

# Recreation Element







# Recreation Element

*"Park improvement is among the most important of the undertakings now before the City. It should have the cordial cooperation of all."*

*San Diego Union editorial on the City Park System, July 6, 1910*

## Purpose

To preserve, protect, acquire, develop, operate, maintain, and enhance public recreation opportunities and facilities throughout the City for all users.

## Introduction

The City of San Diego has over 38,930 acres of park and open space lands that offer a diverse range of recreational opportunities. The City's parks, open space, trails, and recreation facilities annually serve millions of residents and visitors and play an important role in the physical, mental, social, and environmental health of the City and its residents. Parks can improve the quality of life by strengthening the body and assisting in maintaining physical well-being. Mental and social benefits include visual relief



*Mission Trails Regional Park*

from urban development, passive recreational opportunities that refresh the frame of mind and provide opportunities for social interaction, and healthy activities for youth. Park and open space lands benefit the environment by providing habitat for plants and animals, and space for urban runoff to percolate into the soil, while also serving to decrease the effects of urban heat islands. In addition, the City park system supports San Diego's tourism industry, and enhances the City's ability to attract and retain businesses.

San Diego's environment, its coastal location, temperate climate, and diverse topography, contribute to creating the City's first-class recreation and open space system for San Diego's residents and visitors. The goals and policies of the Recreation Element have been developed to take advantage of the City's natural environment and resources, to build upon existing recreation facilities and services, to help achieve an equitable balance of recreational resources, and to adapt to future recreation needs.



# THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO General Plan

## Recreation Element

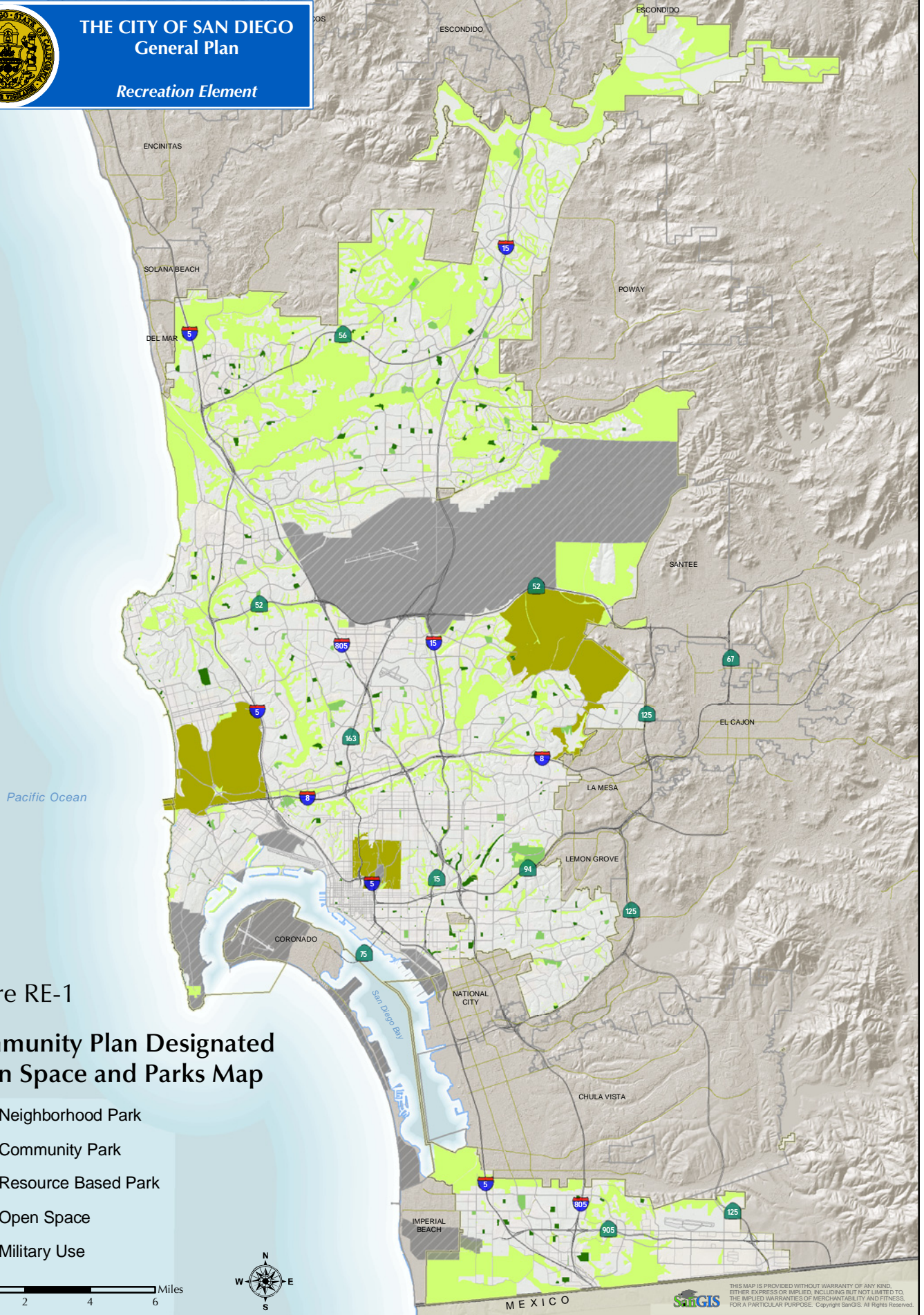


Figure RE-1

### Community Plan Designated Open Space and Parks Map

- Neighborhood Park
- Community Park
- Resource Based Park
- Open Space
- Military Use

0 1 2 4 6 Miles



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### *The City's Parks and Open Space System*

The City of San Diego provides three use categories of parks and recreation for residents and visitors: population-based, resource-based, and open space. These three categories of recreation, including land, facilities, and programming, constitute the City of San Diego's municipal park and recreation system.

- Population-based parks (commonly known as Neighborhood and Community parks), facilities and services are located in close proximity to residential development and are intended to serve the daily needs of the neighborhood and community.



*Hilltop Community Park, Rancho Peñasquitos*

When possible, they adjoin schools in order to share facilities, and ideally are within walking distance of the residences within their service area.

- Resource-based parks are located at, or centered on, notable natural or man-made features (beaches, canyons, habitat systems, lakes, historic sites, and cultural facilities) and are intended to serve the citywide population, as well as visitors.
- Open space lands are City-owned lands located throughout the City, consisting of canyons, mesas, and other natural landforms. This open space is intended to preserve and protect native plants and animals, while providing public access and enjoyment by the use of hiking, biking, and equestrian trails.

Parks and open spaces that have been designated in community plans are shown on Figure RE-1, Community Plan Designated Open Space and Parks Map.

### *Park and Recreation Challenges*

It has become increasingly challenging to meet the public's park and recreational needs as resident and visitor populations grow and the availability of vacant land decreases. The City faces:

- Increased demand on existing/remaining useable park and recreation resources/facilities, especially in older, urbanized communities;
- Increased pressure to develop open space lands and resource-based parks for population-based recreational purposes;
- Inequitable distribution of, and access to, parks citywide, especially in older, developed communities; and
- The need to balance competing land uses, and to recognize the unique differences among communities, in order to achieve livable neighborhoods and communities.



## Recreation Element

The Recreation Element contains policies to address these challenges. The element recommends that the City pursue long-term joint use agreements with schools, other public agencies, or private entities; ensure that adequate park fees are collected to provide for the park needs generated by new development; and allow for alternative means of providing timely and equitable park and recreation facilities. The element also recommends that a comprehensive Parks Master Plan be prepared to inventory and assess all City park lands, recreational uses, facilities and services, set priorities for protection and enhancement of existing park and recreation assets, and develop implementation strategies to meet present and future community needs.

The Recreation Element is not an isolated component of the General Plan. It is interconnected in varying degrees to other elements of the General Plan. In particular, the Conservation Element provides additional policies for protecting and preserving natural resources and open space, many of which contribute to the City's recreation and open space system. Additionally, the Public Facilities Element provides the City's financing strategy for providing many public services, including park and recreational opportunities. Overall, the City of Villages strategy reinforces the importance of recreation as an essential quality of life factor that needs to be integrated into communities.

### A. Park and Recreation Guidelines

#### Goals

- ◆ Preparation of a citywide, comprehensive Parks Master Plan to guide park and open space acquisition, design and development, recreational programming and needed maintenance over the next 20-30 years.
- ◆ A sustainable park and recreation system that meets the needs of residents and visitors.
- ◆ Provision of parklands that keep pace with population growth through timely acquisition and development.
- ◆ An increase in the amount and quality of recreation facilities and infrastructure through the promotion of alternative methods where development of typical facilities and infrastructure may be limited by land constraints.
- ◆ An equitable citywide distribution of and access to parks and recreation facilities.

#### Discussion

As the City has grown, so have the quantity, quality, and distribution of recreation opportunities. New parks and open space have been acquired and facilities and services have been expanded in response to population-based needs.



*Youth baseball in Jerabek Neighborhood Park  
Scripps Ranch*



Recreation activities in the form of cultural, athletic, sport, social, and craft programs have been developed to serve a wide variety of the population throughout the City at parks, recreation centers, athletic fields, and public schools. Table RE-1, Existing Park and Open Space Acres Within the City of San Diego, in conjunction with Figure RE-1, Community Plan Designated Open Space and Parks Map, provides a breakdown of the types and quantities of parks within the City.

A variation exists between communities with respect to total recreational facilities and population-based park acres provided. Of most concern is the lack of neighborhood and community facilities in portions of older urbanized neighborhoods. Reasons for this include:

- The older urbanized communities were developed without specified park development guidelines or park fees;
- Large resource-based parks such as Mission Bay Park and Balboa Park, serve both residents and visitors, yet have not been given credit towards meeting population-based park acreage recommendations;
- Continued development of new housing further adds to the need for new population-based park lands;
- There is a limited amount of land readily available for development of population-based parks; and
- There is a lack of funding strategies and resources to enable planned and opportunistic land acquisitions.

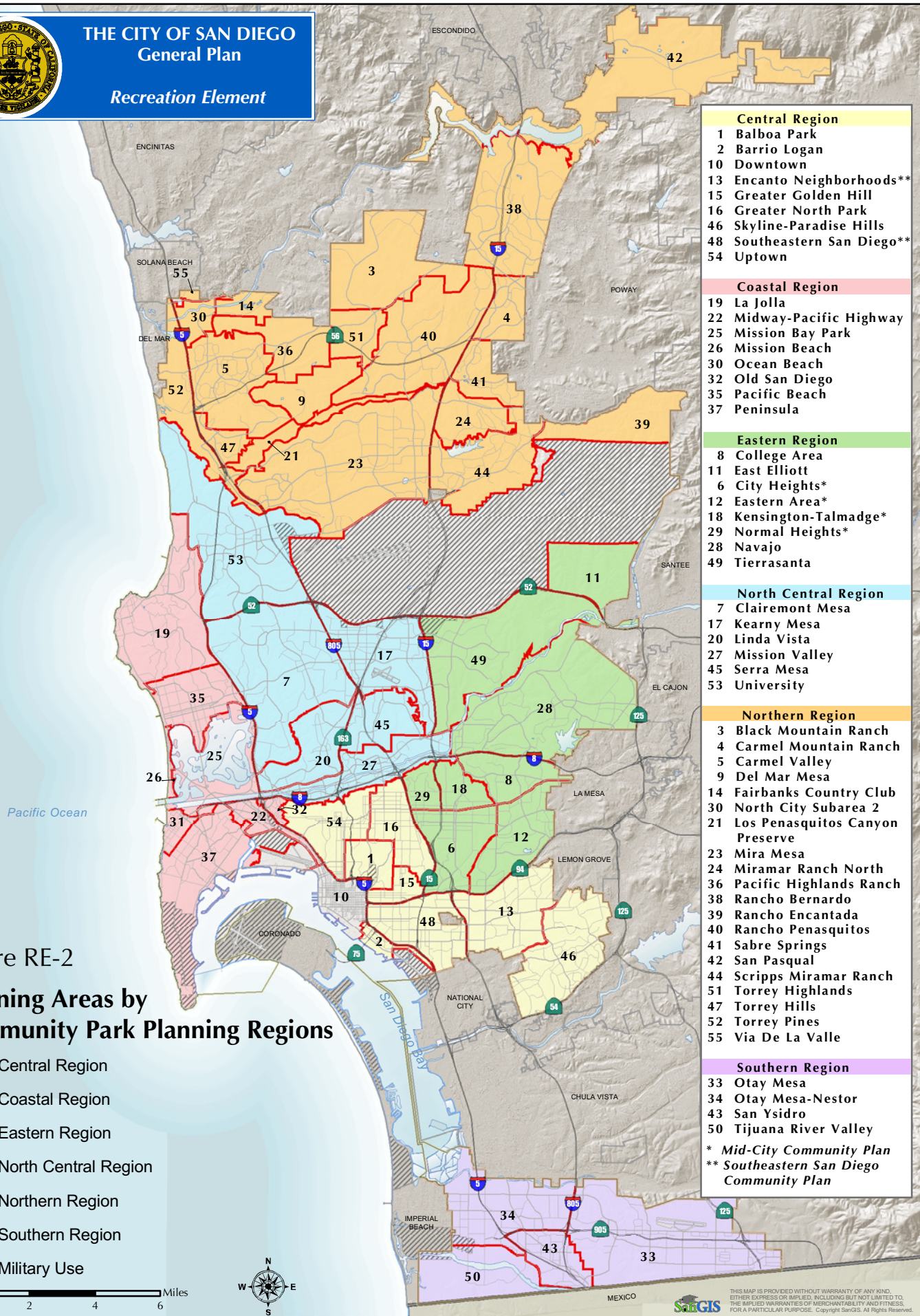
Retrofitting older neighborhoods to add new parks must be achieved with solutions that balance the often competing needs of parks, housing and other land uses. The Public Facilities, Services and Safety Element provides additional goals and policies related to funding of parks and recreation facilities. Additionally, downtown San Diego has a small block pattern and limited vacant land, and as the regional core is targeted for extensive, high-intensity vertical development, therefore necessitating creative and flexible methods for downtown to fulfill citywide goals, policies and standards.

In addition to land constraints, the City has been continually challenged with economic constraints in regards to park development, maintenance and operations. Therefore, it is essential that new parks and recreation facilities, and improvements to existing parks and facilities be designed and constructed to endure the intended use with minimal funding for maintenance or upgrades during the expected useful life of the facility. When communities desire special activity parks and smaller, more intensive parks which may require a higher level of maintenance, additional funding sources for maintenance will need to be identified. Sustainable development features including application of water and energy conservation measures, green building technology, low-maintenance plantings, and design which is sensitive to local environmental conditions can help reduce long-term costs (see also Conservation Element, Section A).



**THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO**  
General Plan

*Recreation Element*



<b>Central Region</b>
1 Balboa Park
2 Barrio Logan
10 Downtown
13 Encanto Neighborhoods**
15 Greater Golden Hill
16 Greater North Park
46 Skyline-Paradise Hills
48 Southeastern San Diego**
54 Uptown
<b>Coastal Region</b>
19 La Jolla
22 Midway-Pacific Highway
25 Mission Bay Park
26 Mission Beach
30 Ocean Beach
32 Old San Diego
35 Pacific Beach
37 Peninsula
<b>Eastern Region</b>
8 College Area
11 East Elliott
6 City Heights*
12 Eastern Area*
18 Kensington-Talmadge*
29 Normal Heights*
28 Navajo
49 Tierrasanta
<b>North Central Region</b>
7 Clairemont Mesa
17 Kearny Mesa
20 Linda Vista
27 Mission Valley
45 Serra Mesa
53 University
<b>Northern Region</b>
3 Black Mountain Ranch
4 Carmel Mountain Ranch
5 Carmel Valley
9 Del Mar Mesa
14 Fairbanks Country Club
30 North City Subarea 2
21 Los Penasquitos Canyon Preserve
23 Mira Mesa
24 Miramar Ranch North
36 Pacific Highlands Ranch
38 Rancho Bernardo
39 Rancho Encantada
40 Rancho Penasquitos
41 Sabre Springs
42 San Pasqual
44 Scripps Miramar Ranch
51 Torrey Highlands
47 Torrey Hills
52 Torrey Pines
55 Via De La Valle
<b>Southern Region</b>
33 Otay Mesa
34 Otay Mesa-Nestor
43 San Ysidro
50 Tijuana River Valley

Figure RE-2  
**Planning Areas by  
Community Park Planning Regions**

- Central Region
- Coastal Region
- Eastern Region
- North Central Region
- Northern Region
- Southern Region
- Military Use





Table RE-1 Existing Park and Open Space Acres Within the City of San Diego

District	Population <sup>1</sup>	Population-Based Parks		Resource-Based Parks	Open Space Lands	Other Park Lands <sup>2</sup>	Total Parks and Open Space (gross acres) <sup>4</sup>	Dedicated Parks	Designated Parks	Joint Use School Sites (Net Useable)	Other Public Agency Parks & Open Spaces <sup>3</sup>
		Gross	Net Useable								
Central	313,559	314.0	250.3	1,126.5	446.7	0.0	1,887.2	1,272.3	150.1	11.1	32.6
Coastal	140,719	191.2	120.6	4,525.0	1,100.0	5,977.0	11,793.2	4,967.4	94.6	24.4	245.7
Eastern	253,843	899.6	381.2	0.0	7,118.8	0.0	8,018.4	1,225.0	6,093.3	96.9	0.0
North Central	208,099	450.0	306.9	476.8	1,993.6	0.0	2,920.4	492.9	250.4	48.1	1327.6
Northern	274,085	738.3	507.3	86.3	11,968.2	0.0	12,792.8	3,966.9	9,338.1	80.0	181.9
Southern	99,499	264.8	134.3	1.1	1,142.1	110.3	1,518.3	143.2	1,215.8	6.9	1,740.0
City Total	1,289,804	2,857.9	1,700.6	6,215.7	23,769.4	6,087.3	38,930.3	12,067.7	1,7142.3	267.4	3,527.8
<b>Total acres per Thousand</b>		2.22	1.32	4.82	18.43	4.72	30.18	9.36	13.29	.21	2.74

<sup>1</sup> SANDAG population estimate for 2004

<sup>2</sup> Includes cemeteries (Mount Hope Cemetery) and stand alone facilities that are not within parks (Cemeteries can be protected as dedicated parkland per City Charter Section 55).

<sup>3</sup> Includes the following:

Border Field State Park and Tijuana Estuary National Park - 2,531 ac.	Cabrillo National Monument – 160 ac.
Heritage County Park – 7.8 ac.	Old Town State Park – 29.0 ac.
San Pasqual Battle Field State Historic Park – 1.9 ac.	Tijuana River Regional Park - 1,740.7 ac.
Torrey Pines State Reserve – 1,446.2 ac.	Port of San Diego – 81.5ac.
	Torrey Pines State Beach – 61.36 ac.

<sup>4</sup> Total Parks and Open Space (gross acres) includes population-based parks, open space lands, and other park lands.



## Recreation Element

There are many recreation facilities within the City that, while not under the control of the City of San Diego, provide a wide variety of recreation opportunities for the public that assist in meeting their recreation needs. These facilities come in many forms, from government-owned and operated parks to commercial endeavors, such as fitness clubs. Each serves to increase recreation opportunities, if only for a specified time. Of significant benefit to the public are those facilities that are owned, operated, and maintained by other governmental agencies and not-for-profit entities. These facilities tend to represent long-term investments in recreation and are designed to be accessible to the widest range of the public. Some examples of these are the Cabrillo National Monument, Torrey Pines State Park, the Salvation Army Corps Ray and Joan Kroc Community Center, YMCAs and Jewish Community Centers.

An ideal balance of recreational opportunities throughout the City is best achieved by considering a number of factors, such as numerical criteria for park acres and facilities, economic feasibility, community needs and desires, topographic conditions, changing demographics, and evolving trends in recreation. Park acreage, physical facilities, accessibility, service radius, supervision, and leadership should all be included in the total effort to achieve, as much as possible, the same level of service and opportunity or need fulfillment in each community citywide.

Neighborhood and community park facilities should take a variety of forms in response to the specific needs and desires of the residents involved. Neighborhood parks should be oriented toward achieving maximum neighborhood involvement in terms of interest, participation, and support. They should be an important element in creating neighborhood identity. Community parks should supplement those activities in the neighborhood parks and provide for a greater variety of facilities and active programmed uses.

Table RE-2, Parks Guidelines, and Table RE-3, Recreation Facilities Guidelines, provide the minimum standards and strategies for development of population-based park and recreation facilities. The purpose of the tables is two-fold: first, to provide a means of measuring the degree to which park and recreation facilities are developed; and second, to equitably provide facilities throughout the City. The guidelines are basic tools for guiding and evaluating the

### **Mission Bay Park**

*Mission Bay Park was developed from the 1940s through the 1960s using a tidal marsh that Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo named "False Bay" in 1542. In 1944, a Chamber of Commerce committee recommended development of Mission Bay into a tourist and recreation center to help diversify the City's economy. In the late 1940s, dredging and filling operations began converting the marsh into the jewel that is today, Mission Bay Park. Twenty-five million cubic yards of sand and silt were dredged to create the landforms of the park, which now is almost entirely man-made.*

*Mission Bay Park comprises 27 miles of shoreline. Swimmers, boating enthusiasts, and sun lovers are drawn to Mission Bay's beaches and water activities. The park offers a wide variety of recreation facilities and activities including boat docks and launching facilities, sailboat and motor rentals, 14 miles of biking and walking paths, basketball courts, and play areas for children. It's one of San Diego's most visited parks.*





adequacy of service to a given area and to the City as a whole. Their application should allow for flexibility as opportunities arise or the needs and desires of the residents change.

While the City's primary goal is to obtain land for park and recreation facilities, alternative methods of providing recreation facilities need to be available to achieve citywide equity where constraints may make meeting guidelines infeasible, or to satisfy community specific needs and demands where applying flexibility is beneficial. Table RE-4, Eligible Population-Based Park Equivalencies, describes guidelines for these alternative methods, or equivalencies.

The use of "equivalencies" is intended to be a part of a realistic strategy for the equitable provision of park and recreational facilities, with built-in safeguards designed to protect the public interest. It is through the proposed development of a citywide Parks Master Plan that "equivalencies" will be addressed on a community-by-community basis. Alternatively, criteria for park and recreation opportunities can be analyzed and established during a community plan update or amendment, or community-specific parks master plan.



*Mission Bay Park*

Table RE-2 Parks Guidelines<sup>1</sup>

Category	Park Type	Guidelines	Typical Components <sup>2</sup>
Open Space	<b>Open Space and Resource-Based</b>		
	Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City-owned land, canyons, mesas, and other natural landforms, exclusive of shorelines</li> <li>• Serves single or multiple community plan area(s) population(s)</li> <li>• Provides habitat protection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trails, staging areas, outlooks, viewpoints, picnic areas</li> </ul>
Resource-Based	Regional Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serves regional resident and/or visitor population</li> <li>• Developed amenities should not impair the distinctive features or resources</li> <li>• Provides habitat and resource protection</li> <li>• Development for recreation use is typically controlled by a master plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located at the site of distinctive scenic, natural, historical or cultural features</li> <li>• Resource-based Parks such as Balboa Park, Mission Bay Park, and Sunset Cliffs Natural park</li> <li>• Regional Parks such as Mission Bay and Otay Valley</li> </ul>
	Shoreline Parks and Beaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serves regional resident and/or visitor population</li> <li>• Developed amenities should not impair the distinctive features or resources</li> <li>• Provides habitat and resource protection</li> <li>• Development for recreation use is NOT typically controlled by a master plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could include facilities found in Community Parks</li> <li>• Comfort stations with shower or changing rooms</li> <li>• Lifeguard facilities</li> </ul>
Population-Based Park	<b>Community Parks – Qualify to meet 2.8 ac/1000 population minimum standard</b>		
	Major Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 acres minimum; approximately 30 acres typical</li> <li>• Serves single or multiple community plan area(s) population(s)</li> <li>• Parking provided</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialized facilities that serve larger populations</li> <li>• Passive and active recreation facilities</li> <li>• Facilities found in Community Parks</li> <li>• Could include facilities found in Special Activity Parks</li> <li>• Community cultural facilities</li> <li>• Also called “Great Parks” or “Grand Parks”</li> </ul>
	Community Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 13 acre minimum (consistent with program and facilities on-site)</li> <li>• Serves population of 25,000</li> <li>• Typically serves one community plan area but depending on location, may serve multiple community planning areas</li> <li>• Parking provided</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passive and active recreation facilities</li> <li>• Facilities found in Neighborhood Parks</li> <li>• Could include facilities found in Special Activity Parks</li> <li>• Community cultural facilities</li> <li>• Recreation centers</li> <li>• Aquatic complexes</li> <li>• Multi-purpose sports fields</li> </ul>

Table RE-2 Parks Guidelines (continued)

Category	Park Type	Guidelines	Typical Components <sup>2</sup>
Population-Based Park	<b>Neighborhood Parks – Qualify to meet 2.8 ac/1000 population minimum standard</b>		
	Neighborhood Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 acres – 13 acres</li> <li>• Serves population of 5,000 within approximately 1 mile</li> <li>• Accessible primarily by bicycling and walking</li> <li>• Minimal parking as necessary, only if 5 acres or more</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Picnic areas, children’s play areas, multi-purpose courts, multi-purpose turf areas, comfort stations, walkways and landscaping</li> <li>• Also called “Greens” in urban settings</li> </ul>
	Mini Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 acre – 3 acres</li> <li>• Serves population within ½ mile</li> <li>• Accessible by bicycling and walking</li> <li>• No on-site parking, except for disabled access</li> <li>• May require funding source for extraordinary maintenance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Picnic areas, children’s play areas, small multi-purpose courts, multi-purpose turf areas, walkways and landscaping</li> <li>• Also called “Squares” in urban settings</li> </ul>
	Pocket Park or Plaza	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less than 1 acre</li> <li>• Serves population within ¼ mile</li> <li>• Accessible by bicycling and walking</li> <li>• No on-site parking, except for disabled access</li> <li>• May require funding source for extraordinary maintenance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primarily hardscape</li> <li>• Picnic areas, children’s play areas, walkways and landscaping</li> <li>• Multi-purpose courts</li> <li>• Multi-purpose turf areas</li> </ul>
	<b>Special Activity Parks</b>		
Special Activity Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serves one or multiple communities</li> <li>• Size varies by activity and population served</li> <li>• Need determined case by case</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skateboard park</li> <li>• Off-leash dog park</li> <li>• Other unique uses</li> </ul>	

<sup>1</sup> Guidelines to be refined and components to be analyzed for minimum requirements during Parks Master Plan preparation.

<sup>2</sup> Components listed are not all-inclusive in every park.

Table RE-3 Recreation Facilities Guidelines<sup>1</sup>

Category	Facility Type	Guidelines	Typical Components <sup>2</sup>
Population-Based Facility	<b>Recreation Facilities</b>		
	Recreation Center (Building)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serves population of 25,000 or within <math>\pm 3</math> miles, whichever is less</li> <li>Minimum 17,000 square feet per recreation center or 25,000 population</li> <li>Serves one community plan area or a portion of one community plan area population</li> <li>Parking provided for population served</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May be a stand-alone facility or located within a community park</li> <li>Elements may include gymnasium, indoor courts, multi-purpose rooms, kitchen, and other community-serving facilities</li> </ul>
	Aquatics Complex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serves population of 50,000 or within <math>\pm 6</math> miles</li> <li>Serves single or multiple community plan areas(s) population(s)</li> <li>Minimum standard 25 meters by 25 yards swimming pool</li> <li>Parking provided for population served</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May be a stand-alone facility or located within a Community Park, Major Park, or Resource based Park</li> <li>Elements may include pools for specialized uses (children's pools, therapeutic pools)</li> <li>Aquatic support facilities (locker rooms and showers)</li> </ul>
Activity Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Population served and service radius varies by activity</li> <li>Serves single or multiple community plan area(s) population(s)</li> <li>Size varies by activity and population served</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sports Complex</li> <li>Tennis Complex</li> <li>Skating Rink</li> <li>Soccer/roller hockey arena</li> <li>Senior, teen and pre-teen centers</li> <li>Often require operating agreements for certain services</li> <li>May be a stand-alone facility, located within a Community Park, or combined with a Recreation Center</li> <li>May include on-site parking</li> </ul>	

<sup>1</sup> Guidelines to be refined and components to be analyzed for minimum requirements during Parks Master Plan preparation.

<sup>2</sup> Components listed are not all-inclusive in every park.

Table RE-4 Eligible Population-Based Park Equivalencies

Category	Facility Type	Guidelines for Equivalencies Credit	Typical Components and examples
Equivalencies	All (as shown below)	<p>The following guidelines apply to all categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determined case by case by evaluation of use and function</li> <li>• Easily accessed by the public</li> <li>• Consistent with the General Plan, Parks Master Plan, individual park master plans, applicable community plans and other applicable land use plans</li> <li>• Includes typical population-based park components and facilities as appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Picnic areas</li> <li>• Children's play areas</li> <li>• Multi-purpose turf areas</li> <li>• Multi-purpose courts</li> <li>• Sports fields</li> <li>• Comfort Station</li> <li>• Security Lighting</li> <li>• Walkways</li> <li>• Landscaping</li> <li>• Parking</li> </ul>
	Joint Use Facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires an executed long-term joint-use agreement</li> <li>• Property owner could be City or partner agency/entity (school districts, other public agencies, not-for-profit private entities)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children's play areas</li> <li>• Multi-purpose turf areas</li> <li>• Multi-purpose courts</li> <li>• Sports Field</li> <li>• Parking</li> </ul>
	Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could include portions of, and areas adjacent to, greenways or linear parks</li> <li>• Consistent with the Trails Master Plan</li> <li>• Provides linkage between parks, or parks and open space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scenic overlooks or viewpoints</li> <li>• Staging Areas</li> </ul>
	Portion of Resource-Based Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent with applicable Resource-Based park master plans (e.g. Balboa Park Master Plan, Mission Bay Park Master Plan) and community plans</li> <li>• Typically contiguous to the community it serves</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community and Neighborhood Park components (Table RE-2)</li> <li>• Recreation Facilities components (Table RE-3)</li> </ul>
	Privately-owned Park Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires agreements, public use easements, and/or other applicable legal instruments that remain in effect in perpetuity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sites within residential, commercial/industrial, or mixed-use developments</li> </ul>
	Non-Traditional Park Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes atypical sites such as rooftops, interior space of non-park buildings, and portions of other publicly-owned property</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rooftop or indoor basketball or tennis court</li> <li>• Green streets or linear street parks</li> </ul>
	Facility or Building Expansion or Upgrade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes physical improvements that expand or increase the intensity of use or range of users available at an existing City owned or controlled park or recreation facility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expansion or upgrades to children's play areas or multi-purpose courts</li> <li>• Building additions</li> <li>• Aquatics complex additions</li> <li>• Specialty-use room improvements (dance, weight/fitness, arts &amp; crafts, commercial-grade kitchen)</li> </ul>



## Recreation Element

### Policies

#### *Park Planning*

- RE-A.1. Develop a citywide Parks Master Plan through a public process.
- a. Develop implementation strategies to meet urban park and recreational needs and ensure equitable access to recreational resources.
  - b. Include policies that further refine the intent of the Recreation Element.
  - c. Identify community-specific recreation needs and preferences through a comprehensive conditions/needs assessment.
  - d. Identify neighborhood and community preferences for equivalencies through a public input process.
  - e. Develop criteria for the use of "equivalencies" (see also RE-A.9).
  - f. Identify opportunities for recreation equivalencies in communities where compliance with Park and Recreation Guidelines are not feasible or where specific community needs are not satisfied.
  - g. Develop criteria to evaluate the acceptability of private recreation facilities in satisfying population-based park guidelines and amount of credit to be given (see also RE-A.10).
  - h. Include measurements of recreation performance based on Table RE-1, Existing Park and Open Space Acres Within the City of San Diego.
  - i. Promote the preservation and management of the City's canyons as a part of the Parks Master Plan. Acknowledge the many environmental and recreational benefits they provide.
  - j. Incorporate by reference adopted resource-based and open space parks master plans and precise plans into the Parks Master Plan, such as Mission Bay Park and Balboa Park Master Plans, Central Mesa Precise Plan, Mission Trails Regional Park Master Plan, and river park master plans.
- RE-A.2. Use community plan updates to further refine citywide park and recreation land use policies consistent with the Parks Master Plan.
- a. In the absence of a Parks Master Plan, utilize community plans to guide park and recreation facilities acquisition and development citywide.
  - b. Coordinate public facilities financing plans with community plan and the Parks Master Plan recommendations to properly fund needed park and recreation facilities throughout the City.





- c. Identify the location of population-based parks when updating community plans so they are accessible and centrally located to most users, unless a community benefit can be derived by taking advantage of unique opportunities, such as adjacency to open space, park linkages, desirable views, etc.
- RE-A.3. Take advantage of recreational opportunities presented by the natural environment, in particular beach/ocean access and open space.
- RE-A.4. Consider existing, long-term recreation facilities provided by not-for-profit organizations when establishing priorities for new facilities.
- RE-A.5. Improve distribution of the most specialized recreation facilities, such as water play areas, swimming pools, off-leash dog areas, and skate parks.
- RE-A.6. Pursue opportunities to develop population-based parks.
  - a. Identify underutilized City lands with potential for use as mini-parks, pocket parks, plazas and community gardens.
  - b. Encourage community participation in development and maintenance of City-owned mini-parks, pocket parks, plazas, and community gardens.
  - c. Pursue acquisition of lands, as they become available, that may be developed as mini-parks, pocket parks or plazas.
- RE-A.7. Establish a policy for park design and development which encourages the use of sustainable methods and techniques to address water and energy conservation, green buildings, low maintenance plantings and local environmental conditions, such as soil and climate (see also Conservation Element, Section A).

#### *Park Standards*

- RE-A.8. Provide population-based parks at a minimum ratio of 2.8 useable acres per 1,000 residents (see also Table RE-2, Parks Guidelines).
  - a. All park types within the Population-based Park Category could satisfy population-based park requirements (see also Table RE-2, Parks Guidelines).
  - b. The allowable amount of useable acres exceeding two percent grade at any given park site would be determined on a case-by-case basis by the City.
  - c. Include military family housing populations when calculating population-based park requirements.
- RE-A.9. Where development of population-based park acreage for recreational purposes is infeasible due to land constraints, consider the use of park and recreation "equivalencies" that have been identified through a Parks Master Plan, or community plan update/amendment process.



## Recreation Element

- a. Use the proposed Parks Master Plan to develop the criteria and details of how the credits/calculations for "equivalencies" would be implemented and tracked on a project and community basis (see also RE-A.1).
  - i. Continue the ongoing practice of developing joint use facilities utilizing a public input process; joint use facilities may be developed prior to the adoption of the Parks Master Plan.
- b. Clearly demonstrate and document the acceptability of any proposed "equivalencies" through findings made and approved by the City, which state how required park acreage, recreation facilities and/or infrastructure standards are being met; and that the equivalency is consistent with the applicable community plan and park master plans.
- c. Document the use of equivalencies acreage and amenities which meet population-based park needs in the population-based park inventory database to ensure accurate accounting among communities.
- d. Through the community plan, public facilities financing plan update/amendment or Parks Master Plan processes, evaluate whether specific portions of resource-based parks and open space satisfy population-based park acreage requirements. If sites are identified that provide, or could provide typical population-based park amenities, then identify the associated costs and financing mechanisms for the proposed amenities and include them in the appropriate public facilities financing plans, and amend park master plans accordingly.
- e. Use the 2006 Downtown Community Plan, and a specific City Council-approved Downtown parks master plan, or subsequent community plan update or amendment, to determine appropriate downtown population-based park and recreation facility equivalencies that consider, but are not limited to the following: partnerships with publicly accessible private recreation facilities, nonprofit and educational entities; rooftop recreation facilities; green streets and linear street parks; use of portions of resource-based parks (e.g., Balboa Park); and other similar creative ways to meet the City's goals, policies and standards. This would constitute the compliance mechanism for the application of park equivalencies in the Downtown Community Planning Area.

- RE-A.10. Encourage private development to include recreation facilities, such as children's play areas, rooftop parks and courts, useable public plazas, and mini-parks to supplement population-based parks. (see also Urban Design Policies, UD-B.8 and UD-C.5)
- a. Consider partial credit for the provision of private recreation facilities when it is clearly identified that the facilities and programs provide a public benefit and are intended to help implement the population-based park guidelines and are bound by easements and agreements that remain in effect in perpetuity according to adopted policies (see also RE-A.1.g).

*Equity*

- RE-A.11. Develop a diverse range of recreation programs that are sensitive to and consider community needs, interests, and financial resources.
- RE-A.12. Ensure that appropriate quality and quantity of parks, recreation facilities and infrastructure is provided citywide.
- RE-A.13. Designate as a priority, in economically disadvantaged and underserved neighborhoods, the identification of funding sources for acquisition and development of park and recreation facilities.
- RE-A.14. Designate as a priority, in economically disadvantaged and underserved neighborhoods, the development of population-based parks and recreation facilities for local youth activities.

*Implementation*

- RE-A.15. Ensure that adequate funding is identified in public facilities financing plans for the acquisition and development of sufficient land necessary to achieve a minimum ratio of 2.8 useable acres per 1,000 residents or appropriate equivalencies, including any unmet existing/future needs.
- RE-A.16. Adopt an ordinance which authorizes implementation of the state Subdivision Map Act/Quimby Act and provides a methodology for collecting land and/or appropriate park fees from new subdivisions for population-based parks and recreation facilities to serve future residents.
- RE-A.17. Ensure that all development impact fees and assessments collected for the acquisition and development of population-based parks and recreation facilities be used for appropriate purposes in a timely manner.
- RE-A.18. Pursue joint use agreements for recreational facilities on other public agency-owned land to help implement the population-based park acreage requirements if they meet the criteria for equivalencies (see also Table RE-4, Eligible Population-Based Park Equivalencies).



## B. Recreational Opportunities

### Goals

- ◆ A City with park and recreation facilities and services that are designed to accommodate the needs of a growing and diverse population and respect the City's natural landforms.
- ◆ A regional and citywide parks/open space system, including the bays, beaches, rivers, and other attractions, that gives our region identity, attracts tourism, and enriches the quality of life for residents and visitors.
- ◆ A City with a diverse range of active and passive recreational opportunities that meet the needs of each neighborhood/community and reinforce the City's natural beauty and resources.

### Discussion

San Diego's mild climate, diverse topography, and unique location that spans from the mountains to the coast, physically define the City and afford it exceptional recreational opportunities. San Diego is fortunate to have a temperate climate that makes comfortable year-round outdoor recreation possible. Its hillsides, canyons, mesas, and floodplains help shape the City's urban form and provide numerous and varied recreational opportunities. The City's beaches, bays, and estuaries provide active and passive recreational opportunities. San Diego is also defined by its diverse neighborhoods and communities. These neighborhoods and communities are reflective of the wide array of cultures, income levels, ethnicities, physical abilities, and household types that represent the City and influence its recreation choices.

Recreation and leisure-time activities are defined by the user, and include active and passive pursuits. While some residents and visitors may participate in active recreation such as organized or programmed sports, others may choose passive activities such as reading under a shade tree, strolling through a garden, or observing nature. Individual recreation choices are based on a number of factors including location, age, family composition, schedule, physical ability, and culture.

The City's park and recreation system offers a broad range of opportunities for recreation and leisurely pursuits. It is a network of park lands, open space, recreation facilities, programs, and staff services designed to meet the specialized needs of individual neighborhoods and communities while respecting the natural resources and landforms. The City provides sports fields, swimming pools, tennis courts, parks, beaches, picnic areas, skate parks, dog off-leash parks, hiking/biking and equestrian trails, and areas of scenic beauty for public use, as well as a variety of programs for youth, adults, and seniors.



The City of San Diego's definitions for 'park' and 'open space' vary according to the context in which the terms are used (see Table RE-5, Types of Park and Open Space in the City of San Diego). For purposes of this document, General Plan-designated open space and parks are those areas of the City that are identified in adopted land use plans as open space or parks. As such, these areas include population and resource-based parks, open space with natural or cultural value (including Multiple Habitat Planning Area [MHPA] lands), and areas identified in land use plans that may not contain natural or cultural characteristics, but instead function to provide a land use buffer, visual relief, or similar purpose (see Figure RE-1, Community Plan Designated Open Space and Parks Map, and also Conservation Element, Figure CE-2, Multi-Habitat Planning Area).



*Skate Park*



*Crystal Pier, Pacific Beach*

## Policies

- RE-B.1. Provide access to a diversity of recreation facilities and programs that meet the demographically changing needs of the community while ensuring no net-loss of overall citywide population-based park acreage.
- RE-B.2. Sustain partnerships with communities in the planning, site selection, design, and construction of park and recreation facilities to ensure resident, neighborhood and area needs are satisfied.
- RE-B.3. Include recreation needs in community plans, consistent with a Parks Master Plan, to ensure that facilities and programs reflect community preferences, including the growing demand for senior activities.
- RE-B.4. In planning, with respect to existing parks, give consideration to preserving the existing uses.

Table RE-5 Types of Park and Open Space in the City of San Diego

Type of Policy Document/Process	Type of Park/Open Space	Definition/Description	Attributes/Examples
General Plan & Community Land Use Plans	General Plan/Community Plan Designated Parks and Open Space	Land identified in adopted land use plan for use as either population or resource-based parks or open space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Publicly or privately-owned</li> <li>- Satisfies park and open space objectives of a land use plan</li> <li>- May be modified by City Council through a land use plan amendment</li> <li>- Includes Multiple Habitat Preservation Area lands within Multiple Species Conservation Program</li> <li>- May also include resources to protect public good (e.g., aesthetics, flood plains, historic)</li> <li>- Designated "Open Space" and "Park" lands that are controlled or held by private owners, quasi-public agencies or various City departments</li> </ul> <p>EXAMPLES: City Water Dept. reservoir lands, MSCP (Cornerstone Lands), Metro Wastewater Dept. lands around facilities, Del Mar Mesa Specific Plan Open Space, etc.</p>
Council Policy (700-17)	City Council Designated Park Land and Open Space	Land set aside by City resolution for park and recreation purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implements City Charter Section 55</li> <li>- City fee-owned and managed by Park &amp; Recreation Dept.</li> <li>- May be used for any public purpose deemed necessary by the City Council</li> <li>- Includes population-based, resource-based and open space park lands</li> <li>- Reviewed periodically for consideration as dedicated parkland</li> <li>- May be designated through subdivision process</li> </ul> <p>EXAMPLES: Mission Trails Regional Park and Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve (portions not formally dedicated), Normal Heights Community Park, Lakeview Neighborhood Park, Canyon Hills Park, etc.</p>
Council Policy (700-17) continued	City Council Dedicated Park Land and Open Space	Land dedicated by City ordinance or state legislature for park and recreation purposes only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implements City Charter Section 55</li> <li>- City fee-owned, or publicly-held, and managed by Park &amp; Recreation Dept.</li> <li>- Protects parks and open space from any uses other than for park, recreation, and cemetery purposes</li> <li>- Includes population-based, resource-based and open space park lands</li> <li>- Two-thirds voter approval required to remove dedication</li> <li>- Proposed dedications require recommendation by Park and Recreation Board prior to City Council action</li> </ul> <p>EXAMPLES: Mission Trails Regional Park and Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve (portions formally dedicated), Mt. Hope Cemetery, Mission Bay Park, Balboa Park, Doyle Community Park, Compers Neighborhood Park, etc.</p>
Development Review Process/Exactions	Development Designated/Dedicated Park Land and Open Space	Land designated/dedicated through the subdivision or development permit process as park or open space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Excludes open space required by Land Development Code</li> <li>- Privately-owned and managed</li> <li>- Land encumbered by open space easement in favor of the City that restricts future development</li> <li>- City Council action required to remove restrictions</li> <li>- May also have a park or open space designation in community plan</li> <li>- Land set aside as required population-based park or open space to be deeded to City and subsequently designated/dedicated by City Council</li> <li>- Mitigation land for habitat/species impacts (private owner may retain ownership)</li> </ul> <p>EXAMPLES: Montana Mirador, Pacific Highlands Ranch Open Space/Wildlife Crossing, Torrey Surf, etc.</p>



## C. Preservation

### Goals

- ◆ Preserve, protect and enhance the integrity and quality of existing parks, open space, and recreation programs citywide.
- ◆ Preserve, protect and enrich natural, cultural, and historic resources that serve as recreation facilities.

### Discussion

San Diegans place a high value on the availability of park and recreation opportunities, and increasingly recognize their importance as a requisite companion to urban living as population densities increase. As San Diego continues to grow, so will the demand for parks and recreation opportunities. Since undeveloped land in the City is diminishing, it is increasingly difficult to provide new parks, thus putting increased pressure on existing parks. This will be especially evident in the older, well-established urban communities. Thus, existing parks must be protected from degradation caused by overuse. Preservation and enhancement of existing population-based parks, recreation programs, and open space (including canyons) is essential and will require careful balancing of community and park infrastructure needs.



*California Tower, Balboa Park*

Key to the preservation and enhancement of open space and parkland is the use of the City's resource-based parks which are home to many of the City's cultural and natural resources. Cultural resources are man-made physical features associated with human activity. In addition to their historic value, cultural resources often function as recreation facilities. The Old Mission Dam (Padre Dam) in Mission Trails Regional Park, and the Presidio and Fort Stockton in Presidio Park are examples of cultural resources that provide recreational value. Natural resources are the naturally occurring environmental attributes of the region. They include the beaches, canyons, mesas, rivers, floodplains, and associated plants and animals. These resources, like cultural resources, provide varying opportunities for recreation. Cultural and natural resources should be protected and preserved as reminders of man's historic presence, the regions' natural history, and to provide maximum educational, recreational, and aesthetic benefit for the citizens of, and visitors to San Diego.



## Policies

- RE-C.1. Protect existing parklands and open space from unauthorized encroachment by adjacent development through appropriate enforcement measures.
- RE-C.2. Protect, manage and enhance population- and resource-based parks and open space lands through appropriate means which include sensitive planning, park and open space dedications, and physical protective devices.
- RE-C.3. Identify and secure funding sources necessary for protecting, preserving, and maintaining population- and resource-based parks and open space.
- RE-C.4. Preserve all beaches for public-only purposes, including the protection of sensitive habitat and species.
- RE-C.5. Design parks to preserve, enhance, and incorporate items of natural, cultural, or historic importance.
- RE-C.6. Protect parks from commercialization and privatization if at the expense of public recreational use and benefit.
- RE-C.7. Protect beaches and canyons from uncontrolled urban run off.
- RE-C.8. Develop programs to educate the public on the variety, importance, and recreational uses of the City's natural and cultural resources that are located in City parks and open space lands.
- RE-C.9. Determine strategies that accommodate both land for residential, commercial, and industrial use with the needs for parkland and open space uses.

### *History of Balboa Park*

On May 26, 1868, when San Diego consisted of only 2,301 residents and 915 houses, a 1,400-acre tract of nine city pueblo lots was set aside as "City Park." Twenty-four years later, in 1892, Kate O. Sessions asked City officials to lease 30 acres of "City Park" for a nursery, and in return, she would plant 100 trees per year throughout the park. In 1902, the Park Improvement Committee employed landscape architect Samuel Parsons, to develop a comprehensive plan for the park. By 1910 the parkland began to look much as it does today. In that same year a contest was held to rename the park. Balboa, in honor of Spanish explorer Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, the first European to see the Pacific Ocean, was selected, in part, because the park also offered wide views of the Pacific Ocean.

Balboa Park owes much of its development to two world fairs, the Panama-California Exposition of 1915-16, and the California Pacific International Exposition of 1935-36. The design of the 1915 Panama-California Exposition reflected Spanish Colonial Architecture. The Cabrillo Bridge, most of the Cultural Center buildings along El Prado, and the Spreckels Organ Pavilion were built for the Exposition, under the supervision of architect, Bertram Goodhue. The development of the Southern Palisades grew out of the California Pacific International Exposition and was designed to represent a complete history of the Southwest, from prehistoric times to the modern era, under the direction of Richard Requa, Director of Architecture and Landscaping. Many of the buildings were designed to be reminders of Indian Pueblo or Mayan building design.

Today, Balboa Park is comprised of more than 1,100 gross acres and 820 useable acres. It includes fifteen museums, various gardens, arts and international cultural associations, recreation areas, and the San Diego Zoo. This urban park at the edge of downtown is renowned for its brilliant displays of seasonal flowers, shady groves of trees, and meandering paths through rolling lawns. It offers something historical, horticultural, educational, and recreational for everyone. Approximately 14 million visitors come to the park each year.





## D. Accessibility

### Goals

- ◆ A park and recreation system that provides an equitable distribution of park and recreation facilities that are designed to accommodate the needs of a diverse population.
- ◆ Park and recreation facilities that are sited to optimize access by foot, bicycle, public transit, automobile, and alternative modes of travel.
- ◆ Provision of an inter-connected park and open space system that is integrated into and accessible to the community.
- ◆ Recreational facilities that are available for programmed and non-programmed uses.

### Discussion

Park and recreation facilities enhance the quality of life for all San Diegans. These facilities should be integrated into the urban fabric so they become a convenient and easily accessible part of the daily life of San Diegans. San Diego's recreation system is comprised of a large number of facility types and programs dispersed throughout the City. However, due to City development patterns through the years, parks and recreation facilities are not equitably distributed citywide.



*Balboa Park*

Recreation access has three main components: linkage, opportunity, and availability. Regarding recreation linkages, ideally, all facilities should be located within walking distance of residential neighborhoods and employment centers. However, given the wide variety of recreation facility types, their use characteristics, and associated costs, it is not always feasible to locate every type of recreation facility in every community. Therefore, regional recreation facilities should be placed equitably throughout the City.

Recreation opportunity addresses the need for facilities to be accessible to the broadest population possible. This means facilities should be optimally located and designed to address people with special needs. They should be located along transit routes that provide access for the disabled, elderly, teens, and the economically disadvantaged. They should be designed as open facilities that can be easily navigated by seniors and persons with disabilities. Outdoor recreational opportunities should also be available to the diverse population within the City's open space and resource-based parks. This can be accomplished through development of accessible overlooks and trails, where feasible, and interpretive and directional signs (see also



## Recreation Element

RE-F.7). The Mobility and Conservation Elements provide additional recommendations regarding access (see also Mobility Element, Policies ME-A.6.b and CE-B.5).

Recreation availability addresses the need for facilities to be open for use by the general public. Many recreation facilities set aside time for exclusive use by programmed activities, such as sport leagues, clubs, or other private groups. These programmed activities fulfill recreational needs of the community. However, a balance between programmed and non-programmed use of recreation facilities must be achieved to make facilities available to the greatest number and variety of users.

### Policies

- RE-D.1. Provide new and upgraded park and recreation facilities that employ barrier-free design principles that make them accessible to San Diegans regardless of age or physical ability, giving priority to economically disadvantaged communities.
- RE-D.2. Provide barrier-free trails and outdoor experiences and opportunities for persons with disabilities where feasible.
- RE-D.3. Provide recreation programs and services specifically designed to meet the needs of children, the increasing elderly population, persons with disabilities and the underserved teenage population.
- RE-D.4. Equitably distribute regional special activity recreation facilities that are not feasibly located in most community parks based on broader service areas (see also Table RE-3, Recreation Facilities Guidelines).
- RE-D.5. Work with regional agencies to improve public transit to park and recreation facilities.
- RE-D.6. Provide safe and convenient linkages to, and within, park and recreation facilities and open space areas.
  - a. Provide pedestrian and bicycle paths between recreation facilities and residential development.
  - b. Designate pedestrian and bicycle corridors, and equestrian corridors where appropriate, that link residential neighborhoods with park and recreation facilities, trails, and open spaces.
  - c. Improve public access through development of, and improvements to, multi-use trails within urban canyons and other open space areas.
  - d. Coordinate efforts with the City's Pedestrian Master Plan and Trails Master Plan and the County's trail system to provide safe and convenient linkages between areas (see also Mobility Element, Section A).



- RE-D.7. Provide public access to open space for recreational purposes.
- Provide public access into Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) open space for only those recreational purposes deemed compatible with the preservation goals of the MSCP Subarea Plan.
  - Provide public access at locations consistent with the goals and policies of the Conservation Element.
  - Provide new, and preserve and enhance existing public beach access, where appropriate.
- RE-D.8. Balance the scheduling of programmed and non-programmed use of parks and recreation facilities to provide access to a diversity of users.
- RE-D.9. Maximize natural sunlight and shade opportunities in park areas to provide relief and a range of recreational experiences throughout the year for all users.

## E. Joint Use and Cooperative Partnerships

### Goals

- ◆ Achievement of greater public benefit through shared use of recreational resources.
- ◆ An increase in recreational activities and programs through multi-agency coordination of interagency public lands, facilities and infrastructure uses.
- ◆ Joint use and lease agreements that contribute to the recreational and physical education needs of the community.

### Discussion

Creative methods for cost-effective and efficient use of public lands are required if recreation facilities are to be improved, enhanced, and expanded to meet existing and future needs. San Diego's expanding urban development and its desire to acquire, protect and preserve parkland, recreation facilities, and open space have limited the availability of, and placed constraints on, developable lands. One creative means of providing additional lands and facilities for public recreation use is through joint use of public and not-for-profit facilities such as parks, swimming pools, and schools. Joint use facilities can include any land area or



*Youth soccer at school athletic field, San Carlos*



## Recreation Element

physical structure shared by one or more public or not-for-profit entities. An example of a joint use facility is a multi-purpose sports field at a secondary or middle school that is exclusively used for school purposes during school hours, but is available for public use when school is not in session. Joint use serves an increasingly important role in providing recreation space and facilities in the older, more densely populated urban communities.

San Diego has a well-established history of developing successful joint use recreation facilities. The City of San Diego entered into its first joint use agreement in September 1948 with the San Diego Unified School District. The City is now a party to approximately 100 similar agreements between it and the San Diego Unified, Solana Beach, Del Mar Union, Poway Unified, and San Ysidro School Districts. These agreements have accommodated the need for recreational space by designating school sites for community recreational use during non-school hours. The agreements have resulted in shared use of multi-purpose courts, turf-ed playfields, lighted and unlighted multi-purpose sports fields, children's play areas and parking lots in communities throughout the City. However, occasionally, planned joint use of school athletic fields in new urbanizing communities has not materialized. Therefore, it will be a City priority to acquire all land to be jointly used with schools to ensure recreational use of the site in perpetuity and that population-based park guidelines are met.

In addition to the continued pursuit of joint use opportunities with school districts, there are opportunities for new cooperative partnerships with governmental agencies and other entities with land holdings. Underutilized public facilities, such as surplus land, remnant parcels, rights-of-way, paper streets, structures, rooftops, and underground facilities can provide recreation opportunities. Undeveloped rights-of-way provide opportunities for trails that link parks and recreation facilities. Unnecessary paper streets could be vacated and acquired for mini-park development. Surplus land and remnant parcels could be developed into population- and resource-based recreation facilities. Underutilized structures could provide space for recreation programs, underground facilities could possibly provide recreation space at ground level, and rooftops could potentially provide additional recreational opportunities. Once identified and developed, such cooperative partnerships could provide needed recreation facilities and services.

The City of San Diego has partnerships with community volunteers and manages an extensive volunteer program. Volunteers are active in almost all City departments, working in offices, recreation centers, and libraries, or at parks and beaches. In 2004, over 35,000 volunteers worked more than 1,100,000 hours assisting in City departments.

## Policies

- RE-E.1. Engage in multi-purpose planning and inter-agency coordination to provide a variety of compatible recreational activities within a given location, especially where they cross jurisdictional boundaries.



- RE-E.2. Work with local school districts', colleges, and universities to expand development of on-campus joint use recreation facilities including multi-purpose courts, parking lots, and multi-purpose athletic fields.
- RE-E.3. Support local school district's efforts to expand elementary and secondary school sites that result in additional joint use opportunities while balancing the competing needs of recreation and housing.
- RE-E.4. Strive for mutually agreeable long-term, joint use agreements with other public agencies to assure recreation for existing residents and future generations.
- RE-E.5. Pursue acquisition or lease of surplus school property for park development.
- RE-E.6. Use of underutilized or unnecessary City rights-of-way to help meet recreational needs, where appropriate.
- Develop and maintain an inventory of underutilized or unnecessary rights-of-way, including underlying ownership.
  - Develop criteria to determine potential value of underutilized or unnecessary rights-of-way for recreational use, including bike, pedestrian, and equestrian linkages for trail access to parks and open space (and canyons), and as overlooks into open space or beaches.
- RE-E.7. Design public facilities, such as municipal water storage facilities, public parking structures and libraries, to incorporate recreational elements such as children's play areas, rooftop parks, courts and arenas, plazas, mini-parks, and community gardens.
- RE-E.8. Pursue partnerships and agreements with public agencies and not-for-profit entities to provide additional recreational space within the City such as parks, greenbelts, trail connections, parkways, bike paths, community gardens, and other recreation facilities. Potential partners for recreation land and facilities may include, but are not limited to:
- Metropolitan Transit System
  - San Diego Unified Port District
  - California Department of Transportation
  - U. S. Department of Defense
  - Other governmental agencies and jurisdictions
  - Utility and railroad companies
  - Redevelopment agencies
  - Not-for-profit youth and recreation entities
  - School districts



## Recreation Element

- RE-E.9. Explore acquisition or utilization of government-owned surplus or remnant parcels for public park use.
- RE-E.10. Secure land for joint use recreational facilities to ensure its public use in perpetuity.
- a. Acquire land identified for school athletic program use, where the cost is beneficial and suitable for joint use.
  - b. Develop financing strategies for City acquisition of land for joint use facilities, where feasible.
  - c. Where acquisition of the joint use land is not feasible, provide other assurances (such as memoranda of understanding or park easements) that joint use materializes.
  - d. Negotiate and enter into joint use agreements with school districts to help implement population-based park recommendations.
- RE-E.11. Provide credit to subdividers for the joint use of land reserved for school athletic program use when secured in accordance with RE-E.10.
- a. Provide credit to a subdivider consistent with equivalency policies based on public availability, when a school provides for on-campus, neighborhood or community-serving recreational facilities for joint use purposes (see also RE-A.9).
  - b. School land secured for joint use purposes to satisfy population-based parks guidelines shall be contiguous with and at the same grade as an adjacent population-based park for optimum recreational use.
- RE-E.12. Encourage and support multi-level volunteerism to supplement and enhance public recreational programs, through provision of a wide range of programs that help meet community needs.



## F. Open Space Lands and Resource-Based Parks

### Goals

- ◆ An open space and resource-based park system that provides for the preservation and management of natural resources, enhancement of outdoor recreation opportunities, and protection of the public health and safety.
- ◆ Preservation of the natural terrain and drainage systems of San Diego's open space lands and resource-based parks.
- ◆ A system of pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian paths linking communities, neighborhoods, parks, and the open space system.

### Discussion

Open space may be defined as land or water areas generally free from development or developed with very low-intensity uses that respect the characteristics of the natural environment. Open space is generally non-urban in character and may have utility for: park and recreation purposes; conservation of land, water, or other natural resources; historic or scenic purposes; or support of the mission of military installations. Open space that may be designated for outdoor recreation includes, but is not limited to: areas of outstanding scenic, historic, and cultural value; areas particularly suited for park and recreation purposes, including access to passive recreation space adjacent to waterfronts, rivers and creeks; urban canyons; specified areas within the City's Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP); and areas that serve as links between major recreation uses and open space, such as utility easements, river corridors, and trails. The Conservation Element, Section B further defines and expands on policies for the preservation of open space.





## Recreation Element

The City of San Diego's definitions for 'open space' and 'park' vary according to the context in which the terms are used. Table RE-5, Types of Park and Open Space in the City of San Diego, identifies the three contexts in which open space and parks are used, defines them in that context, and lists the general attributes for each. For purposes of this document, designated parks and open space lands are those areas of the City that are identified in adopted land use plans and referred to as either general plan parks or general plan open space lands.

Resource-based parks are intended to preserve and make available to all residents and visitors those areas of outstanding scenic, natural, or cultural interest. Examples of resource-based parks are Presidio Park, Mission Bay Park, and Balboa Park. Although resource-based parks are not developed to address the specific needs of any one community, portions of them can, and do, function to fulfill the local neighborhood and community park needs of surrounding residents. River parks are a type of resource-based park, often involving coordination/cooperation between multiple jurisdictions, that are centered around regional water resources, that provide a strategic plan for the balanced protection of open space, wildlife, historic, agricultural, and archaeological resources and provision of recreational opportunities ranging from playing fields and picnic areas to hiking, biking, and horse trails. The City of San Diego, in association with other agencies and jurisdictions, currently has four river parks at various stages in the planning process: San Diego River Park, San Dieguito River Park, Otay Valley Regional Park, and Tijuana River Valley Regional Park.

### ***Mission Trails Regional Park***

*Mission Trails Regional Park has been called the third jewel in the City of San Diego Park System (Balboa Park and Mission Bay Park are the first and second.) Started in 1974, Mission Trails Regional Park is one of the largest urban parks in the United States. Originally inhabited by the Kumeyaay Indians, it is the site of the Old Mission Dam, built to store water for the Mission San Diego de Alcalá. The park encompasses approximately 8,000 acres of rugged hills, valleys, and open areas which represent a San Diego prior to the landing of Explorer Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo in San Diego Bay in 1542.*

*Mission Trails Regional Park provides San Diego residents and visitors a way to explore the cultural, historical, and natural outdoor recreational aspects of San Diego. The park is operated and maintained by the City of San Diego in close partnership with the Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation. With more than 40 miles of trails, boating on Lake Murray, camping at Kumeyaay Lake, numerous informative bikes, and a state-of-the-art Visitor & Interpretive Center, Mission Trails Regional Park has something to offer everyone.*

## Policies

- RE-F.1. Protect and enhance park lands from adjacent incompatible uses and encroachments. (see also Urban Design Element, Policy UD-A.3.)
- RE-F.2. Provide for sensitive development of recreation uses within and adjacent to City-owned open space lands.
  - a. Include only those development features and amenities that do not encroach upon or harm the feature or resource that inspires the open space or resource-based park.
  - b. Design and maintain open space lands to preserve or enhance topographic and other natural site characteristics.





- c. Preserve designated public open space view corridors, such as views to the Pacific Ocean, other bodies of water, and significant topographic features.
  - d. Preserve open space along lakes, rivers, and creek beds for passive public recreation uses that are consistent with MSCP preservation goals.
  - e. Plant only native plant and non-invasive naturalized plant materials adjacent to open space lands.
  - f. Plant only native plant materials in open space lands intended for natural resource protection.
- RE-F.3. Acquire remaining private beaches within the City for public use.
- RE-F.4. Balance passive recreation needs of trail use with environmental preservation.
- RE-F.5. Utilize open space lands for outdoor recreation purposes, when doing so is compatible with cultural, historic preservation and MSCP conservation goals and surrounding land uses, including, but not limited to:
- Locations of outstanding scenic, historic, and cultural value;
  - Corridors that link recreation facilities and open space areas such as utility easements, river and stream corridors, trails, and scenic highway corridors; and
  - Sites particularly suited for park and recreation purposes, such as areas adjacent to and providing access to beaches, lakeshores, rivers, and streams.
- RE-F.6. Encourage the planning and coordination of river parks to provide public recreational opportunities, protect natural resources, and enhance community character.
- RE.F.7. Create or enhance open space multi-use trails to accommodate, where appropriate, pedestrians/hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians.
- a. Maintain a citywide Trails Master Plan to guide the provision of and enhancement of open space multi-purpose trails.
  - b. Enhance public access to public open space by clearly identifying trailheads and trail alignments which are consistent with MSCP preservation goals.
  - c. Locate canyon and other open space trails to take advantage of existing pathways and maintenance easements where possible and appropriate.