



BIG SUR
LAND TRUST

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Big Sur Land Trust Begins Construction of Ensen Community Park

Starting with 6-acre traditional park at the 73-acre site in the center of Salinas

SALINAS, CA — Big Sur Land Trust has begun the first stage of construction on Ensen Community Park, a new park in the center of Salinas. Located at the Land Trust’s 73-acre site at Carr Lake, this 6-acre traditional park will include amenities such as a children’s playground, a basketball court, barbecues, picnic areas, a skate spot, a dog park, and more. Weather permitting, construction is expected to take approximately one year, with the park’s opening estimated in spring of 2025. After a competitive bid process, the Land Trust selected [Robert A. Bothman Construction](#), a firm that has extensive experience building parks. [Felice Consulting Services](#) is serving as the construction manager. The park was designed by [BFS Landscape Architects](#).

“Seven years ago, we stood at our project site at Carr Lake with community members and leaders envisioning a green space in the heart of Salinas where people could gather with their families and friends, children could play, and everyone could immerse themselves in the benefits of being outside and in nature. This has been a decades-long dream of the community, and we are thrilled to be taking this major step towards creating a community park for everyone,” said Jeannette Tuitele-Lewis, President/CEO of Big Sur Land Trust. “We want to express our deep gratitude to the community, our partners, and the funders that have helped us reach this important milestone. We want to thank the [Center for Community Advocacy \(CCA\)](#) and [CSUMB’s Habitat Stewardship Project](#) for their effort towards community engagement in the park design process. Thanks to the City of Salinas for supporting this project for the last several years and for contributing \$1 million towards the construction on these first six acres. We are also grateful to the California Statewide Park Development and Community Revitalization

Grant Program (funded through Proposition 68), along with the Monterey Peninsula Foundation, Lural Foundation, Nora McNeely Hurley and Michael Hurley/Manitou Fund, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Sunlight Giving, Harden Foundation, Kinnoull Foundation, Maxwell/Hanrahan Foundation, and Newman's Own Foundation. Many other generous individuals, organizations, and foundations have contributed towards the six-acre park's total construction cost of \$15 million."

Big Sur Land Trust purchased the property from the Ikeda Farms Partnership in 2017 with funding provided by the California Natural Resources Agency River Parkways Program, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Monterey Peninsula Foundation, Barnet Segal Charitable Trust, and the California State Coastal Conservancy, which also provided funding for the initial design.

Over 6,700 people have taken action to help Big Sur Land Trust plan this park. They signed petitions, attended park design meetings and site tours, helped with planting and stewardship of the site's native plant restoration demonstration garden, and participated in many other engagement activities including the park's naming process. The name "Ensen Community Park" was ultimately chosen because it received the most support in the final survey. "Ensen" is an Indigenous word which means blackberry. The name was suggested by Louise J. Miranda Ramirez, Tribal Chairwoman of the Ohlone/Costanoan-Esselen Nation (OCEN). Blackberries were an important food source for Indigenous peoples in the area known as Carr Lake. Most of the 966 respondents to the final survey felt it was important to honor the history of the original peoples and their relationship with this land.

Upon its completion in 2025, Big Sur Land Trust will transfer the six-acre park area to the ownership of the City of Salinas and the City's Recreation & Park Services division will maintain Ensen Community Park.

Salinas Mayor Kimbley Craig said, "We are so incredibly excited to begin construction on Ensen Community Park! This critical partnership between Big Sur Land Trust and the City of Salinas will provide our residents with an opportunity to enjoy amazing open space, trails, and naturally restored habitat in the center of our city." Councilman Orlando Osornio added, "I am thankful for the many years of work and collaboration from the community, Big Sur Land Trust, and the City of Salinas that will result in the creation of Ensen Community Park! This is a unique opportunity to bring a park to life in the center of town where residents of all ages can go to walk, run, play, and learn. Ensen Community Park is truly an example of the progress being made in Salinas through strong collaborative efforts."

In 2025, Big Sur Land Trust anticipates beginning construction on the second stage of the overall park project. Rachel Saunders, Big Sur Land Trust's Director of Conservation explained, "This 67-acre restoration area will feature seasonal wetlands, habitat for wildlife, walking trails, and interpretive signage. We're excited to restore this natural green space in the heart of Salinas." Weather permitting, construction of this portion of Ensen Community Park is anticipated to take one year. The California Wildlife Conservation Board funded the final design and permitting of the restoration area. Currently, the construction cost is roughly estimated at \$17 million. The Land Trust is now raising funds for this aspect of the park project, as well as a stewardship endowment fund to keep the habitat restoration thriving for generations to come.

Once the restoration area construction is completed, it will be transferred to the City. At that time, the Recreation and Parks division will extend its responsibility to include the general operation and maintenance of the entire 73-acre Ensen Community Park. Big Sur Land Trust will be responsible for implementing vegetation and habitat management in the restoration area, including invasive plant removal

as required under grant agreements and permits to ensure that the restoration is successful into the future.

On March 19, 2024, the Salinas City Council unanimously approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City and Big Sur Land Trust that outlines the steps that the two organizations will take to transfer the 6-acre traditional park and the 67-acre restoration area once they are constructed. The MOU also covers the City's role in operations and maintenance and the Land Trust's continued role in the restoration area.

For more information on the history and funding of the Ensen Community Park project please visit www.bigsurlandtrust.org/carr-lake-salinas.

For more information about the Carr Lake Restoration and Park Development Project please visit bit.ly/CarrLakeStoryMap.

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About Big Sur Land Trust

Big Sur Land Trust (BSLT) is a non-profit organization with a mission to inspire love of land across generations, conservation of our unique Monterey County landscapes, and access to outdoor experiences for all. We see a future where natural landscapes, working lands, urban open spaces and healthy communities are cared for by people who share a love of nature and a deep appreciation for the richness of their diverse cultures. Over the past 45 years our generous supporters, partners, and funders have conserved over 45,000 acres throughout Monterey County. Learn more at www.bigsurlandtrust.org.

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