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Community Watch: Mom asks: Where's playground?

By Cathy Locke - Bee Staff Writer

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The problem: Residents of the Promontory development in El Dorado Hills are concerned that the features most desired by their neighborhood will be omitted from Promontory Community Park because of escalating costs for the project's first phase.

Pari Goode, mother of a 4-year-old and a 6-year-old, said she wants the amenities that characterize a neighborhood park, namely a playground and picnic area.

Goode cited a land swap that eliminated a 4-acre neighborhood park planned near Promontory Elementary School and instead expanded the community park site at Sophia Parkway and Alexandra Drive from about 14 acres to nearly 19 acres. She fears that the first phase of the community park, currently under construction, will be dominated by ball fields and that playground facilities will never be built.

"We lost our neighborhood park. We are the only (neighborhood) without a park for kids to play on," Goode said.

In addition, Goode said, she heard that the ball fields in the park are for adult use, not for youth leagues.

"I've been told kids can't play on the soccer field," she said.

The answer: Wayne Lowery, general manager of the El Dorado Hills Community Services District, which is responsible for parks and recreation services, said playgrounds are included in both the first and second phases of the project.

The larger playground is in the first phase, which is scheduled for completion in March, if the weather cooperates, he said.

"The playground will be as big or bigger than what is at Community Park (at El Dorado Hills Boulevard and Harvard Way)," Lowery said, adding that it will include slides, climbing apparatus and other play equipment.

Individual picnic areas also are part of the first phase.

A smaller playground, as well as a "spray ground" -- play equipment with a water features -- will be built in the second phase, along with a group picnic area, Lowery said.

The ball fields are designed for mixed use, he said. One softball field will be used primarily by adults, and the other by youth teams. The soccer fields will serve both adults and youths, he said.

A clubhouse is to be constructed in the third phase.

The second and third phases are not listed in the district's five-year capital improvement program, but Lowery said the district budgets for the entire park project, regardless of the number of phases. The fact that the phases aren't specified, he said, doesn't mean that they are on or off the five-year list, which is updated annually.

Lowery said a board member during a recent meeting re-marked that the district has spent about \$10 million on the first phase of the project and suggested the district ought to be getting on with park projects elsewhere in the community.

But Lowery said Promontory is the second of three community parks planned in El Dorado Hills and is a

district priority. "We want it to be as nice or nicer than anything we've done so far," he said.

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