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To: [Parks Commission](#); jgaffney@santacruzcountyca.gov; [Manu Koenig](#)
Subject: Concerns Regarding Proposal for Half-Court Basketball Facility at Floral County Park
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Dear Members of the Parks Commission, Board of Supervisors, and County Parks Staff,

I am writing to express my strong concerns regarding the proposal to construct a half basketball court at Floral County Park. As a daily park user who spends time there with my young son and as a resident who deeply values this neighborhood green space, I am alarmed by both the substance of the proposal and the limited community awareness surrounding it. Floral Park is one of the few remaining small green spaces in Pleasure Point, and paving over a portion of it would significantly change the character, accessibility, and peaceful nature of this beloved community park.

Below are the primary concerns I wish to highlight:

1. Preservation of scarce neighborhood green space

Floral County Park is a small, 0.85-acre neighborhood park intentionally designed to provide open lawn, a playground, picnic space, and passive recreation. The park's renovation in the late 2000s was guided by a comprehensive master planning process that involved community meetings, conceptual design development, and final approval. Approximately \$1.35 million of public investment went into implementing that master plan. The 2023–2024 improvements—such as the new accessible playground—further reinforced this community-designed vision.

Reopening this master plan to add a basketball court undermines the extensive planning and funding already dedicated to creating a quiet, family-focused, neighborhood-serving green space.

2. Redundancy: two full basketball courts already exist within one mile

Jade Street Park and Brommer Street Park, both within roughly one mile of Floral Park, are fully equipped with basketball courts. Adding another—especially in a much smaller neighborhood park—offers limited additional benefit while introducing significant drawbacks, including increased noise, activity, and traffic in a location not suited to such intensity.

3. Noise, traffic, and parking impacts on immediate neighbors

Basketball courts are high-usage, high-noise facilities. Floral Park is bordered directly by homes, and its quiet, passive character is one of its greatest strengths. The park also lacks dedicated parking, relying entirely on already crowded residential streets. Many neighbors already struggle to find parking near their homes; a basketball court would draw more visitors and worsen this existing problem.

4. Insufficient and inadequate community outreach

As a daily user of the park, I have spoken with many neighbors, families, and regular visitors in recent weeks. Very few were aware that a basketball court was even being considered. This alone should give the County pause.

Currently, the only visible outreach on-site is a single small sign placed behind the main park sign—easy to overlook and insufficient for meaningful public engagement. A change of this

scale, one that would significantly alter the purpose and feel of the park, requires far more than a single understated notice. While today I have noticed an increased social media presence since raising my concerns with a Parks Commissioner, it appeared reactive and last-minute, with information shared only about a week before the Commission meeting.

To ensure genuine community involvement, I respectfully request that the County:

- Provide mailed flyers or hand-delivered notices to all immediate neighbors surrounding the park
- Host at least one in-person community meeting with adequate notice
- Conduct a widely publicized survey of park users and nearby residents

This is not only reasonable—it is necessary for transparent, equitable public engagement.

5. A strong advocate for youth sports — but appropriate placement matters

I want to emphasize that I am a passionate supporter of athletics and recreation. I was a three-sport athlete in high school, an all-league basketball player for four years, a Santa Cruz County league and Central Coast section record-holder, high school State shot-put champion, and later an All-American Division I Track and Field athlete. I deeply understand the importance of providing spaces for children and adults to play, learn, and grow through sport.

As the parent of a two-year-old, I prioritize opportunities for physical activity and healthy recreation. However, thoughtful placement matters. Floral Park's small size, peaceful character, and lack of supporting infrastructure make it an unsuitable location for a basketball court. This proposal would not expand recreation in a meaningful way—it would simply shift a more intensive use onto a tiny neighborhood greenspace that was never designed to support it.

6. Why reopen a fully realized, community-driven master plan?

Revising an established master plan should occur only when there is clear, broad community support and compelling rationale. Neither exists in this case. The proposal is inconsistent with the park's original mission and with recent County investments intended to reinforce that mission.

Request

For all of these reasons, I respectfully ask that the County Parks Department, Parks Commission, and Board of Supervisors reconsider any plan to install a basketball court at Floral County Park. If expanding access to sports facilities in Live Oak is a priority, I encourage the County to focus on enhancing or expanding existing courts at parks designed for such uses, such as Jade Street Park or Brommer Street Park.

Should discussion of this proposal continue, I urge the County to adopt a robust, transparent community outreach approach, including direct mailed/hand-delivered notices to neighbors, clear signage, and public meetings before making any decisions.

Thank you for your commitment to maintaining safe, vibrant, and community-centered public spaces. I appreciate the opportunity to share these concerns and hope you will prioritize the long-term wellbeing and character of Floral County Park.

Sincerely,

Julie Howard