

Recreation Element - Excerpt

“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 and Intent

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

Plan Issues

- Anticipated population growth and development results in increased pressure on existing/remaining usable park and recreation resources/facilities.
- Coordination and partnerships with schools and other agencies to maximum recreational opportunities where land is limited or not available.
- Alternative methods to evaluate/achieve City park standards/usable acres.
- Recreational needs vary greatly throughout the City by community; policies and strategies to achieve City-wide goals and standards must recognize and address these differences.

Introduction

The city’s parks, open space, trails, and recreation facilities play an important role in the physical, mental, social, and environmental health of the city. They strengthen the body and assist in maintaining physical well-being. They provide the visual relief and relaxation that refreshes and restores the frame of mind. They create opportunities for personal interaction and provide alternatives to crime. They improve air quality, reduce urban runoff, and decrease the effects of urban heat islands.

The City of San Diego provides four use categories of recreation for residents and visitors: population-based, resource-based, open space, and amenity-based recreation.

- Population-based facilities and services are located in close proximity to residential development and are intended to serve the daily needs of the neighborhood and community. 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.



- Natural open space lands are city-owned land 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.
- Amenity-based recreation facilities are golf courses, dog parks, skate parks, amphitheaters and other similar type facilities that are not necessarily population-based that are strategically placed to serve the needs of several communities. These facilities may be developed as stand-alone facilities or grouped together.

These four categories of recreation, including facilities and programs, constitute San Diego's municipal park and recreation system.

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. The Conservation Element provides additional policies for protecting and preserving our recreational natural resources and open space. The Urban Design Element recognizes the opportunities that park and recreation facilities provide toward creation of safe and walkable communities, distinctive neighborhoods, and significant public spaces and civic architecture. The Strategic Framework Element reinforces the importance of recreation as a quality of life factor that needs to be integrated into communities. The Mobility Element recognizes that pedestrian and bicycle facilities help achieve both transportation and recreation goals.

City of San Diego definitions for 'park' and 'open space' vary according to the context in which the terms are used (see Table RE-1, Park and Open Space Terminology). 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 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. Figure RE-1 (Add in Major Open Space Area to Map), General Plan Designated Open Space/Parks Map identifies open space and parks in this context.

San Diego's environment, its coastal location, temperate climate, and diverse topography, contribute to the city's recreation needs. The goals and policies of the Recreation Element have been developed to take advantage of the city's natural environment, to build upon existing recreation facilities and services, and to adapt to future recreation needs. To accomplish this, the Recreation Element identifies goals and policies to address a diversity of recreation opportunities, preservation of existing facilities, the accessibility of facilities and services, cooperative efforts to attain parkland and facilities, open space and resource-based parks, and guidelines for park and recreation facilities.



E. Open Space Lands and Resource-Based Parks

Policies

- RE-E.1. Protect and enhance resource-based parks through planning and acquisition.
- RE-E.2. Sensitive development.
Provide for sensitive development of recreation uses within and adjacent to City-owned open space lands.
- 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
 - Design and maintain open space lands to preserve or enhance topographic and other natural site characteristics.
 - Create or enhance open space multi-use trails pursuant to a citywide trails master plan to accommodate, where appropriate, pedestrians/hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians.
 - Locate canyon and other open space trails to take advantage of existing pathways and maintenance requirements where possible and desirable.
 - Preserve designated public open space view corridors, such as views to the Pacific Ocean, other bodies of water, and significant topographic features.
 - Preserve open space along lakes, rivers, and creek beds for passive public recreation uses that are consistent with MSCP preservation goals.
 - Plant only native plant and non-invasive naturalized plant materials adjacent to open space lands.
 - Plant only native plant materials in open space lands intended for natural resource protection.
- RE-E.3. Acquire remaining private beaches within the City for public use.
- RE-E.4. Balance passive recreation needs of trail use with environmental preservation.
- RE-E.5. Provide open space lands for outdoor recreation purposes 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 streams banks, trails and scenic highway corridors
 - Sites particularly suited for park and recreation purposes, such as areas adjacent to and providing access to beaches, lakeshores, rivers, and streams.



F. Park and Recreation Guidelines

**Table RE-4
Acreage Calculation for Population-Based Parks**

Cumulative Population	Acres*	Neighborhood Parks (NP)	Community Parks (CP)	Net Usable Acres/1,000 Residents
5,000	10	1	---	NP- 40 ac/25,000 = 1.6 CP- 20 ac/25,000 = 0.8 2.4
10,000	10	1	---	
15,000	10	1	---	
20,000	10	1	---	
25,000	20	Included within CP acres	1	2.4 net usable acres/1,000 Residents

Policies

- RE-F.1. Community Plans.
Use community plan updates to further refine the Park and Recreation Guidelines.
- Identify community specific recreation needs and desires.
 - Tailor the Park and Recreation Guidelines to community specific conditions.
 - Identify opportunities for recreation enhancements in communities where compliance with Park and Recreation Guidelines are not feasible or where specific community needs are not satisfied.
- RE-F.2. Park Master Plan
Develop a citywide Park Master Plan.
- Develop implementation strategies to meet urban needs and address inequitable access to recreational resources.
 - Include a needs assessment.
 - Include policies that further refine the Park and Recreation Guidelines.
 - Develop guidelines for enhancements that include credit toward fulfilling population-based Park and Recreation Guidelines. Until the Park Master Plan is developed, interim measures (e.g., Council Policies, ordinances, development right-of-entry agreements, development review conditions, etc.) should be pursued to provide direction and a foundation for the Park Master Plan.
 - Include measurements of recreation performance based on the Park and Recreation Guidelines and enhancements.
- RE-F.3. Population-based parks are to be provided at a ratio of 2.4 net usable acres per 1,000 residents.
- RE-F.4 Financing plans are to assure the acquisition of sufficient land necessary to achieve a ratio of 2.4 net usable acres per 1,000 residents for population based parks.



- RE-F.5. Designate as a priority, recreational funding resources for public recreation facilities in underserved neighborhoods.
- RE-F.6. Designate as a priority in underserved neighborhoods, scheduling of neighborhood parks and facilities for local youth activities.
- RE-F.7. Improve distribution of the most specialized recreation facilities such as water play areas, pools, and skate parks.
- RE-F.8.. Assure the appropriate quality and quantity of recreation facilities and infrastructure citywide.
- RE-F.9. Develop a diverse range of recreation programs that are sensitive to community needs, interests, and financial resources.
- RE-F.10. Take advantage of recreational opportunities presented by the natural environment, in particular beach/ocean access and open space.
- RE-F.11. Pursue opportunities to develop mini-parks and vest pocket parks
- a. Identify underutilized city lands with potential for use as mini-parks and community gardens.
 - b. Encourage community participation in development and maintenance of mini-parks and city owned and maintained community gardens.
 - c. Pursue acquisition of lands, as they become available, that may be developed as mini-parks.
- RE-F.12. Utilize Park and Recreation enhancements, including but not limited to those identified in Table RE-3, as a means of providing quality park and recreation facilities and infrastructure where development of useable acres for active recreational purposes are limited by land constraints.
- a. The acceptability of enhancements are to be determined on a case-by-case basis based on criteria developed by Park and Recreation with input from the appropriate community planning group and park and recreation board. Findings to clearly demonstrate acceptability shall be made and approved by Park and Recreation for any proposed “enhancements” to recreation facilities and infrastructure. Factors to consider include:
 - Do community specific needs that require flexibility to implement?
 - Are there parcels that could feasibly be acquired that are adjacent to parks or open spaces within the community?
 - Will the proposed enhancement result it achievement of an equivalent or superior recreational opportunity?
 - Will the proposed enhancement result in a more timely provision of recreational facilities/programs than would otherwise be possible?
 - b. Encourage creative solutions that provide recreation by taking advantage of opportunities presented in the built environment such as converting building roof



tops, adding facilities atop parking structures, and adapting underutilized buildings.

- c. Identify neighborhood and community preferences for enhancements through public forums and workshops.
- RE-F.13. Identify, quantify, and consider as fulfilling population-based park needs, for purposes of General Plan and community plan park allocation, those portions of resource-based parks that satisfy neighborhood park and community park guidelines.
- RE-F.14. Consider existing recreation facilities provided by non-profit organizations when establishing priorities for new facilities.
- RE-F.15. Land Purchase.
Establish a council policy or other mechanism to outline parameters for locating and purchasing properties in the city that may be used for recreation purposes.
- a. Develop a process to identify lands that become available for purchase or lease.
 - b. Develop criteria to determine potential value for recreation use.
 - c. Provide direction on how those lands could be developed for recreation purposes.
- RE-F.16. Encourage private development to include recreation elements such as children's play areas, rooftop courts, vest-pocket parks and usable public plazas.
- RE-F.17. Include useable passive and/or active public recreation areas in development projects requiring community plan amendments resulting in development intensities beyond those identified in the applicable land use plan.
- RE-F.18. Pursue joint-use agreements and facilities as a means of meeting Park and Recreation Guidelines.

