
PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

GOALS

Provide for a full and varied range of recreational opportunities accessible to all San Ysidro residents by improving existing resources, designating additional community and neighborhood parks, and preserving natural resources and open space areas.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Due to a greater than anticipated increase in residential growth, San Ysidro is deficient in developed parkland by approximately 20 acres. The General Plan population-based park standards for neighborhood and community parks state that a neighborhood park should be located within an area serving 3,500-5,000 persons, and be a minimum of five acres when adjacent to an elementary school and ten acres when freestanding. According to the General Plan, community parks are recommended to serve a population of between 18,500 and 25,000 residents and to contain a minimum of 13 acres when adjacent to a junior high school and 20 acres when freestanding. Based on the projected population for the year 2010 of 29,292 people (forecasted by SANDAG, Series 7), San Ysidro should contain 1.2-1.5 community parks, and five neighborhood parks of five acres, using an average of 1.86 acres of park per 1,000 people. The community should have 54.5 total park acres. Currently, the community has one community park at 3.6 acres and five neighborhood parks for a total of 41.13 acres.

One neighborhood park site is currently undeveloped. The total existing developed population based park acreage is 34.35 acres.

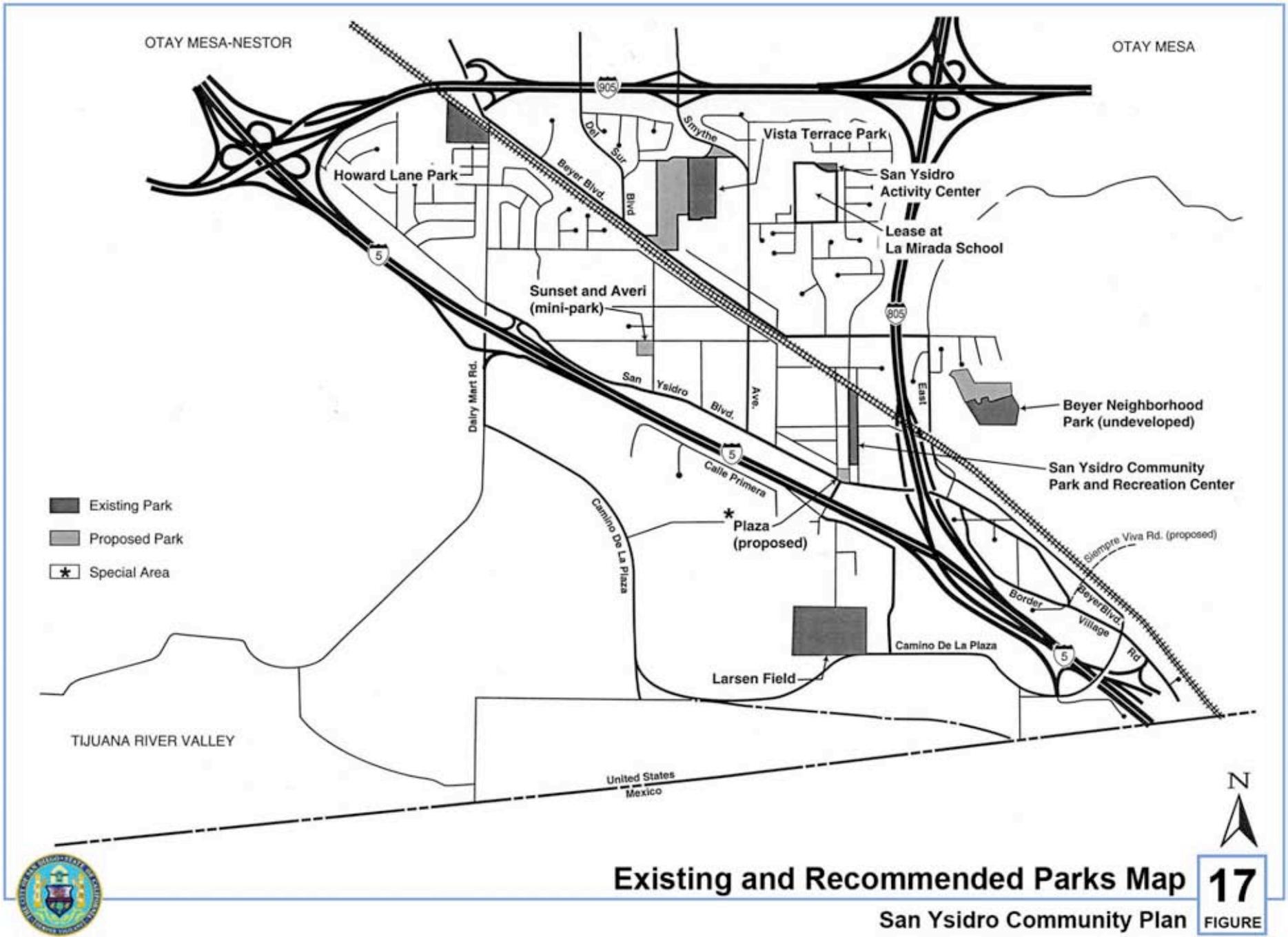
Community Park

The San Ysidro Recreation Center is classified as a community park. This 3.6-acre linear park site is bounded by East and West Park Avenues, San Ysidro Boulevard and Seaward Avenue, and serves as the primary unifying element of the historic neighborhood “El Pueblito Viejo.” Improvements to this facility include tennis and basketball courts, parking facilities, a tot lot and a landscaped open area with picnic tables.

The park also contains several important public facilities: the San Ysidro Library, the Senior Center, the Metropolitan Area Advisory Committee Center (a social service agency), and a gymnasium. Access to these facilities is enhanced by the park’s central location in the community. (See **Figure 17** and **Table 9**.) Casa Familiar, a local social service agency, began operating the gymnasium in 1988.



San Ysidro Recreation Center - The “Linear Park”



Existing and Recommended Parks Map

17

San Ysidro Community Plan

FIGURE

Neighborhood Parks

Vista Terrace Park, a neighborhood park, contains 6.7 acres and is located west of Smythe Avenue and south of Athey Avenue, adjacent to the United States Border Patrol Headquarters and Detention Facility and Smythe School. (See **Figure 17.**) This neighborhood park is the site of a municipal swimming pool with a dressing facility, a tot lot, parking and picnic areas and a soccer athletic field. This is a heavily visited facility due to the popularity of the swimming pool and fully improved athletic field, yet it has inadequate parking. The location of the Border Patrol facility currently prohibits a much needed expansion of the park. In 1988, the San Ysidro community began a drive to relocate the facility to Otay Mesa and expand the park.



Vista Terrace Park

Howard Lane Park is a 6.6-acre neighborhood park located immediately adjacent to Nicoloff Elementary School, west of Dairy Mart Road and south of SR-905. Improvements include a turfed playing area, a tot lot, picnic benches, basketball courts, paved walkways and landscaping.

The San Ysidro Community Activity Center, a 1.45-acre neighborhood park, is located at the western terminus of Diza Road, below La Mirada Elementary School. This recreation center sponsors a variety of recreational and educational activities for the San Ysidro community. The Center also sponsors a lunch program every weekday. This facility is landscaped but it is lacking a turfed outdoor playing area. A ramp links the Center to La Mirada Elementary School, where, in 1988, the City of San Diego proposed a joint use agreement with the San Ysidro School District to share 2.5 acres of an unturfed sports field.

The San Ysidro Athletic Center (Larsen Field), at the south end of Sycamore Road, is an approximately 16-acre neighborhood park consisting of playing fields and a comfort station. Currently, it does not meet the community's need for youth recreation because it lacks necessary improvements. In 1988, the Park and Recreation Department hired a consultant to design a 10,000-square-foot recreation building. Construction of this facility is due to begin in Fiscal Year 1989.

**TABLE 9
EXISTING POPULATION-BASED PARKS**

Parks	Acreage	Park Type	Major Facilities
San Ysidro Recreation Center	3.6	Community	Tennis and Basketball, Tot Lot, Picnic Area, Library, Senior Center, Gymnasium, Mexican American Activity Center
Vista Terrace Park	6.7	Neighborhood	Swimming Pool, Soccer
Howard Lane Park	6.6	Neighborhood	Playing Field, Basketball
San Ysidro Community Activity Center	1.45	Neighborhood	Gymnasium, Meeting Rooms
San Ysidro Athletic Center (Larsen Field)	16.0	Neighborhood	Playing Field, Comfort Station
Beyer Neighborhood Park	6.78 (undeveloped)	Neighborhood	Unimproved
Total	41.13		

The timely completion of this facility is critical, due to the general lack of public facilities south of I-5 and the influx of young families from other San Diego neighborhoods. When fully improved, Larsen Field will provide San Ysidro and neighboring communities with a sports center with lighted playing fields, a soccer field, a baseball diamond and a recreation building.

It should also be emphasized that San Ysidro lacks leisure centers and gathering places, such as bowling alleys, cinemas, discotheques and open areas. This precludes the provision of entertainment and cultural activities, such as concerts, dance programs and lectures. Such services are essential in communities like San Ysidro with young populations. Recommendations regarding the provision of these services are included in the **Commercial and International Gateway Elements**.

Open Space

San Ysidro is also deficient in open space acreage; there is none designated within the community's 1974 plan boundaries. Prior to this Plan's adoption, existing open areas, such as the Dairy Mart Ponds and the steep slopes on the community's eastern boundary, were not protected with the appropriate land use designation and zoning nor were they easily accessible to San Ysidro residents.



Dairy Mart Ponds

In addition, the potential visual, open space and pedestrian link between San Ysidro and these resources was not realized; this deterred public access and use.

The Dairy Mart Ponds, approximately 113 acres of wetland habitat, 88 of which are in the San Ysidro community planning area, are one of the community's major natural resources. They are located off Dairy Mart Road, southwest of I-5. 53 acres have been acquired by the State of California Wildlife conservation Board. (Twenty-five of those acres are in the Otay Mesa-Nestor community planning area.) The remaining portion of the ponds is under other ownership: approximately 20 acres under public ownership and 40 acres under private ownership.



Steep Slopes

The steep slopes on the community's eastern boundary are one of San Ysidro's major visual open area resources and dramatically frame the eastern portion of the community. They are immediately adjacent to the open space network in the adopted Otay Mesa Community Plan. This area has been identified as containing unstable soils.

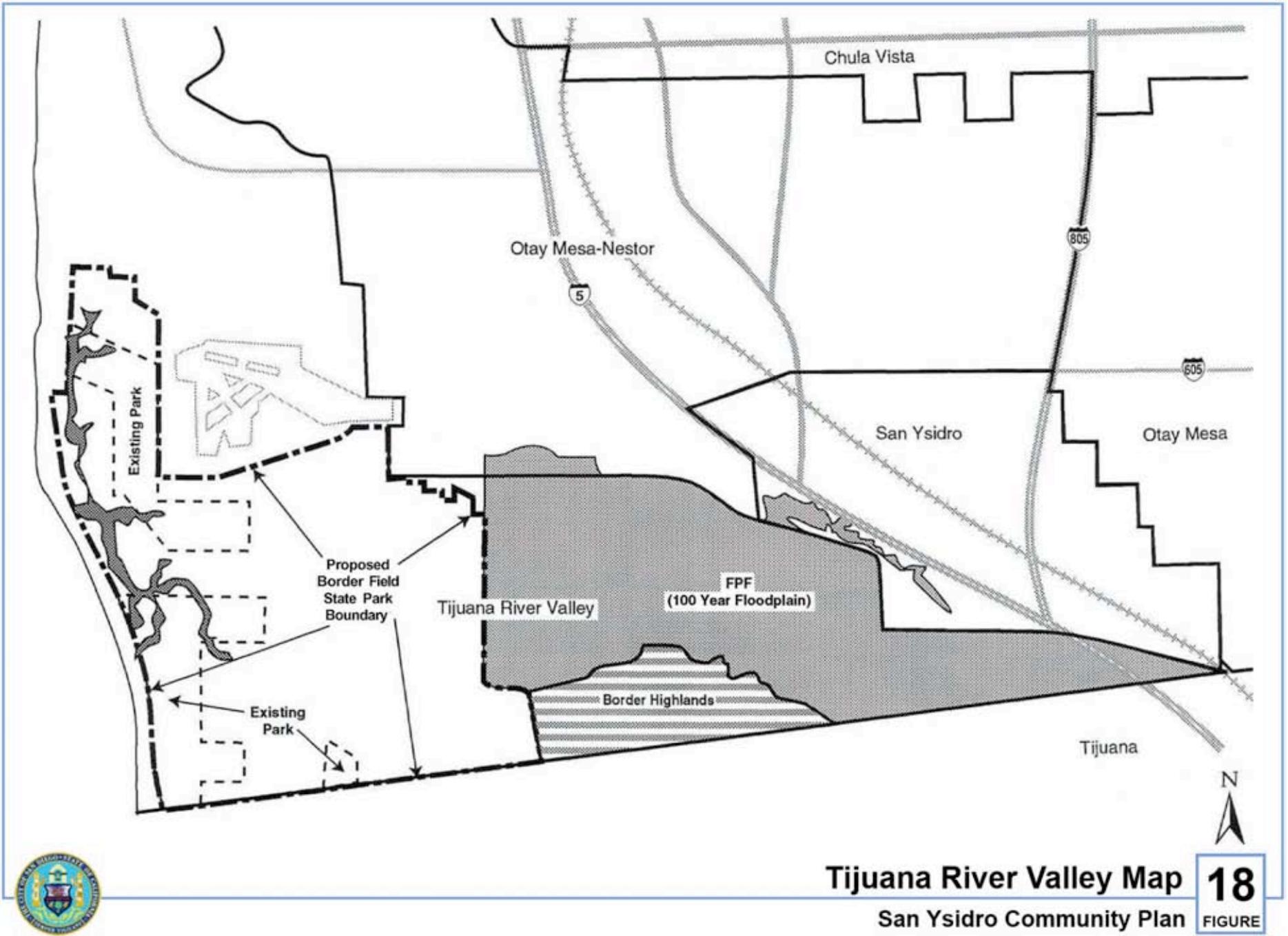
The Tijuana River Valley, immediately to the west of San Ysidro, is also the site of undesignated open areas, including the floodplain, extending west of the Tijuana River Levee, Border Field State Park and the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve. Located between the Cities of Tijuana and San Diego, the river valley provides an open, natural area in an otherwise urban atmosphere. (See **Figure 18**.) Although not within the San Ysidro Community Plan boundaries, the river valley has a dramatic visual impact on that community and serves as its major natural resource.



Tijuana River Valley

The potential visual, open space, vehicular and pedestrian link between San Ysidro and the river valley, however, has not been realized, limiting public access and use.

The existing Border Field State Park and Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve contains 680 acres and extends from the border north along the coast for approximately 2.5 miles. An International Border monument is located on a ten-acre plateau which overlooks the coast and floodplain. This passive recreation area consists of a park used for picnicking and sightseeing and a beach area used for swimming, surfing and fishing. Access to the ocean, however, is often closed due to sewage spills and flooding. The remainder of the area within the existing park consists mainly of wetland habitats—a saltwater marsh, mud flats and a maritime transition zone. It is a primary objective of the State Park and Recreation Commission to preserve the ecological system in as natural a condition as possible and to restrict active recreation to the sandy beach and upland area.



Tijuana River Valley Map
 San Ysidro Community Plan

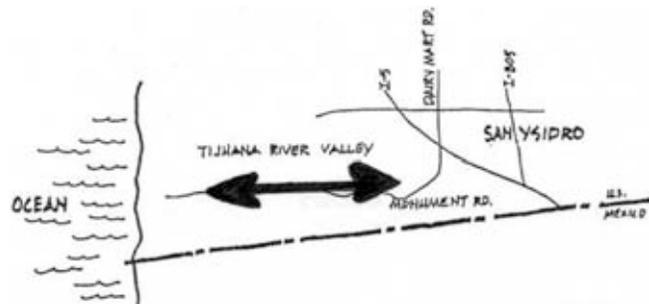
18
 FIGURE



The Tijuana River Estuary is one of the San Diego region's major natural resources. The estuary provides a very valuable wildlife habitat, and is of great environmental, scientific, aesthetic, educational and recreational value. Hillsides surrounding the estuary, the Border Highlands, are also important resources since they form an integral and highly aesthetic open area that frames the southern edge of the estuary. Buffer zones between the estuary and any road or other development must be controlled so that the estuary resource is not damaged.

OBJECTIVES

- Meet the population-based park standards of the General Plan.
- Expand existing parks and develop new parks.
- Provide recreational facilities within residential developments.
- Limit active recreation use of Border Field State Park to the sandy beach and park area.
- Ensure that the Tijuana River Valley is protected because of its natural, educational, recreational and aesthetic value.
- Create a link from San Ysidro to the Tijuana River Valley and to the ocean.
- Preserve and enhance the valued natural resources of the San Ysidro community.
- Link parks, recreation centers, open areas and schools.
- Ensure that development adjacent to wetlands and other sensitive habitats is designed to minimize adverse effects to the resource.
- Maintain sensitive areas in contiguous open space connections with other habitat areas in adjacent communities.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Pursue new sources of revenue, such as bond issues and Federal or State Grant Programs, for the acquisition and development of parks not financed by the City of San Diego General Fund.
2. Relocate the Immigration and Naturalization Service Detention Facility and acquire the 14.4-acre property to expand the existing 6.7-acre neighborhood facility, Vista Terrace Park. The expanded 21-acre park will then serve as an adequate Community Park and ensure that the General Plan's population-based park standards will be met. (See **Figure 17** and **Table 10**.)

**TABLE 10
RECOMMENDED POPULATION-BASED PARKS**

Parks	Acreage	Park Type	Proposed Facilities
Beyer Neighborhood Park (Addition)	(3.0)	Neighborhood	Expand Park Site
Sunset and Averil Park	1.16	Mini-park	
Athey and Smythe Avenues Passive Park	1.47	Passive Park	
Vista Terrace Park Expansion	14.43*	Community	
San Ysidro Activity Center/La Mirada Elementary	2.5**	Neighborhood	Turfed Playing Field
Town Center Plaza	0.25		
Total	22.81		

* The total park acreage including the expansion would equal 21 acres.

** The total park acreage would equal 3.95 acres and include the joint City of San Diego/La Mirada Elementary School playing field and the Activity Center.

3. Designate the 1.47-acre triangular parcel at Smythe and Athey Avenues as Neighborhood Park. (See **Figure 17.**) Develop the site as a passive park and open area and as an entryway to Vista Terrace Park.
4. Improve the 2.5-acre playing field at La Mirada Elementary School for joint use by the school and by the San Ysidro Activity Center.
5. Improve the San Ysidro Athletic Center (Larsen Field) to provide a much needed recreation building and lighted playing fields.
6. Provide sites for mini-parks and landscaped open areas in park deficient neighborhoods. Designate the 1.16-acre currently vacant parcel located at the southwest corner of Sunset and Averil as a mini-park. (See **Figure 17.**)
7. Purchase an additional three acres at Beyer Neighborhood Park.
8. Develop Beyer Neighborhood Park. The existing unimproved 6.78-acre site was designated as park in the 1974 adopted plan. It is owned by the City of San Diego and has been reserved for future park development. The additional three-acre purchase will create, approximately, a ten-acre site.
9. Designate a town center “plaza” site as park. (See also the **Urban Form Element.**) The 0.25-acre plaza would not be a typical park in that there would be no active recreation (playing fields, for example). However, the plaza would be an area for sitting, strolling, community festivals and parades. Maintenance could be provided by a Merchants’ Association or an Assessment District.
10. Use public school facilities (including recreational fields, auditoriums and meeting rooms) for community activities and park and recreation uses during non-school hours.

11. Designate approximately 88 acres of the Dairy Mart Ponds and surrounding land as open space. (See **Figure 19**.) New development adjacent to the wetlands will be subject to discretionary review to ensure protection of the resource. The criteria of the Resource Protection Ordinance, including a requirement to provide a buffer between wetlands and development projects, will be in effect. The buffer shall be a minimum of 50 feet in width and shall be maintained around all identified riparian areas, unless it can be demonstrated that a buffer of lesser width will protect the resources of the riparian habitat, based on site-specific information. Such information shall include, but is not limited to, the type and size of development and/or proposed mitigation (such as planting of vegetation or construction of fencing) which will also achieve the purposes of the buffer. The buffer shall be measured landward from the riparian habitat. The California Department of Fish and Game and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service shall be consulted in such buffer determinations.
12. Designate the floodplain area in the Tijuana River Valley for resource-based open space use. Although not in the San Ysidro planning area, this Plan strongly recommends the retention of this area as open space.
13. Publicize the facilities, and hours that they are available, at the Border Field State Park and the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve.
14. Designate the steep slopes on the eastern boundary of the planning area as open space and apply agricultural zoning and the Hillside Review Overlay zone to reserve this major visual open area resource and to extend the open space network in the adopted Otay Mesa Community Plan. (See **Figure 19**.)
15. Develop a pedestrian path network throughout the planning area to permit pedestrians to safely and easily walk to various community facilities, including schools, parks, and residential, commercial, industrial and institutional development. Maintenance responsibility should be assigned upon development of these paths. (See **Urban Form Element, Figure 20**.)
16. Review all development proposals involving sensitive resources with the goal of maintaining contiguous open space connections within and adjacent to the plan area.

Recommended Open Space

The total amount of open space acreage identified is approximately 149 acres. This includes 88 acres of the Dairy Mart Ponds and about 61 acres of the steep hillsides on the eastern boundary of the planning area.