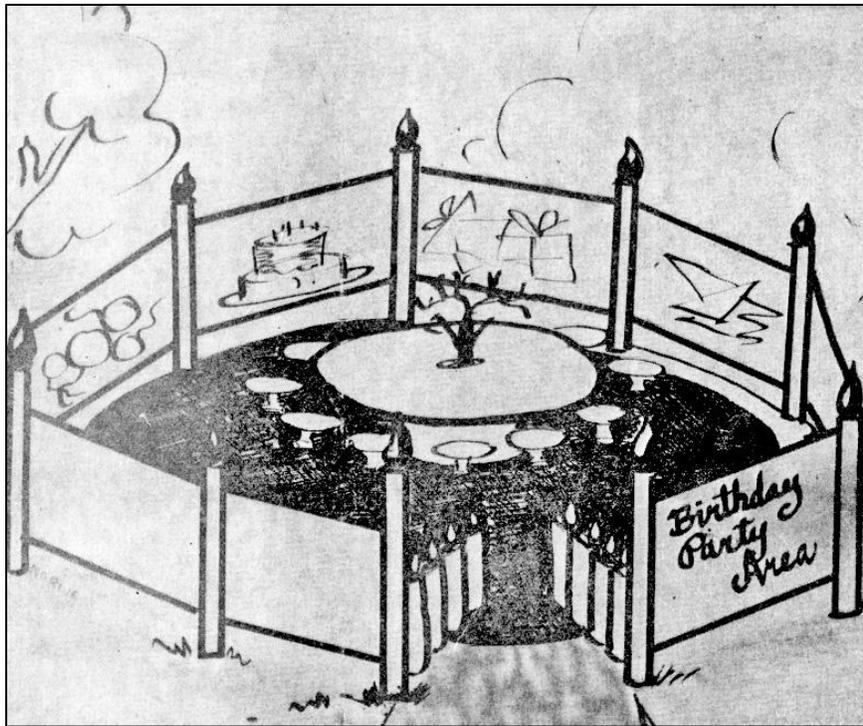


Pictured to the left, are Mayor Pine and Mrs. Lamar Fisher as the mayor signs the proclamation for the special week (October 3 - 10) dedicated to raising money and awareness for a new children's playground - Caper Acres. According to reporter Jim Lement with the Chico Enterprise Record, Caper Acres "has had the on-again, off-again support of city officials and the general public."

Many local citizens donated time and talent to the planning of Caper Acres. Local artist Marlys Norlie drew concept drawings for the playground; many of which were eventually constructed.



Marlys Norlie at her drawing board; woman on the right, unidentified (Chico Enterprise Record)



Photographs of newspaper clippings from the Chico Enterprise Record.



Pictured above is Mrs. Charles Hicks (left), Club President, and Mrs. Lowell Wright who co-chaired the Chico Junior Art Club development committee. Mrs. Hicks is holding a drawing of a Marlys Norlie's proposed entrance structure for the three-acre Caper Acres children's playground.

Chico architect Lorrin Ward and Eugene Ringel and Associates, a local civil engineering firm, donated many hours to surveying and mapping the project site. In particular, Mr. Ringel donated his services to the construction of Caper Acres over a span of ten years. He contributed plans for the playground, electrical and water systems, fencing, restrooms, entrance architecture, parking and other ancillary facilities. Mr. Ringel also served as City of Chico Mayor, Board member of the Bidwell Park and Playground Commission and President of the Downtown Chico Business Association. (Chico Enterprise Record)

In 1959, grading began on the site, and by fall 1961, a well was drilled by N. R. Jesses and the pump and pressure system installed by Butte Pump and Motor Works. Construction on the site commenced. Hayden Davis, Chair of the Bidwell Park and Playground Commission (BPPC), Mrs. Barbara Hicks, Mrs. Phyllis Kicks - Chico Women's Club members, Jake Funk, a Chico contractor, and Gene Ringel headed the Site Planning Development Committee for the playground.

While the Women's Club was busy raising funds and community support to build the facilities for Caper Acres, financial concerns regarding the maintenance of the new playground surfaced early. Park Commissioner Angelo Volpato noted in April 1960 that "the biggest problem with funding a new playground was maintenance after installation."

Park Superintendent Jackson estimated that the maintenance cost and one to two part-time employees would be approximately \$5000 annually. (Chico Enterprise Record)

According to Mrs. Charles Hicks, project chair of the Junior Women's Club, several local service organizations, individuals and businesses had promised sponsorship of Caper Acres facilities: Firehouse (\$700 Exchange Club); Tree House Slide (\$1350 Chico Rotary); Crooked Mile (\$1400 Quota Club); Birthday Party Area ((Mr. and Mrs. D. R. Middleton); Sandbox (\$900 Omega Nu Sorority); Swiss Cheese (Evening Kiwanis Club); Diamond Mine (Greater Kiwanis Club); and a castle-like entrance (Junior Women's Club).

Benches were donated by the Soroptomists and the College club; the Native Sons of the Golden West contributed signs; Peterson Electric and Pacific Gas and Electric Company donated lighting; and Modern Building and other local contractors helped with the lavatories. An engineer's estimate for the cost of the total project was \$30,000 - \$35,000. However, that cost estimate was considered low because of the "numerous donations of time and material." (Chico Enterprise Record) Sponsors of the project (assuming this was the Junior Women's Club) estimated \$27 a day to operate the facility which they suggested would necessitate "small entry fee."

## 1960s

In 1964, the Humpty Dumpty sandbox was the first playground feature to be constructed, followed by the Birthday Ring, Crooked House, Adobe Fort, Diamond Mine, Big Cheese and the Tree House slide. According to Jim Lement, reporter with the Chico Enterprise Record, fencing was an important site improvement that needed to be erected before the playground could officially open. The BPPC requested \$5000 from the Peterson Fund to finance the fencing. This fund was set-up for development of park lands from the sale of the Peterson Tract. (It is unknown if the funding was allocated for the fencing.)



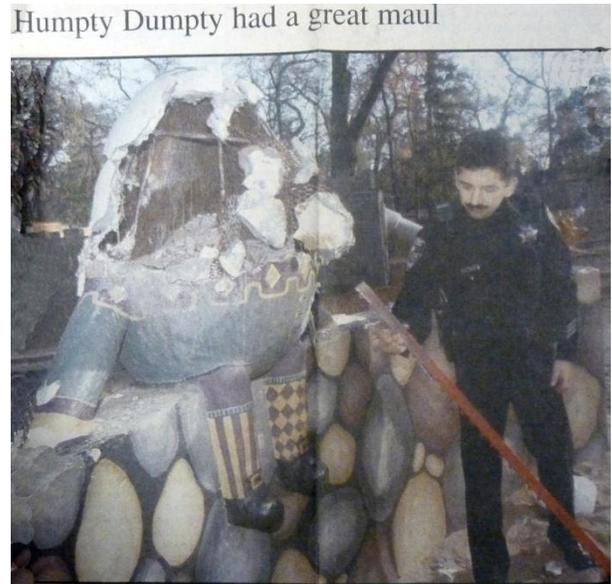
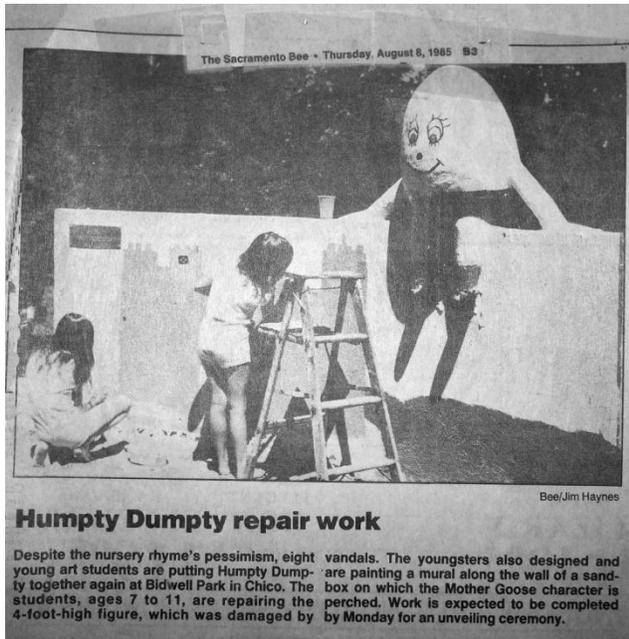
In 1967 there was an unofficial opening of Caper Acres. (Chico Enterprise Record) On June 8, 1970 the official opening of the new playground was held. Pictured to the left is the playground dedication with Little Miss Chico of 1969, Mary Ann Wells, cutting the ribbon to officially open Caper Acres. Mrs. Ron Fox, President of the Chico Junior Women's Club pictured on the right and Carla Jan Norlie who submitted the winning name - Caper Acres in 1958 when she was six-years old is on the left. (Chico Enterprise Record)



The above aerial photography was taken by the U.S. Department of Agricultural Farm Agency. The photograph reveals a tremendous amount of tree cover and the beginning of site work and structures on the future Caper Acres Playground. As noted above, the Humpty Dumpty sandbox was constructed in 1964. This photograph was obtained from Dr. Dean Fairbanks, Chair, Department of Geography and Planning.

The Aerial Photography Field Office, as a division within the Farm Service Agency, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has acquired, used and distributed aerial photography for over 65 years .

During the next two decades (1970s and 1980s) little information was found regarding Caper Acres. Damage to Humpty Dumpty was reported in the Sacramento Bee (August 8, 1985). Unfortunately, Humpty would be vandalized more than once in later years.



Clippings from the Enterprise Record - No additional information

And community members would again, come forth to donate their time and talent to repair the cherished Humpty. Pictured below is wall artist Greg Payne giving Humpty a new smiling face. (Enterprise Record 2006)



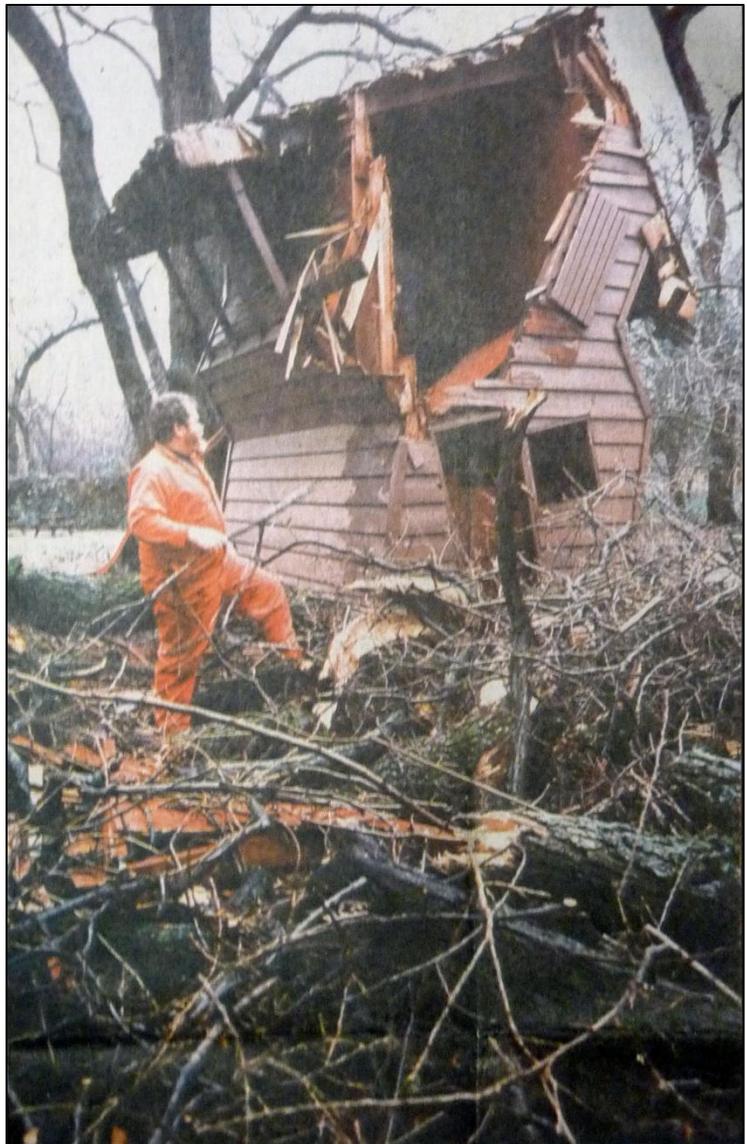
## 1989 - Present Time

In 1989, CSU Chico Professor Fred Brooks with the Department of Recreation and Parks Administration served as the City of Chico Interim Park Director. Dr. Brooks pursued partnership with local service clubs to help fund enhancement and maintenance of Caper Acres. In 1990, Henry Buzza Junior donated several sycamore trees to be planted near one of the Birthday Rings and in November 1991, the BPPC approved the Chico Lion's Club proposed donation and installation of a "Lion" head drinking fountain (\$1500). A Chico Eagle Scout project funded new picnic tables in 1991. (City of Chico, Parks Division files)

In 1995, major storms in January and March caused significant damage to the playground. An oak tree fell on the Crooked House. "Caper Acres was hit really hard. We lost the Crooked House. We're losing a lot of trees in the Park." (Rollie Wright, Park Director)

Friends of Caper Acres, Chico service clubs and individuals once again, came forward with cash donations and volunteer work to make repairs and renovations. The local Building Industry Association (BIA) donated engineering, free labor and materials with the Chico Enterprise Record providing publicity for the fundraising efforts. Additionally information about the community effort to rebuild Caper Acres can be found at these following web addresses: <http://landscapeonline.com/research/article/7653>; <https://www.facebook.com/SaveCaperAcresfor more details.>)

A "March for the Parks" campaign solicited donations. "Buy a Brick" campaign was started to help fund repairs and renovations to



the playground equipment and structures (see Funding section of this report). According to the 1/13/1996 article in Enterprise Record, over \$60,000 was donated in materials and labor, \$40,000 in cash contributions including \$12,000 from "Buy a Brick" program and \$10,000 from the Omega Nu Sorority. These donations helped repair and renovate Humpty Dumpty, the Crooked House, Tree House, Fort Apache, the Diamond Mine, and Birthday Ring.

In July 2003, the 86' deep on-site well that served the playground was formally abandoned and installation of community water was completed. Birthday Ring #2 was installed in October 2004. (City of Chico files and Enterprise Record)

In 2007, a sad event became a happy addition to Caper Acres. A 16-month old Chico toddler, Nico Cardoza died unexpectedly the previous December. Family and friends came together to turn their grief into a positive contribution for living children. Nico loved to play in Caper Acres with his sister Sophia and their parents. A play structure, especially appropriate for toddler-aged children, was installed. The "Nico Project" has an ocean-theme with a magical sea serpent, boat, and toddler-sized crawl spaces surrounded by a soft surface. Lower play equipment makes the popular playground area easily accessed by and safe for younger children to climb.

Throughout the years, repairs and regular maintenance of Caper Acres have been a constant budget and staff time expenditure to keep Caper Acres as the cherished place it has become over the years. The Bidwell Park and Playground Commission (BPPC) included the renovation of the playground in both their 2011-2012 and 2013-2014 Work Plans. The BPPC hired Melton Design Group in October of 2013 to design the renovation of Caper Acres. (Chico Enterprise Record)

#### Caper Acres Limited Hours/Closure

In early July 2013, the City of Chico addressed major budget deficiencies which led to a multiple-day, temporary closing of Caper Acres. The closure was due to lack of staffing to continue maintenance of the playground on a regular basis. The playground was closed Tuesday through Thursday, keeping it open only Friday through Sunday. (Monday was already a closed day for playground maintenance) By the end of July, a local business, ServPro offered to maintain other areas of the park free of charge, so City staff could devote time to cleaning Caper Acres. ServPro committed to help the City until November 1, 2013. Additionally, a group of parents formed the "Caper Acres Volunteers." Their stated purpose was to find more permanent solutions to keep the playground open.

Chico City Council member Randall Stone brought forth an idea to use inmates in Butte County's Alternative Custody Supervision (ACS) program to provide maintenance work

thereby, keeping the playground open for its previous six days a week. The program provides training, learning job skills, and an opportunity to reduce jail sentences. The ACS program was started in 2011 as a result of Assembly Bill 109 which mandated that certain defined inmates be jailed in county jails rather than within the state prison system. Qualifying inmates for the ACS program are defined as committing non-serious, non-violent, non-sexual crimes.

The services of ACS were offered free to the City of Chico. The City Council approved a long-term agreement with Butte County in October 2013 and the ASC program was in full-swing by November. The inmates clean the playground on the Monday closure day, finishing up their work by 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday when Caper Acres is open. (Chico Enterprise Record)

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The Project Description includes two distinct components of the Caper Acres Master Plan:

1. The class project – producing a report through the use of secondary information including, but not limited to: the cultural and historical background of Caper Acres; the goals, policies and funding of City of Chico parkland. Conducting primary research through field observations and a user survey; and, analyzing collected data.
2. “The Preliminary Master Plan for the Caper Acres Renovation 2014” prepared by the consulting firm, Melton Design Group.

The Melton Design Group prepared a Caper Acres Renovation Preliminary Master Plan in March 2014. All existing facilities were analyzed by the consultant firm. Implementation of the Master Plan includes renovation, replacement, repair, demolition and new construction. Additionally, there will be some non-native vegetation removal and replanting, as well as soil movement through grading to prevent flooding incidents.

The class component of the project does not propose any physical changes or impacts to the existing playground. Therefore, this type of study would not be considered a “project” under the requirements of the California Environmental Act (CEQA). However, implementation of the Master Plan would be subject to environmental review as it will result in physical changes. A draft environmental initial study is being conducted for the “Preliminary Master Plan for the Caper Acres Renovation 2014” by the CSUC Environmental Impact Analysis class (Geography 427) as an instructional exercise.



## **PARK FINANCING**

Cities, counties, special districts, including school districts, in addition to the state and national park systems, provide parkland and recreational opportunities for local community enjoyment. Providing parks, facilities and programs are costly expenditures for local government. Acquisition of parkland and capital improvements has a variety of funding mechanisms; however, on-going maintenance and repairs are generally paid for through a local jurisdiction's general fund. The global economic crisis including the "housing bubble" phenomenon that begun in 1997, was further complicated in California when the 2011 Budget Act dissolved the state's 400+ redevelopment agencies (RDA) in February 2012. (State of California, Department of Finance) Previously, robust sales tax revenues and RDA monies allowed the City of Chico to perhaps overspend certain budget accounts and rely on the general fund to fund more city expenses.

In 2013, the City of Chico made significant staffing cuts in order to counter major budget deficiencies. Across the board budget reductions were made in every city department including the Park Division. Vacant staff positions were not filled and responsibilities were shifted.

The City of Chico is currently facing a \$7.7 million budget deficit. The City's general fund was tapped for \$10.1 million to cover deficits in the private development fund and \$3 million for the capital improvement fund. These budget maneuvers were necessary to keep the City from having a negative financial report which could limit the City's ability conduct other necessary financial transactions. (Chico Enterprise Record)

As capital projects for park expansions and new facilities steadily increase the amount of maintenance required for parks and recreation departments, the allocation from the general fund becomes inadequate. This issue necessitates efforts to locate alternative sources of money for maintenance. While park improvements have been universally popular capital projects, there is a lack of long term financially sustainable strategy to pay for them. Below are City policies relating to park financing.

### City of Chico Goals, Objectives, Implementation and Action Statements

#### Parks, Public Facilities and Services Element

- Action PPFs-1.1.4 (Park Maintenance Funding) – Aid in the formation of maintenance districts or other funding mechanisms to pay for the cost of ongoing maintenance and operation of parks.

- Action PPF-1.1.8 (Funding to Develop Recreation Facilities) – Pursue local, state, federal, and other funds for the development of parks and recreation facilities.

#### Bidwell Park Master Management Plan - Funding

- Objective: FI-2. Pursue grants and a variety of public and private funding sources in addition to the funds allocated to the management of Bidwell Park.
- Implementation: FI-1. A variety of grants and public and private funding resources should be sought.
- Implementation: FI-2. Park user groups should be encouraged to improve areas specific to their use.
- Implementation: FI-4. Private sector donations for Park improvements should be encouraged and appropriate recognition of such donations should be allowed.

The Quimby Act and park in-lieu fees allow the city to exact land dedications/monies for acquisition and improvement of parkland; however those funding methods are not available for on-going maintenance. Maintenance, operation, repair and future capital replacements can be funded through Mello-Roos Community Facilities Districts and Benefit Assessment Districts.

#### Grants

There are opportunities for grants that may be applicable to projects within Bidwell Park. Grants primarily come from either a federal or state authority for targeted purpose. These financing can provide substantial funding to a local area with dearth of financial resources to maintain or protect a natural space.

#### Federal – Land and Water Conservation Fund

Outdoor Recreational Grant Program. The program allocates funding to acquire land and plan and develop recreation spaces including tennis courts, playgrounds, walking trails, picnic spaces, outdoor swimming areas, etc. Additionally, funding can be utilized to build restrooms, water systems, and many other support facilities for parks. These grants are available to municipalities, counties, states, and special districts. Fund disbursement is a grant matching a state allocation. The program is run under the auspices of the National Park Service.

Urban and Community Forest grant program. The program allocates matching grants to state funding as well as technical assistance to local communities emphasizing maintenance and preservation of natural landscapes, especially an urban forest canopy.

Community Development Block grants. A program administered by the housing and urban development agency used to help non-entitlement local governments to acquire open space.

#### State of California – Habitat Conservation Fund

This program is administered through the Office of Grants and Local Services that disburses about \$2 million annually municipalities, counties, and special districts. Applicants need to be able match 50% of grant award. Project eligibility consists of 3 categories. Projects types can be nature interpretation programs connecting urban residents with wildlife spaces, conservation of specific plant and animal species, the development of walking trails and wildlife corridors.

#### Funding for Operations, Maintenance, and Repair

As noted above, funding for parks departments primarily comes from the general fund of a municipality. Additional financing for regular maintenance of parks can originate from several policy strategies. The fees are not always fees in the strictest sense. Often, the augmentation of funding for parks and recreation comes from public and private partnerships as well as joint cooperation between municipal departments. Among the tried and true approaches, is community volunteerism, an excellent strategy for reducing costs.

In a 2011 study, sponsored by the Seattle Parks Foundation, several solutions were cited for supporting for the operations and maintenance of an urban parks system:

- Requiring mitigation fees from utilities or any other agencies using park land;
- Tapping into utility funding to ask for payment for the ecological benefits of the park. These benefits could include drainage and water quality;
- Establishing park improvement districts similar to business improvement districts. These districts would be vested with authority to impose a real estate transfer tax generating revenue to add funding to specific parks;
- Allocating a portion of funding for capital projects to future maintenance for new parks (Toronto, Canada);
- Building concession stands in parks with revenue earmarked for maintenance funding (San Francisco and other cities);
- Consolidating concessions in parks to require the company winning the bid in a major park to provide concessions in neighborhood parks also;
- Maintaining a park (Post Office Square Park) completely from parking garage fees (Boston);

- Garnering \$100, 000 from the corporate sponsorship of concerts during the summers in Washington Park (Portland);
- Allocating one quarter of sales tax receipts toward open space and mountain parks (Boulder);
- Levying a five cent tax on the use of plastic bags in stores. While this revenue stream saw diminishing returns later it was instrumental in the restoration of the Anacostia River (Washington DC).

### Local Efforts in Chico

Historically, Chico service groups and citizens have contributed expertise, time, materials, and money to help fund improvements and repairs for Caper Acres. The 1964 photo to the right depicts most likely a service club donating landscaping to the entry of Caper Acres. (Chico Enterprise Record)



The community cares about its parks as demonstrated through various volunteer programs and fundraising efforts. The "Buy a Brick" program started in 1995 is on-going. (See appendices) Recent efforts include the sale of Chico artist Jake Early's re-designed monkey face tee-shirt based on the well-known rock outcropping in Upper Bidwell Park. The organic cotton shirts can be purchased at the Park Division office.

Another fundraising event accomplished in July 2013 was the "Bidwell Park Birthday Bash" which earned \$1,801. This money, according to former Volunteer Coordinator Lisa Smith-Peters, is used for park infrastructure repairs, including some of Caper Acres' expenses. The Park Division also raised about \$7,000 participating in the North Valley Community Foundation's Annie B's Community Drive.

The City of Chico partially relies on volunteer-based efforts to help finance park expenditures and maintenance from groups such as: Friends of Bidwell Park; California Native Plant Society; Cat Coalition, Kids and Creeks, and the Chico Creek Nature Center. Earth Day events in the park include volunteers working on a variety of projects to repair and maintain Bidwell Park. Chico State fraternities and sororities have donated maintenance labor and money to the park in the past and most recently, the Omega Nu professional sorority gave \$1,000 to the Caper Acre playground renovation in March of this year.



Most of the funding of improvements for Caper Acres has come from public commitment and action. Other options that have been considered are to collect a user tax in which participants in large events donate a dollar to Caper Acres and participation in the Annie Bs fundraising program. More and more, the Park Division will be turning to the public to help with projects. The Chico Enterprise Record noted in a January 7, 2014 article that large campaign to raise money for funding renovation of the children's playground was discussed by the BPPC.

### Fundraising Techniques

Community fundraising has evolved over the decades. Procuring donations door-to-door has been replaced with the internet outreach. The most widely used crowdfunding websites that have raised millions of dollars online are: Kickstarter and Indiegogo. These sites provide a platform to any user to raise money. The crowd sourcing is able to reach people for a local effort who might otherwise be unaware of a campaign.

Recently, using the Indiegogo site, two independent Chico businesses were able to stay open. The movie theater, "The Pageant" started a campaign to raise \$51,000 to buy a digital movie projector "Go Digital or Go Dark." The campaign ran from November 7, 2013 to December 31, 2013. They received \$60,250 in donations. Earlier in the year, the independent "The Bookstore" raised \$35,000 through Indiegogo. The funds allowed

a long-time bookstore employee to purchase the business after the original owner retired. Other top rated fundraising sites may be found via the internet.

The beloved and historic Bidwell Mansion, a State Park property, was in danger of closure when on May 11, 2011 state officials announced that as many as seventy parks would be closed as a result of California's budget crisis. (Sacramento Bee) Local community efforts through fundraising events and direct donations were able to bridge the budget gap and save the Mansion from closure.

Other vehicles for fundraising include capital campaigns which are large events involving several teams of volunteers. These events including concerts, food, and other entertainment and require an established well of social capital. The success rate of these large public gatherings varies widely. Another approach to fundraising with higher risk is the founding of a permanent or semi-permanent non-profit business. This could range from selling t-shirts in a park on weekends to renting a commercial space for a thrift store that donates to parks and recreation. There are, of course, many other methods of fundraising but these have the potential to reach the largest number of people or be among the most reliable for dependable, regular fundraising for parks that need annual funding.

## **USER SURVEY**

This section of the report includes the survey methodology, design, and the results.

### Collecting Primary Information

In the beginning of the survey process, the research team conducted a field reconnaissance at Caper Acres to gather information about the project site. The team arrived as a group and moved through the park taking note of the equipment, the people and the surroundings. Our primary research provided a snap shot of current park features and where improvements could be made. This was an important step as it helped the class create a survey that would reflect the most appropriate questions to ask.

### Survey Focus

After the research team conducted the field reconnaissance of the site, the class regrouped and brainstormed the types of questions that should be included in the survey. The class reviewed the overall objectives of the user survey. Originally, the survey included questions about the public's interaction with Lower Bidwell Park as a

whole, as the survey was to be administered from multiple locations throughout Lower Bidwell Park, including Caper Acres. We refined our strategy and targeted the survey exclusively within Caper Acres. This approach narrowed the focus mainly on the children's park and its existing and future improvements.

The Caper Acres Master Plan will include renovation and potential removal of some of the existing improvements as they are currently designed, such as the tunnels of Bunker Hill Mine. Additionally, new design themes and playground facilities may be incorporated. Therefore, asking questions about the existing design, equipment and amenities, in addition to what users would like to see in the future, defined our objectives. Information regarding other areas of Lower Bidwell Park that the survey participants were using was collected, while staying on target with the main focus being the children's playground.

### Survey Design

The class instructor decided that a face-to-face questionnaire would be most beneficial for our survey work, both for a student-learning experience and a higher response rate than a self-administered survey. All class members contributed to the formulation of survey questions. Questions were discussed and debated in class prior to preparing the first draft survey.

Certain criteria were decided upon early in the process, such as the length of the questionnaire. Parents, grandparents, children and community members visit Caper Acres for personal enjoyment. This is important family time for many and we wanted to respect their personal space; making the disruption as minimal as possible. Therefore, the survey was structured to be conducted quickly (in approximately 5-7 minutes), but with the option for the respondent to discuss more if they so desired.

The survey hosted a variety of question types. Open-ended questions gave the participants a chance to share more of their thoughts and opinions and provided qualitative data that is valuable. Closed-ended questions, in the form of yes or no and multiple choices from a list were dominant in the survey. The blend of these questions appeared appropriate for the setting of our project. Privacy and anonymity were important factors in creating our survey. We wanted the participants to feel completely comfortable. The questionnaire did not collect personal information; therefore, the respondents would be completely anonymous. Gender and zip code information were collected, but were not connected or identified with the respondent.

Visually, a streamlined design was created for survey. The survey was printed on one piece of paper, double sided with a separate informational handout for participants with contact information. (See appendices for survey instrument and information sheet)

## Survey Review and Approval

After revisions to our survey including removing unnecessary questions, reading it aloud, and general fine tuning, the questionnaire was ready for review. The City of Chico Natural Resources Manager, Dan Elseaff reviewed the draft and made appropriate changes. After those revisions were made, Dr. Dean Fairbanks, Chair, Geography and Planning Department, reviewed the survey and offered the suggestion to add zip code and gender information, the survey was forward for clearance to the University's Human Subjects in Research.

The final step in the survey process was receiving approval from the Human Subjects in Research Committee, Office of Graduate Studies. The Caper Acres user survey was approved on February 28, 2014. (See appendices for approval letter)

## Administering the Survey

Our Caper Acres survey was conducted completely by the students and Professor Figge. Students worked both in pairs and individually, depending on the day of the week, the number of students available for surveying, and the amount of visitors present in the playground. The surveying was conducted in a professional manner with the survey team wearing matching CSUC Geography and Planning tee-shirts and "Guest Researcher" badges supplied by the City Park Division.

The survey was conducted from February 25<sup>th</sup> to March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2014. There were six visits to the playground reflecting each day Caper Acres is open to the public: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The weekend days received the most visitors. Two-hour time frames were followed for surveying: 10-12:00 pm; 2-4:00 pm; and 3-5:00 pm. The variety in times and days of the week allowed us to capture the most accurate representation of park users. Inclement weather extended the original timeframe for the survey.

Total number of surveys administered: 150



## Survey Data Entry

Students used "Google Docs" and selected the option to create a survey. Two students inputted the survey questions. Responses were then entered which were both quantitative and qualitative using the options available through the program. The completed Google Doc survey created a spreadsheet to analyze the results. Results were discussed and analyzed. Those results considered important to the planning and implementation of the Caper Acres Master Plan were graphically displayed. The entire results of the survey are contained in an Excel sheet found in the appendices of this report.

## **SURVEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

The following is a brief synopsis of the survey results. Visual depictions (charts and graphs) of the survey results follow this section of the report.

Sixty-three (63%) percent of the respondents are female. This is not a particularly surprising statistic, as generally, women spend more time with childrearing responsibilities than men. (pewsocialtrends.org) Sixty-two percent (62%) of the visitors are City of Chico residents. See zip code maps following this section of the report.

### *Mode of Transportation*

Results regarding the mode of transportation used to visit the playground indicated that eighty-four (84%) percent of the respondents drove a vehicle to the park. We were however, surprised with this high percentage as fifty-eight percent (58%) of the respondents lived within less than five miles from the playground. Reviewing this data, prompted us to think more critically about the users of the children's park. Caper Acres users are traveling with their children (or grandchildren). Many of the children are either toddler-aged or under ten years of age with perhaps, baby siblings. Parents are arriving with strollers, large bags, food, and supplies. These parents are more appropriately transported by a vehicle. Additionally, thirty-eight percent (38%) of respondents traveled between 5 and 50 miles. These factors explain the high percentage of respondents driving to the playground and using the adjacent parking lot.

### *Frequency of Visiting Caper Acres and Lower Park Use*

When asked how often respondents visit Caper Acres, thirty-six percent (36%) stated at least once a week. Thirty-five percent (35%) of visitors noted that they visit at least one a month. Twenty-seven percent (27%) visit infrequently. These respondents could represent out of town visitors, grandparents and/or first time visitors.

When asked about other features of Lower Park visitors used, forty-two percent (42%) used the trails to either walk, bike or run and, thirty percent (30%) used Sycamore pool. Less used amenities among our respondents were the picnic areas (16%); baseball fields (6%) and the horseshoe pit (5%). These responses appear appropriate when considering the users of Caper Acres are families with very young children in many instances. Seventy-one percent (71%) of respondents were aware that a concession stand was located at Sycamore Pool; however, qualitative responses revealed that many respondents did not know the concession stand's seasonal dates.

### *Currents Amenities, Facilities and Improvements*

Eighty-two percent (82%) of the visitors believed that the existing seating in Caper Acres was adequate. When asked their opinion on the most important amenities of the park, fifty-one percent (51%) stated restrooms and drinking fountains, twenty-nine (29%) and twenty-two (22%) respectively. Some qualitative responses noted that one working fountain was not sufficient, and several respondents opined both the restrooms and the drinking fountains could use improvements.

Seventy-five percent (75%) of the respondents said that they preferred that the playground has a theme with seventy-three (73%) of those responses stating they were happy with the current theme "Storybook." Other suggestions for different themes were: Disney, Animal, Chico history (Robin Hood, Hooker Oak, and Upper Park).

Preference for the color scheme of the playground equipment was equally split with twenty-seven percent (27%) preferring both bright primary colors and a natural palette of color. Twenty-four percent (24%) stated they liked a combination of bright and natural colors and twenty-one percent (21%) had no opinion on the color scheme.

The survey question regarding which features and/or equipment the visitor's children preferred the most resulted in fifteen percent (15%) choosing the Crooked House and the Nico Project, fourteen percent (14%) the Birdcage, twelve percent (12%) Locksley's Castle, eleven percent (11%) Bunker Hill Mine and the swings, nine percent (9%) the Big Cheese, eight percent (8%) the Humpty Dumpty Sandpit, four percent (4%) the birthday rings, and one-percent (1%) other.

### *Future Renovations*

Securing user opinions for future renovation of the playground as proposed with the Caper Acres Master Plan was incorporated into the survey. Eighty-two percent (82%) of respondents were in favor of adding interactive and educational displays around the perimeter of the playground.

Seventy-one percent (71%) of respondents stated they were in favor of adding new features to the playground. The suggestions were tabulated and grouped into four similar categories:

1. active climbing equipment (e.g. monkey bars, spider net, climbing dome);
2. swinging type equipment;
3. spinning and jumping equipment (e.g. merry-go-round, seesaw); and,
4. water features (e.g. "volcano", fountains).

Twenty-nine percent (29%) suggested more active climbing equipment; twenty-seven percent (27%) asked for more swings; eighteen percent (18%) were in favor of adding spinning and jumping equipment; and, thirteen percent (13%) suggested adding some kind of water feature element.

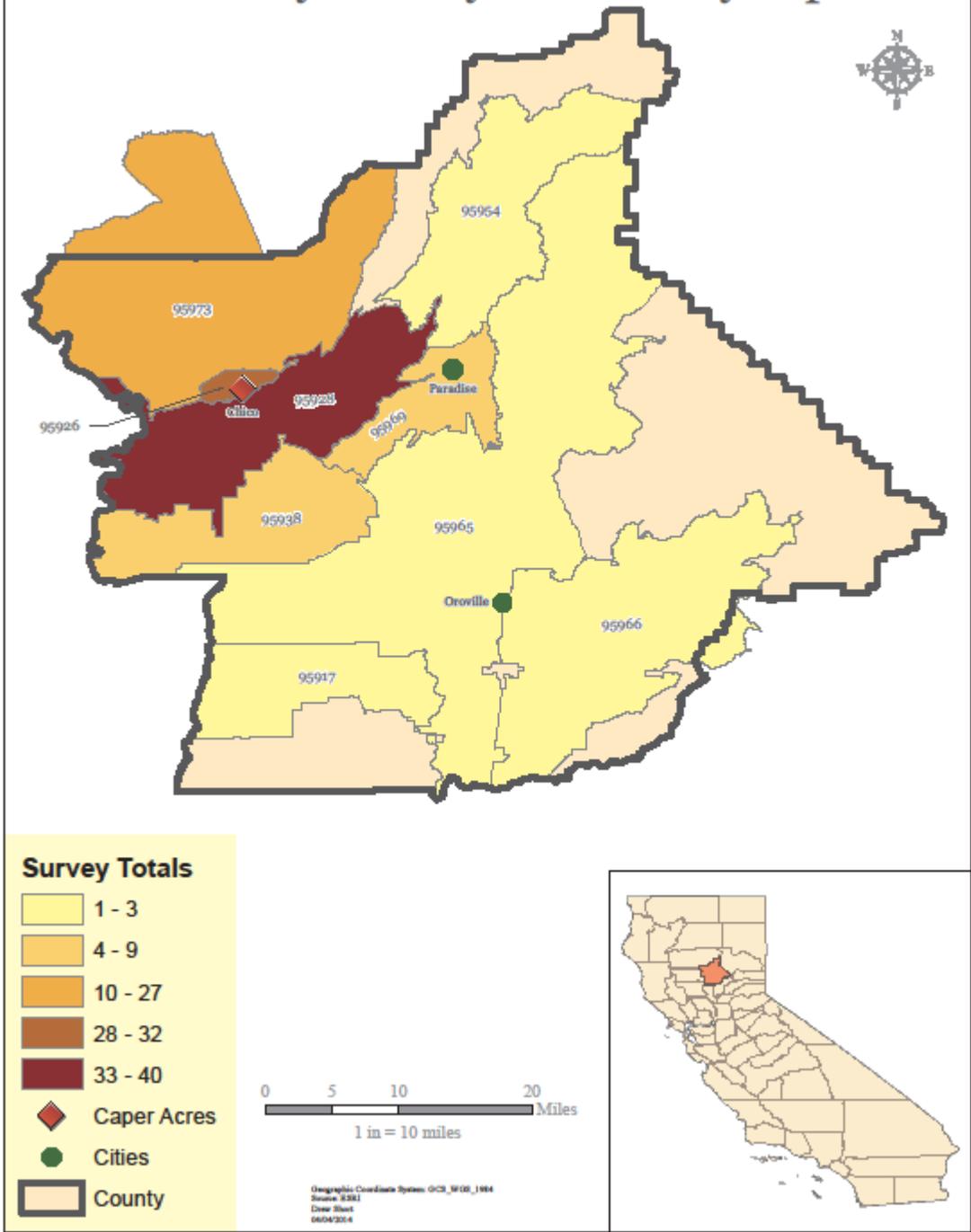
In regards to future renovation, responses to what were "Must Keep" features in Caper Acres; fourteen percent (14%) stated the Bunker Hill Mine, thirteen percent (13%) the Crooked House and eleven percent (11%) for the Big Cheese and Locksley's Castle.

#### *Funding Maintenance/Improvement of Caper Acres*

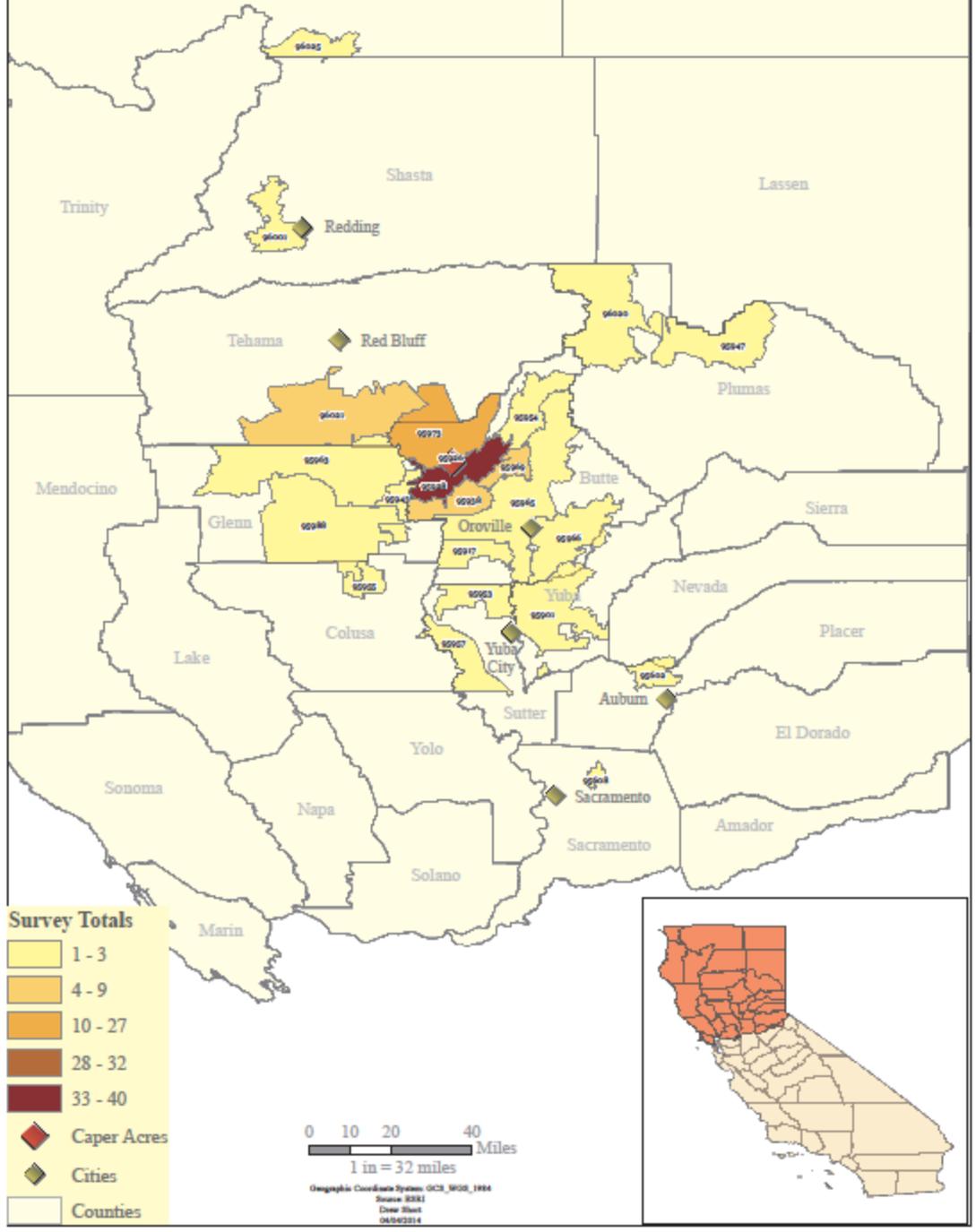
Eighty-five percent (85%) of respondents who identified themselves as City of Chico residents were in favor of paying a local tax to fund the maintenance and renovation of Caper Acres. Forty-seven percent (47%) of all respondents would be willing to pay some sort of parking fee.

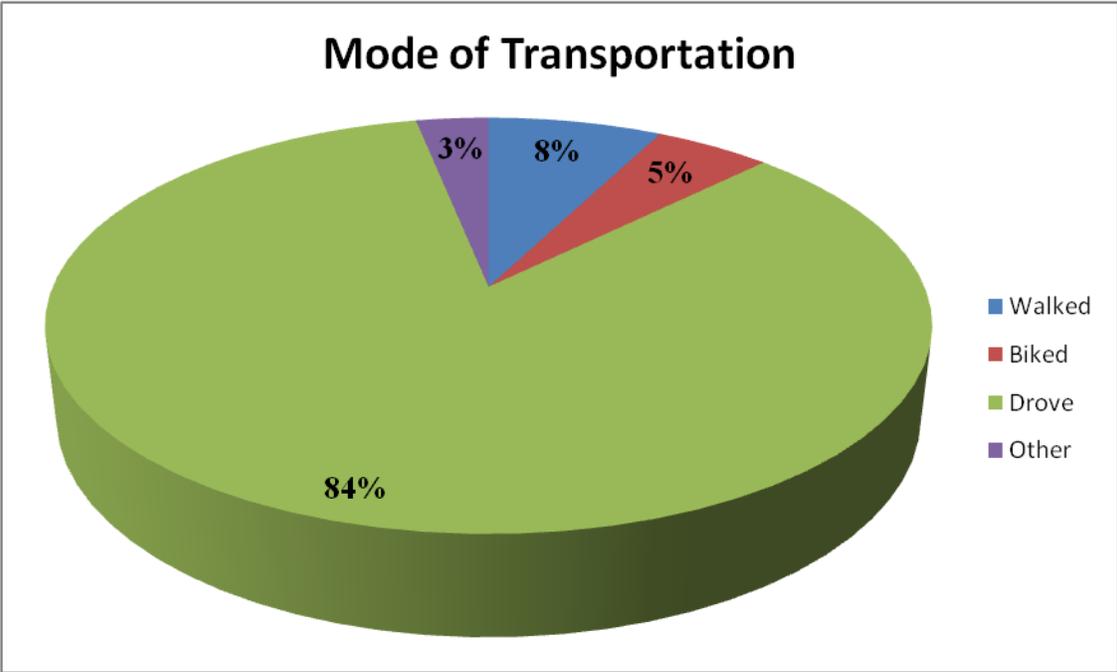
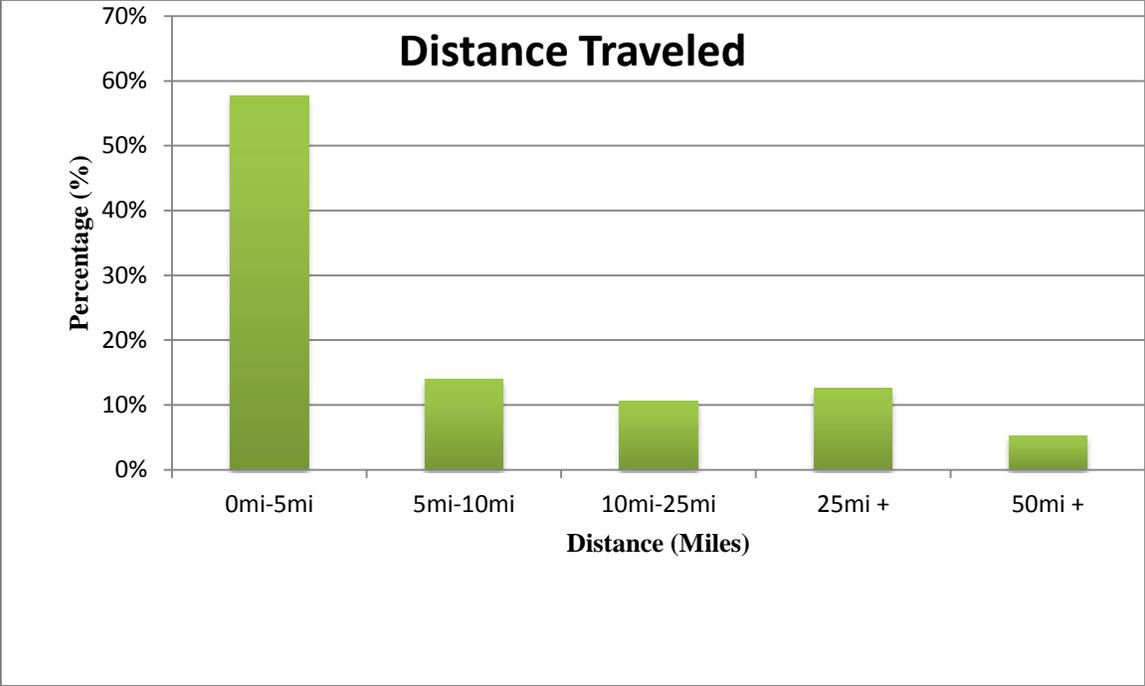
There are qualitative components related to the above results. Many of respondents in favor of paying a local tax noted they wanted the funds to be earmarked for Caper Acres/Lower Park specifically. One individual stated, "If the city charged all the residents two dollars a year, it would amount to \$180,000." Additionally, the majority of those in favor of paying a tax, preferred not to pay a parking fee. Respondents were less inclined to pay the parking fee for various reasons. Some of the reasons stated were: inconvenience of having and paying with cash; to avoid the parking fee, they would park outside the park and it could negatively impact the surrounding neighborhood with traffic and parked cars; and, the fee would discourage lower income families from visiting a park that is expressly for all children. Results for these questions may have been affected by the order in which they were given. After responding "yes" to a local tax, the parking fee question may have prompted a "no" answer for additional funding.

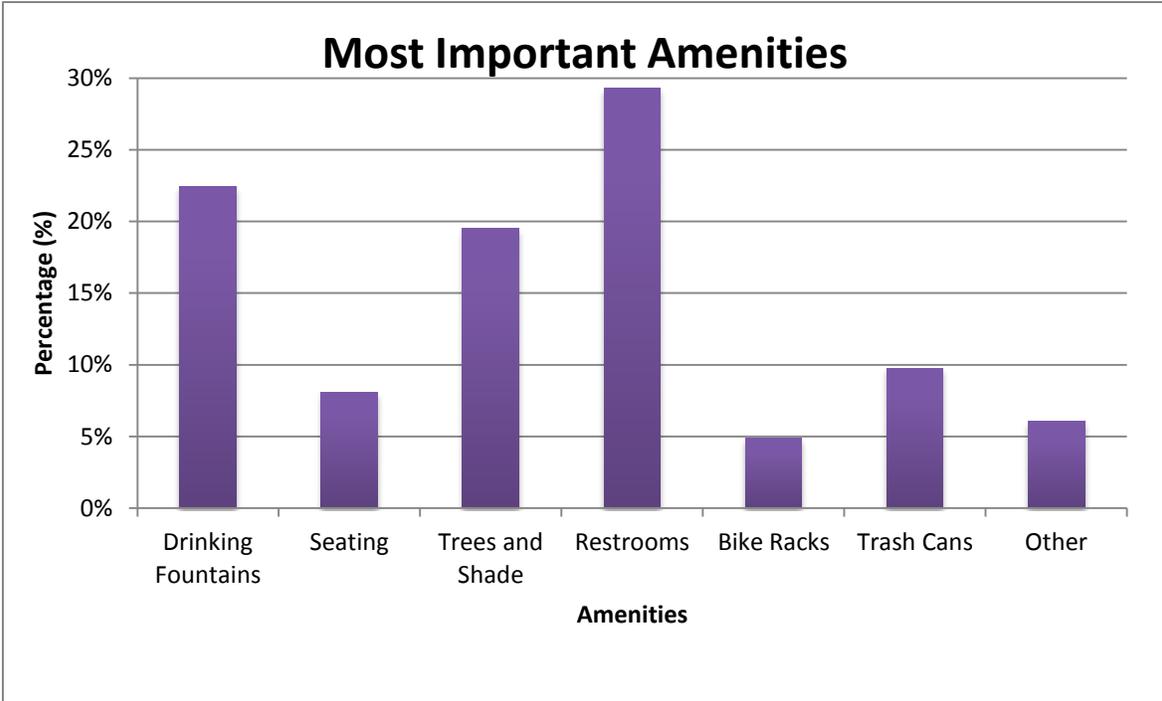
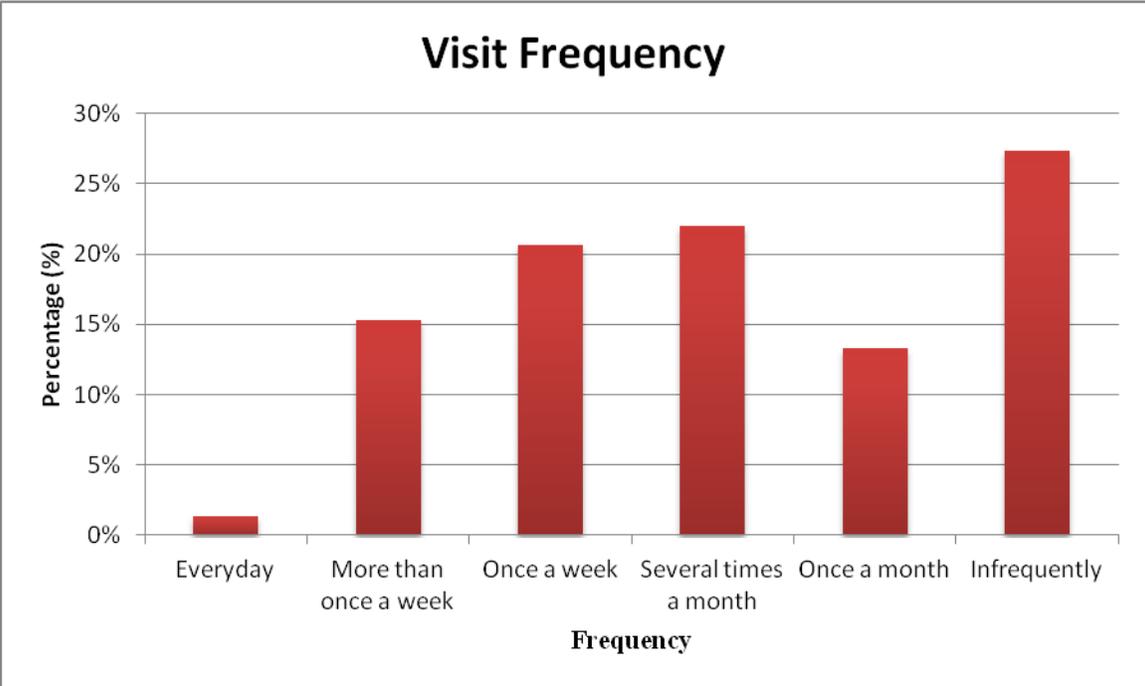
# Butte County Survey Results By Zip Code



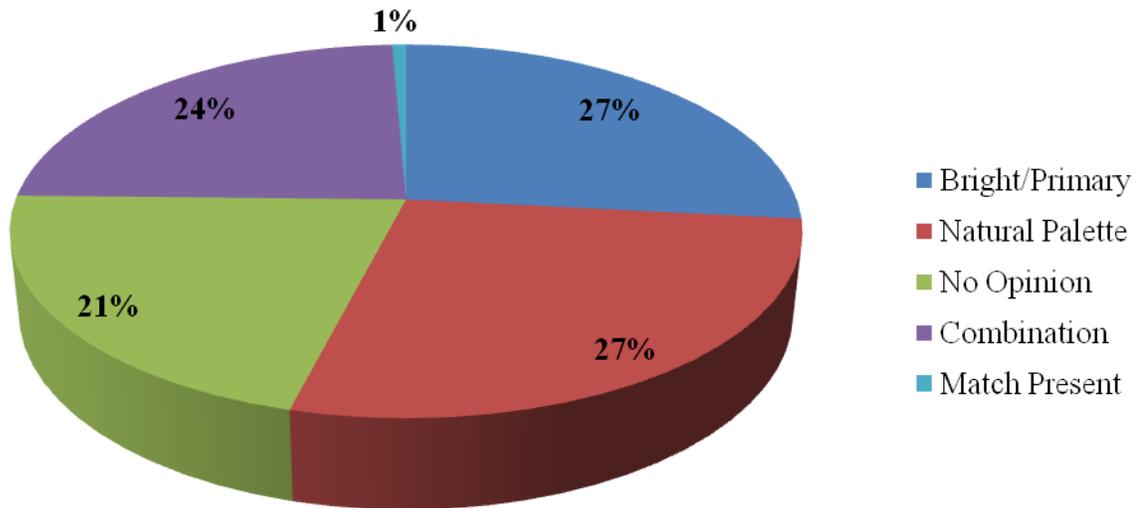
# Northern California Survey Results By Zip Code



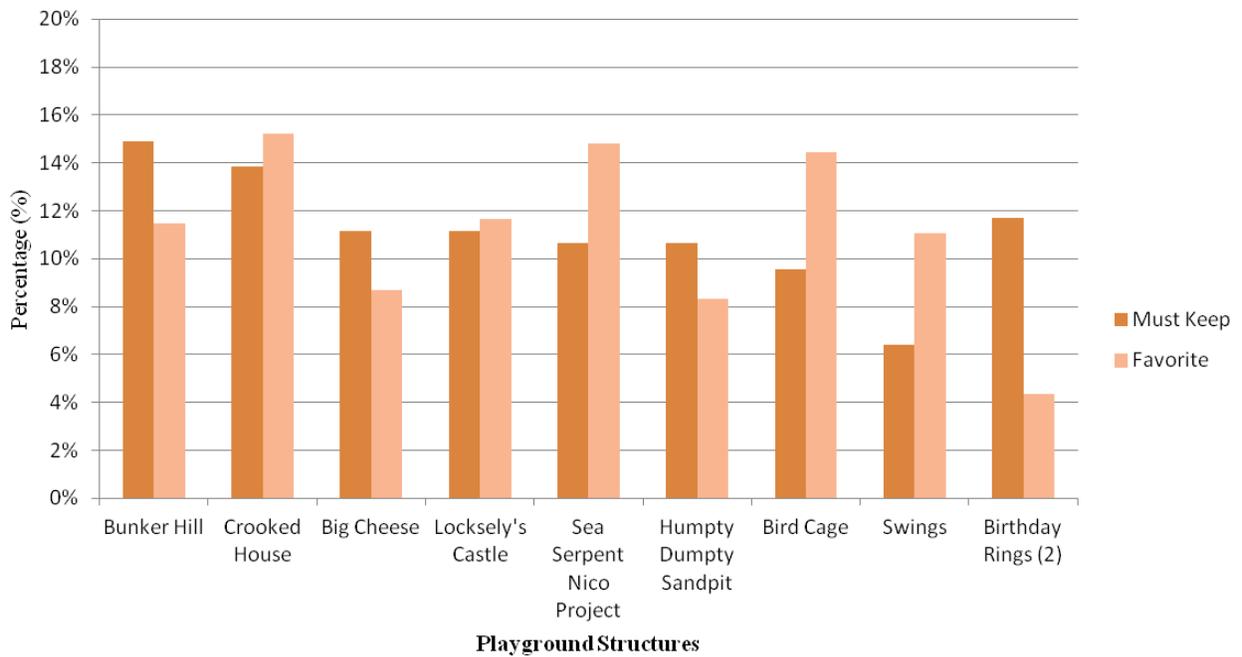




### Caper Acres Color Scheme



### Must Keep Equipment vs. Kids Favorite



## QUALITATIVE RESPONSES

Below are a collection of responses from the respondents. Excluding the first entries that are related to the local tax and parking fee questions, the responses are not categorized, grouped, ranked or analyzed. Many visitors were passionate about Caper Acres and expressed their sentiments to the survey teams.

*If it goes for Caper Acres*

*The fee would limit guests*

*Use meters like downtown*

*If the fee went to maintenance of the park*

*As long as it is affordable*

*Would visit the park less*

*A donation box would be good*

*Hesitant on parking fee*

*It would create more parking issues*

*Would prefer the fee or the tax*

*Have annual pass*

*Make clear for maintenance*

*Annual permit would be good*

*Annual pass*

*Only if the park offered more amenities*

*The turf is falling apart*

*The park has special memories to many generations*

*Wished Bunker Hill Mine was open*

*Keep bikes off Lower Bidwell Park*

*Keep bathroom open all week.*

*We bought our house because of Caper Acres*

*Parking on side street would upset neighbors, parking should be free*

*Cut out driving through Lower Bidwell Park - no vehicles*

*Keep it open and clean - everything else is for adults; reproduce the Hooker Oak for a climbing structure; have information about how Robin Hood was filmed in Bidwell Park*

*No cars in park*

*Need more parking*

*Like one entrance, one exit; skate park for older kids so they don't come to Caper Acres - saw older kids riding bikes in Caper Acres*

*Moved to Chico for city programs*

*Well worth it, Caper Acres, very family friendly*

*Upset that Caper Acres does not seem important; Chico's jewel*

*Teenagers came over from baseball park when waiting for games and broke things in Caper Acres*

## Survey Margin of Error

All survey results include a margin of error. There are several types of errors that can occur. Three types of errors that may have occurred when analyzing our survey results: sampling, measurement and processing. A sampling error occurs because the random sample cannot poll the entire population. This is statistical imprecision. With 150 surveys, the sampling error is approximately 8%. The measurement error can be a bias or error, and results when the survey misses what was intended to measure. This occurs when there is a flaw in the survey instrument such as the wording of the question, question response options, timing (order), interviewer error, etc. (pewsocialtrends.org) Processing the data may result in errors when data is lost, duplicated, or entered wrongly. (National Statistical Service - Australia)

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Researching the history of the playground and conducting the User Survey substantiated what we presumed to be true: Caper Acres is a much appreciated and cherished feature of Lower Bidwell Park. We also learned that the Chico community has supported the playground from its inception, through its many repairs and renovations with their ingenuity, labor and dollars. It appears highly probable that the 2014 Caper Acres Master Plan and Renovation will be supported by the Chico community, its service clubs and citizens alike as they once again rally to the cause with donations of time and money. Of course, this takes organization and human-hours to make it happen. The Bidwell Park and Playground Commission has begun the process by conducting public workshops, having a design firm in place and starting a work plan with priorities for budgeting this year.

Our experience conducting the survey was very positive. In only a couple of instances did the visitors to Caper Acres decline to participate in the survey and they were polite. Most respondents were very pleased to contribute their opinions and suggestions. The survey site was a happy place with the sounds of children delighting in the wonders of Caper Acres - a place just for them with adoring parents and grandparents watching the fun. For the students, it was an opportunity to leave the confines of the classroom and the homogenous blur of students, staff and faculty moving through the campus and spend some time in a glorious park and recall their own childhood.

While conducting the work for our report, the students mentally compiled a list of recommendations based on their research and observations. In class, recommendations were discussed. The recommendations follow:

1. Use park volunteers to provide oversight in Caper Acres (with Ranger back up and coordination).
2. Maintain current "Storybook" theme with enhancements and renovations.
3. Use a combination of primary colors and natural earth tone colors.
4. Consider a local city tax that is directed to Caper Acres funding (ballot).
5. Analyze sufficiency of parking lot capacity.
6. Include interactive and educational displays/activities along the playground perimeter.
  - History of indigenous people
  - Native and invasive plants
  - Big Chico Creek Eco-System
7. Form an ad hoc committee of community members, Park Commission representatives and city staff (if available) to organize fundraising events.
8. Continue to use Anne B's community funding, Buy-a-Brick and other successful funding programs and consider using a crowdfunding site such as Indiegogo or Kickstarter.
9. Ask community members to submit photos they may have of Caper Acres through the years that can be scanned/copied. Plan a fundraiser and display the photographs or present a PowerPoint presentation. (Researching the CSUC Meriam Library Special Collections, Chico Museum, City of Chico files, Chico Heritage Files and the Chico Enterprise Record, very few photographs of Caper Acres could be found.)

## **APPENDICES**

Bibliography  
City of Chico Building Division File Information  
Buy-A-Brick Donation  
Survey Instrument  
Information Sheet  
Survey Approval Letter  
Excel Survey Results

## Bibliography

Please note: This bibliography does not have standard formatting and citation as students varied in their submittal of references. The timeframe for preparation of this report limited efforts to rectify the citations

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#### Photographs:

Meriam Library Special Collections Department, California State University, Chico, CA  
Chico Heritage Association, Chico, CA  
Chico Enterprise Record, Chico, CA  
Pam Figge, Lecturer, CSUC

**Initial Chronological Findings Concerning Caper Acres: APN 005-310-001-000**

Visit to Building Department: City of Chico, February 11, 2014 Report by Richard and Marshall

1. 1962 Copy of Engineer Survey Map (General Plan (for Original Caper Acres – Received City of Chico, Department of Public Works, January 11, 1963
2. 1962 -1967 Various Service Requests for Repairs such as: "No Parking Sign Damaged", "Bottom fell out of tree house", etc
3. 30 June, 1967: Inspection Made by Chris H. Gage, John Bramble. Various notations: "Water pump rewired", "rest rooms not marked for respective sexes", "Need sand in bottom of concrete pipes of the tunnels."
4. 1967 – 1992 Nothing for this period of time.
5. An initial Status of Plan Check was issued on March 23, 1992 that seem to focus on the rest rooms at Caper Acres such as: Provide plumbing and electrical drawing, provide adequate ventilation to restrooms, provide Title 24 handicap requirements, etc.
6. A sewer Main Extension was issued in March 1994
7. 1995: On July 24, 1995 Status of Plan for renovating Caper Acres was received by Community Development Dept. Included were specific plans for renovation of Caper Acres in accordance with requirements for Americans with Disabilities Act, Title III and UBC Chapter 31A (Accessibility). Questions were asked on the plan and suggestions made for the Masterplan and each of the various features of the park such as: Locksley Castle, the Tree House, etc.
8. 1996: Major work was done and Inspections were conducted. A completion list was included costing \$16,885.00 dated 7/18/96
9. 1996: On August 1, 1996, a City of Chico Memorandum was issued adding a few more renovations needed such as: railing for the Crooked House, installing access bars at viewing window, etc. Mention of finishing before rainy season was also included.
10. 1998: Document approving Welding Inspector on July 17, 1998 for Bird House Project
11. 1998: The Bird House Plan was approved by the Building Division for Griffin & Associates was approved 10/6/1998
12. 2003: Encroachment Permit for California Water Service Co, crossing Woodland Avenue to tie in with new water facilities.



### Caper Acres Brick

Leave a lasting legacy in Caper Acres through the purchase of a Caper Acres Brick. Bricks cost \$100 each.

Brick engraving information: Bricks may have up to 3 lines of 15 characters each and are 8" x 3.75" x 2.5". Please print clearly in the space provided below how you would like your brick to be inscribed. Place one letter, number, or blank per space.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



#### Contact information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make check payable to the City of Chico and write "CA Brick" in the memo space on your check. For more information, call the Park Division at 896-7800.

Return checks and completed form to: Park Division, City of Chico, P.O. Box 3420, Chico, CA 95927.

CAPER ACRES QUESTIONNAIRE - GEOGRAPHY 428 SITE PLANNING SPRING 2014

1. How did you get to Caper Acres Park today?  
Walked    Biked    Drove    Other
2. How far did you travel to get to Lower Park?  
0-5 miles    5-10 miles    10-25 miles    over 25 miles    over 50 miles
3. What is your zip code? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Why are you visiting Caper Acres today? \_\_\_\_\_  
Are you with a group?    Yes    No
5. How often do you come to Caper Acres?
  - Everyday
  - More than once a week
  - Once a week
  - Several times a month
  - Infrequently
  - Once a Month
6. In addition to Caper Acres, what areas of Lower Park do you use?
  - None, I just walk, run or bike
  - Horseshoe pit
  - Sycamore pool
  - Picnic areas
  - Baseball field
7. Do you know there's a seasonal (May-Sept) concession stand at Sycamore Pool?  
Yes    No    If yes, how did you learn of the concession stand? \_\_\_\_\_
8. When you visit Caper Acres is there adequate seating for parents to watch their children?    Yes    No
9. What amenities are most important during your visit to Caper Acres?
  - Drinking fountains
  - Seating
  - Playground equipment
  - Trees and Shade
  - Restrooms
  - Bike Racks
  - Trash Receptacles
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
10. What playground equipment does your child(ren) most like?
  - Locksley's Castle
  - Bunker Hill Mine
  - Big Cheese
  - Crooked House
  - Birthday Rings (2)
  - Humpty Dumpty Sand Pit
  - Bird Cage Play Equipment
  - Swings
  - Sea Serpent Ship Nico Project

CAPER ACRES QUESTIONNAIRE - GEOGRAPHY 428 SITE PLANNING SPRING 2014

Now, we'd like to ask you about future improvements to Caper Acres

11. Would you like to see a design theme for Caper Acres?    Yes        No  
If yes, what theme would you like to see? \_\_\_\_\_
12. The playground equipment should be:
- Bright, primary colors
  - A natural palette of colors
  - Neutral (no opinion) Other \_\_\_\_\_
13. Is there a feature and/or equipment that you'd like to have added to the playground? Yes    No        If yes, what feature and/or equipment?  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. Would you like to have interactive, environmental and educational displays/activities incorporated into the perimeter of Caper Acres?        Yes        No
15. What features and/or equipment are "must keep" for any future renovations to Caper Acres?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
16. Are you a City resident?    If not, are you a Butte County resident?  
Yes        No                                Yes        No
17. If you're a City resident, would you be in favor of a local tax to help fund the improvement and maintenance of Lower Park?    Yes        No
18. If you drive to Lower Bidwell Park would you be willing to pay a small parking fee?  
Yes        No

"Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am a student at CSU, Chico and my Geography class is conducting a survey regarding Caper Acres. You were selected to participate in this study because we are conducting a user survey of citizens visiting Caper Acres. This study is being done by Professor Pam Figge of the Geography and Planning Department. Only persons eighteen (18) years of age and older will be asked to participate in the study. No children will be questioned. The purpose of this research study is to receive public input that will help the City of Chico prepare a Master Plan for Caper Acres. Your responses to the questions are completely anonymous and no identifying personal information will be collected or used in conjunction with the research. The questionnaire will take approximately five (5) minutes and you will be asked about your (or your children's) use of Lower Bidwell Park and Caper Acres; what facilities your child(ren) and you enjoy; and what improvements you might want to see in the future. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. You are free to skip any questions you choose."

Contact Information:

"Thank you for participating in the survey. If you have any questions, you may contact Professor Figge at [pfigge@csu.chico.edu](mailto:pfigge@csu.chico.edu)" (students will hand the contact information to the participant).

"Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am a student at CSU, Chico and my Geography class is conducting a survey regarding Caper Acres. You were selected to participate in this study because we are conducting a user survey of citizens visiting Caper Acres. This study is being done by Professor Pam Figge of the Geography and Planning Department. Only persons eighteen (18) years of age and older will be asked to participate in the study. No children will be questioned. The purpose of this research study is to receive public input that will help the City of Chico prepare a Master Plan for Caper Acres. Your responses to the questions are completely anonymous and no identifying personal information will be collected or used in conjunction with the research. The questionnaire will take approximately five (5) minutes and you will be asked about your (or your children's) use of Lower Bidwell Park and Caper Acres; what facilities your child(ren) and you enjoy; and what improvements you might want to see in the future. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. You are free to skip any questions you choose."

Contact Information:

"Thank you for participating in the survey. If you have any questions, you may contact Professor Figge at [pfigge@csu.chico.edu](mailto:pfigge@csu.chico.edu)" (students will hand the contact information to the participant).

California State University, Chico  
Chico, California 95929-2575

Office of Graduate Studies  
530 895 6680  
Fax: 530-895-1147  
www.csuchico.edu/graduatestudies



February 28, 2014

Pamela Figue  
583 East 6th Street  
Chico, CA 95928



Dear Pamela Figue,

As the Chair of the Campus Institutional Review Board, I have determined that your research proposal entitled "USER STUDY FOR CAPER ACRES, CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND, LOWER BIDWELL PARK, CHICO, CA" is exempt from full committee review. This clearance allows you to proceed with your study.

I do ask that you notify our office should there be any further modifications to, or complications arising from or within, the study. In addition, should this project continue longer than the authorized date, you will need to apply for an extension from our office. When your data collection is complete, you will need to turn in the attached Post Data Collection Report for final approval. Students should be aware that failure to comply with any HSRG requirements will delay graduation. If you should have any questions regarding this clearance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

John Mahoney, Ph.D., Chair  
Human Subjects in Research Committee

Attachment: Post Data Collection Report

<b>Gender</b>		
Male	48	29%
Female	104	63%
Unknown	12	7%
	164	100%

<b>Mode of Transportation</b>		
Walked	12	8%
Biked	8	5%
Drove	133	84%
Other	5	3%
	158	100%

<b>How Far</b>		
0mi-5mi	87	58%
5mi-10mi	21	14%
10mi-25mi	16	11%
25mi +	19	13%
50mi +	8	5%
	151	100%

<b>Group</b>		
yes	26	17%
no	124	83%
	150	100%

<b>Frequency</b>		
Everyday	2	1%
More than once a week	23	15%
Once a week	31	21%
Several times a month	33	22%
Once a month	20	13%
Infrequently	41	27%
	150	100%

<b>Simplified:</b>		
Everyday	2	1%
At least once a week	54	36%
At least once a month	53	35%
Infrequently	41	27%
	150	100%

<b>Other areas of Lower Park</b>		
None/walk/bike/run	120	42%
Horseshow	14	5%
pool	85	30%
picnic	47	16%
baseball	18	6%
other	4	1%
	288	100%

<b>Other</b>	
N/A	2
creek	1
Wildlife center	1
	4

<b>Seasonal Concession</b>		
Yes	106	71%
No	43	29%
	149	100%

<b>If yes, how?</b>		
Familiar with area	52	84%
Media	4	6%
Word of mouth	3	5%
Friends and Family	3	5%
	62	100%

<b>Enough seating?</b>		
Yes	125	82%
No	23	15%
Other	5	3%
	153	100%

<b>Other:</b>	
N/A:	2
More Shade	1
More benches	1
walking	1
	5

<b>Most important amenities</b>		
Drinking Fountains	78	22%
Seating	28	8%
Trees and Shade	68	20%
Restrooms	102	29%
Bike Racks	17	5%
Trash Cans	34	10%
Other	21	6%
Playground Equipment	0	0%
	348	100%

<b>Other:</b>	
cleanliness/maintenance	5
picnic	1
parking	3
quiet	1
safety	5
enclosed/fence	4
N/A	1
Creek	1
concession	2
nostalgic	1
	24

<b>Kids Favorite Equipment</b>		
Crooked House	77	15%
Sea Serpent Nico Proj	75	15%
Bird Cage	73	14%
Locksley's Castle	59	12%
Bunker Hill Mine	58	11%
Swings	56	11%
Big Cheese	44	9%
Humpty Dumpty Sandpit	42	8%
Birthday Rings (2)	22	4%
other	7	1%
	513	

<b>Other:</b>	
Unknown:	1
No Sand Pit	1
N/A	1
open space	1
climbing	1
stage	1
slides	1
	7

Theme		
yes	110	75%
no	36	25%
	146	100%

Interactive		
yes	88	82%
no	15	14%
other/ NA	4	4%
	107	100%

Suggestions:		
Content	78	73%
Chico History	2	2%
H2O	2	2%
natural	1	1%
something new	1	1%
princess/superhero	1	1%
Disney	2	2%
tunnels	1	1%
future	1	1%
age appropriate	1	1%
variety	2	2%
robin hood	2	2%
animal/zoo	2	2%
fairytale	4	4%
N/A	7	7%
	107	

Must Keep		
Bunker Hill Mine	28	14%
Crooked House	26	13%
Cheese	21	11%
castle	21	11%
Nico	20	10%
Humpty Dumpty Sandpit	20	10%
birdcage	18	9%
swings	12	6%
original Pieces	8	4%
Slides	7	4%
trees	3	2%
everything	3	2%
N/A	3	2%
Birthday Rings (2)	2	1%
handicap equipment	1	1%
soft ground	1	1%
improve picnic areas	1	1%
restrooms	1	1%
upkeep	1	1%
	197	100%

Color Scheme:		
Bright/Primary	40	27%
Natural Palette	41	27%
No Opinion	32	21%
Combination	36	24%
Match Present	1	1%
	150	100%

City Resident?		
yes	93	62%
no	58	38%
	151	100%

Added Feature:		
Yes	106	71%
no	43	29%
	149	100%

Butte County Resident		
yes	22	39%
no	23	40%
unknown	7	12%
N/A	5	9%
	57	100%

If yes, what?		
Swings	44	27%
water feature element	21	13%
Active Climbing	48	29%
Spinning/Jumping	29	18%
other	23	14%
	165	100%

Favor local tax:		
yes	81	85%
no	14	15%
	95	100%

Parking Fee:		
yes	66	47%
no	75	53%
	141	100%