

## ***PARKS AND RECREATION ELEMENT***

### **3.2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The Parks and Recreation Element plays an important role in the Arcata General Plan. This Element expresses the degree to which the community values park and open space land and establishes a policy framework and priority for the provision of park and recreation services, park improvements and provides the framework required by state law for the dedication of land or payment of fees in lieu of dedication for park or recreational purposes as a condition of subdivision approval. In addition, the General Plan must identify existing and planned public facilities, including land for parks and recreation, which is critical for future dedications, acquisitions and park improvements, which must be consistent with the General Plan. In 1994, the City adopted a General Plan Parks and Recreation Element (Resolution 945-26) to serve as the central policy document to guide the provision of parks and recreation in the City. The Element considered a wide variety of recreation programs with policies addressing the community's desire to provide a wide spectrum of parks and recreation opportunities and facilities; encouraging cooperative agreements with other government entities and public/private partnerships to enhance the availability of recreation programs; and emphasized fiscal responsibility and the objective to minimize environmental impacts. This Element was maintained as a separately bound document in the Arcata General Plan, 2020.

In 2010, the City updated its Parks and Recreation Master Plan, originally compiled in 1979 and updated with the preparation of the Parks and Recreation Element in 1994. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan establishes a vision for a sustainable and interconnected parks and recreation system relying on local standards and guidelines and a comprehensive implementation strategy to address community needs. This Parks and Recreation Element updates the policies and program of the 1994 Element and incorporates the vision and objectives of the 2010 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

The City of Arcata divides the responsibility for parks and recreation services between the Parks and Recreation Divisions of the Environmental Services Department. The Environmental Services Parks Division is responsible for the design, development, landscaping, and maintenance operations of the City's parks and facilities. The Environmental Services Recreation Division provides recreation services, facilities, and programs geared to all ages and interests ranging from traditional and nontraditional athletics to arts, science, music, and seasonal community events that are intended to improve the quality of life in Arcata. Supported by the Environmental Services Department, the City Parks and Recreation Committee holds regular public meetings and serves in an advisory capacity to the City Council on matters pertaining to public recreation, parklands, and related facilities.



### **Guiding principles and goals.**

- A. Provide residents with an accessible variety of recreation opportunities and park experiences that are equitably distributed throughout the City.
- B. Expand the range of park types and recreation programs to meet changing community needs and priorities.
- C. Design sustainably to maintain carbon neutrality, operate efficiently and minimize water/energy needs.
- D. Optimize natural resources and amenities for the enjoyment of residents and visitors.
- E. Make parks and recreation programs safe, accessible by multi modal transportation, usable by all ages, inclusive, and without barriers for those with limited mobility.
- F. Assess user needs and adapt as needed on an ongoing basis.

**Existing parks and recreation system overview.** The City of Arcata is a unique community, in terms of the parks, trails, and recreation opportunities it provides. The City owns and maintains more than 3,744 acres of parkland at 41 sites. The City's system for classifying parks is based on National Recreation and Park Association standards but defines park types and appropriate levels of service to reflect the unique characteristics of Arcata and to facilitate future parks planning for the City. Arcata's classification system includes:

- **Neighborhood Parks** that provide access to basic recreation opportunities for nearby residents;
- **Community Parks** that are larger parks that provide both active and passive recreation opportunities and that appeal to the entire community;
- **Special Use Areas** that are stand-alone recreation facilities not located within larger parks;
- **Greenways and Linear Parks** that are natural or built corridors that provide green buffers between communities or around the city; and
- **Natural Areas** that are undeveloped lands left in a natural state for conservation or outdoor recreation.

More than 97% of the City's parks and recreation acreage is provided as Natural Areas or undeveloped park reserves and a relatively small proportion of the park system is devoted to developed parks. As shown in the table below, park development is not divided evenly among the existing park types. Most developed parkland (over 63.7%) is provided at two large community parks: Arcata Community Park and Redwood Park. Remaining acreage (approximately 32 acres) is distributed among 21 small parks, consisting of special use areas (19%), neighborhood parks (10.7%), and linear parks/greenways (6.6%). Figure PR-a illustrates the Arcata parks and playground amenities.

In addition to City parks and recreation areas, there are a number of local schools in Arcata whose sports fields, sports courts, playgrounds, and gymnasiums are regularly used by the community, including: Arcata Elementary; Jacoby Creek, Pacific Union, and Sunny Brae. In addition, Cal Poly Humboldt is a major provider of recreational facilities and programs, primarily available to faculty, staff, and students, who also use City parks and recreation facilities. The Arcata Community Pool is managed by the Northern Humboldt Recreation and District Park and

located adjacent to Arcata High School and serves surrounding communities as well, including Manila, Jacoby Creek, and the Warren Creek area. HealthSPORT is a private health club located in Arcata Community Park.

The City has a comprehensive system of trails within and connecting parks that provide a valuable recreation resource to the community in addition to regional linkages. The City has a mix of hard and soft surface multi-purpose trails that support activities, such as running, hiking, mountain biking and riding horses.

Developed Parks	#	Acres	Percent
<b>Arcata Parkland by Classification</b>			
<b>Community Parks</b>	2	56.6	<b>63.7</b>
<b>Special Use Areas</b>	6	16.9	<b>19.0</b>
<b>Linear Parks/Greenways</b>	3	5.9	<b>6.6</b>
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>88.8</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Undeveloped Parks</b>			
<b>Natural Areas</b>	15	3,625.4	
<b>Undeveloped Sites</b>	5	29.9	
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>3,655.3</b>	
<b>TOTAL PARK SYSTEM</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>3,744.1</b>	

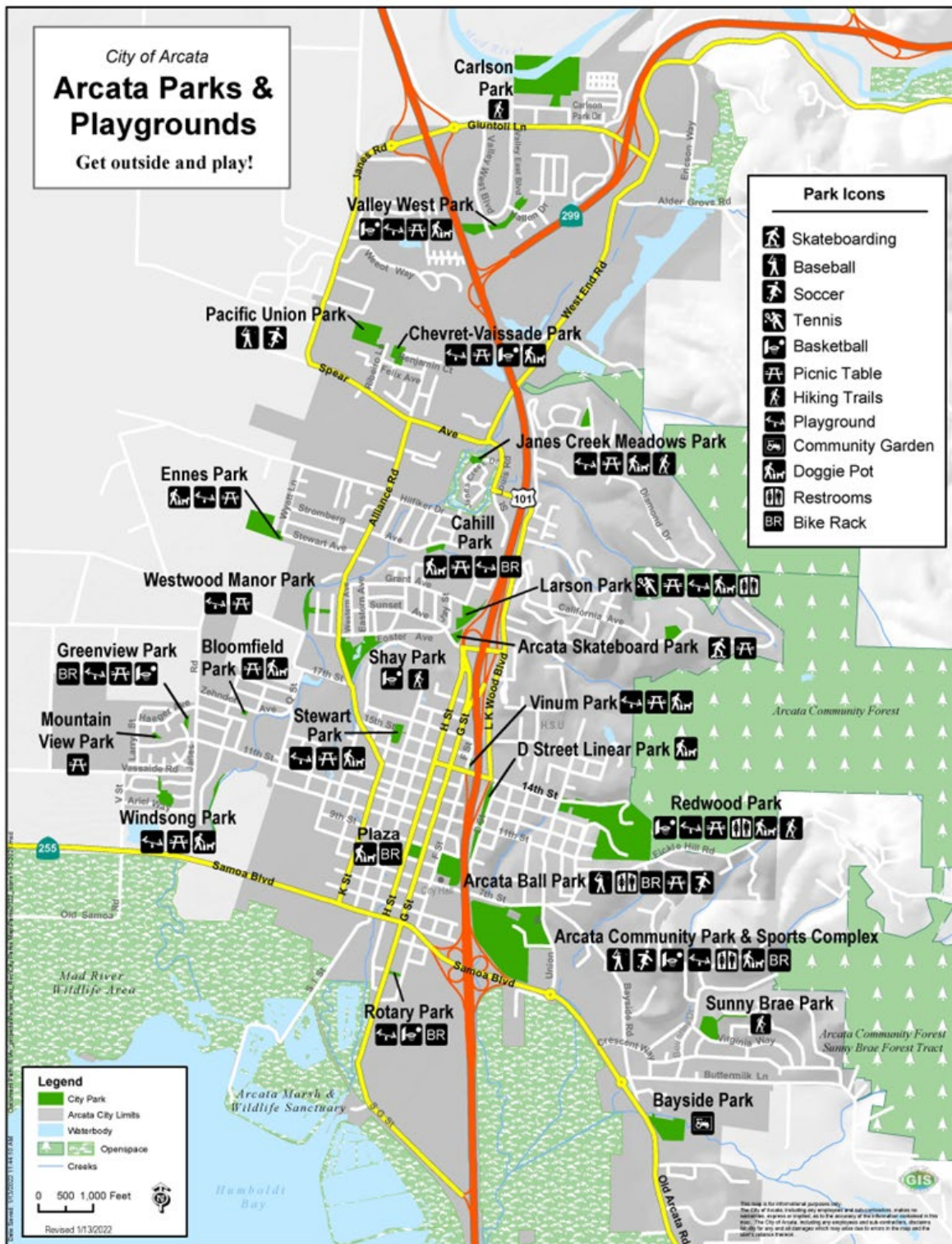
Source: Arcata Parks & Recreation Master Plan (2010)

**Parkland Dedication Standards.** The State’s “Quimby Act” (Government Code Section 66477 of the Subdivision Map Act) allows cities to require residential subdividers to dedicate land, or to pay in-lieu fees, for park and recreational purposes if the general plan contains policies and standards for parks and recreational facilities and definitive regulations are in place specifying the proportion of a subdivision to be dedicated or the payment of in-lieu fees. The Quimby Act allows for minimum dedications of three acres per 1,000 residents and the dedications of up to



five acres to match a jurisdiction’s actual parkland to population ratio. Despite the small proportion of City parkland that is improved as community and neighborhood parks, Arcata maintains a very high parkland to population ratio, 5.15 acres per 1,000 residents. As a result, the City’s General Plan and Development Code requires dedications of the maximum amount under the Quimby Act, five acres per 1,000 residents.

Figure PR-a Outdoor Recreation Map





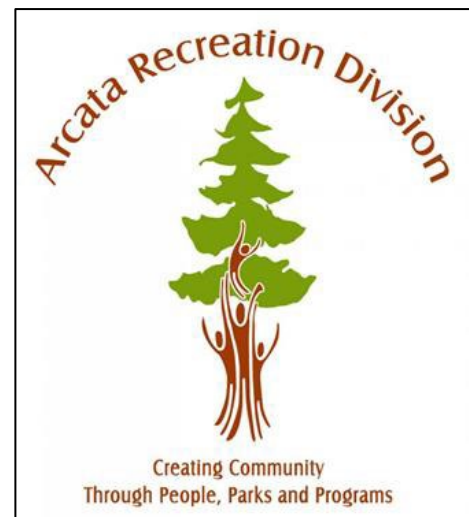
**Natural Resources Values.** The City of Arcata has a strong commitment to its parks and natural open space areas and the City's parkland protects natural resources, offers scenic views and contributes to the City's unique character, aesthetic appeal, and high quality of life. Arcata's parks, waterways, agricultural lands, wildlife sanctuary, and forests help establish community identity and a strong sense of place. The protection and preservation of the natural environment through park design is an important value in Arcata and environmental protection and sustainability are integral components of park design, forest and open space maintenance and management, operations, and programming. In particular, the Arcata Marsh provides secondary treatment for the City's wastewater treatment plant and serves as an important natural and recreational area; and the Arcata Community and Jacoby Creek Forests serve many functions, including supporting recreation, education, watershed protection, wildlife habitat, and sustainable timber harvesting to support additional park acquisition, development and maintenance.

**Community Values.** Based on findings from the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Questionnaire, nearly all community members consider parks, recreation, and open space to be important to Arcata's quality of life. Residents value a park system that emphasizes natural areas and trails and express a desire for additional multi-use trails, natural and multi-use parks that serve the whole community, and small parks in neighborhoods.

The people of Arcata also highly value art and culture. In 2021, the City Council adopted the City of Arcata Strategic Arts Plan 2022-2025, to articulate the community's values that expands and formalizes the City's support for Arcata's arts and artists and guides the City's engagement with community partners in the arts. In relation to the Parks and Recreation Element, the Strategic Arts Plan encourages community beautification and public art, which will no doubt involve city parkland. The Strategic Arts Plan also seeks to develop policies and support community organizations that provide services that improve the quality of life in Arcata and events that promote Arcata as a 'livable community', which closely matches the objectives of this Element.

The City and Cal Poly Humboldt are both experiencing demographic changes that will influence demand for parks and recreation services and facilities. The proportion of the County population that is 55 years and older is growing and expected to continue to increase into the future and as a result, more facilities and programs will likely be needed to serve a growing senior population in the City. The University is experiencing substantial change, which will increase the numbers of students and faculty that may increase the demand for active and passive City recreation activities.

**Community Needs.** The Parks and Recreation Master Plan included a comprehensive assessment of community needs. The need for parkland in Arcata considered the community's desire for diverse recreation experiences, including active and passive recreation opportunities,



the need for open space, natural resource management and preservation, and opportunities to

The Parks and Recreation Element includes the following policies:

- PR-1 Park Standards
- PR-2 Park Development and Maintenance
- PR-3 Coordinated Open Space, Park and Recreational Facilities Planning and Use

enjoy the outdoors. The needs analysis evaluated the existing parks level of service and geographical access to parks from within the City and then identified service gaps based on these factors, plus the preferences and demands by Arcata residents for recreation opportunities. Despite relatively good park coverage in Arcata and the wide range of park facilities, there are still a number of service gaps in the City. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan includes a series of maps to characterize service areas for parks facilities and areas with identified needs and recommendations for actions to address these needs.



The City of Arcata has worked to incorporate accessible amenities and facilities into the City's park system. Although most playgrounds have surfacing that promotes universal accessibility, only a few have accessible amenities, such as picnic tables and benches, and many sites lack an accessible path of travel to link facilities. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update includes recommendations to Update the City ADA Transition Plan for parks and recreation facilities and to incorporate universal design principals into all master planning efforts.

### 3.2.2 POLICIES

#### POLICY PR-1 PARK STANDARDS

**Objective.** Provide parklands to defined City Service Areas to meet unique community preferences and demands for recreation opportunities. Maintain park standards that facilitate future planning and help define appropriate levels of service for various types of parkland.

- PR-1a **City of Arcata Parks Classification System.** The following is a summary of the City Parks Classification System. The complete system description is contained in Appendix B of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan with the Park Design and Development Guidelines.

**Neighborhood Parks.** Located within walking and bicycling distance of most users, neighborhood parks are small parks that provide access to basic recreation opportunities for nearby residents. Designed primarily for non-supervised, non-organized recreation activities, neighborhood parks often include amenities such as playground equipment, outdoor basketball courts, picnic tables, pathways, and multi-use open grass areas. Neighborhood parks may include small-scale natural areas, such as riparian areas, and can contribute to environmental sustainability by incorporating sustainable design elements. These parks generally are one to five acres in size and serve residents within a ½-mile radius. Smaller mini parks (of less than one acre) will have a smaller service area (less than ¼ mile).

**Community Parks.** Community parks are larger parks that provide both active and passive recreation opportunities that appeal to the entire community. These sites are generally designed around organized, active recreation, supported by facilities such as sports fields and outdoor courts. These parks also serve as community gathering spaces, offering a variety of facilities that can accommodate small or large groups, such as recreation centers, group picnic areas and shelters, rental space, festival space, amphitheaters, and large playgrounds. The optimum size of community parks is between 15-30 acres.

**Special Use Areas.** Special use areas include stand-alone recreation facilities not located within larger parks. These include single-purpose sites, such as community centers, aquatic centers, sports complexes, boat ramps, skate parks, outdoor theaters, urban plazas, and gardens. Special use areas promote a variety of personal, social, and economic benefits depending on facility type and location. In some cases, these facilities may attract new residents and businesses and support tourism.



**Linear Parks/Greenways.** Greenways and linear parks include natural or built corridors used to link features together and provide green buffers between communities or around the city. Greenways and linear parks typically support trail-oriented activities, including walking, jogging, biking, and skating, which play a major role in health and fitness. These parks may incorporate smaller scale neighborhood park amenities, such as play areas, picnic areas, or exercise trails. Trails between key destinations can help create more tightly-knit communities, improve children's access to schools, and provide opportunities for non-motorized transportation. Greenways and linear parks may be of various lengths and widths, and these corridors typically support facilities such as viewing areas, picnic tables, or trailheads.

**Natural Areas.** Natural areas are undeveloped lands left in a natural state for conservation or outdoor recreation. They protect and manage unique or significant natural features, such as rivers and streams, wetlands and marshes, steep hillsides,

environmentally sensitive areas, and wildlife habitats. Some natural areas may have limited access due to resource conservation needs. Sites may provide a number of ecological benefits, such as shoreline protection, wildlife habitat, stormwater filtration, riparian corridor and wetland preservation, and erosion control. Where appropriate, natural areas may support passive, outdoor recreation, such as trail-related opportunities, bird and wildlife viewing, environmental interpretation and education, and nature photography. These parks provide opportunities to promote conservation and stewardship, develop an appreciation for nature, and improve health and wellness by providing a physical and mental refuge from the built environment. The size and shape of the natural area will vary depending on the protected resource.

Undeveloped Sites. Undeveloped sites include land that has been acquired by the City for possible future park improvements. These sites are not managed as natural areas, although they do provide green space in the City. Their size varies depending on the purpose of their acquisition.

Beautification Areas. Beautification areas are landscaped areas, typically located along street rights-of-way and intersections, entry features, and parking lots. Beautification areas can incorporate flowers, shrubs, trees, native plants, or other ecologically appropriate landscaping to add green space to the urban environment, provide visual and economic benefits, and promote environmental health. Through the use of signage, fountains, or other features, these areas also may add to community identity. Unlike parkland, beautification areas have reduced recreational value.

PR-1b **Parkland Dedication.** For all residential subdivisions, require parkland dedications, or fees in lieu of dedication, according to the following standards:

1. Land or fees shall be based on five (5) acres of parkland per 1,000 persons.
2. Subdivisions having fifty-one or more lots shall automatically be reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Committee for possible dedications. Any other residential subdivision creating five or more lots, and that proposes to pay a fee in lieu of dedicating land, shall also be reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Committee for possible dedications.
3. Land that is not suitable for recreation or wildlife habitat may not be counted toward fulfilling parkland dedication requirements.
4. Parkland dedications should be consistent with the following criteria:
  - a. Average slope should not exceed 10 percent;
  - b. Access to the site shall be adequate for the purpose of the community or neighborhood park;
  - c. The site shall not have significant topographic or environmental constraints that would render the site unsuitable for development.
5. Riparian areas, wetlands, and forests shall be accepted for dedication only if it has been determined that the recreational needs of the area will be adequately met by other sites. Where such lands are accepted, development of parklands



should recognize existing wildlife and habitat values and minimize the disturbance of riparian, wetland, and other wildlife habitats.

6. The City shall maintain a schedule for the use of land and fees acquired pursuant to parkland dedication requirements, including mechanisms for tracking the receipt and expenditure of funds over a five-year period.

**PR-1c Create a public space network that promotes physical, mental, and social wellbeing.** Design an accessible public space network that promotes physical and mental health, contributes to a sense of community, improves air quality, and supports storm water management.

**PR-1d Ensure a diversity of public spaces.** Plan for a variety of types of open spaces—including plazas, parks, playgrounds, and amphitheaters/stages—that accommodate a variety of types of activities (formal, informal, structured, and unstructured) and promote physical activity and social interaction. Prioritize areas lacking in existing parks, facilities, and/or recreational opportunities in the development of new public spaces.

## **POLICY PR-2 PARK DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE**

**Objective.** Encourage appropriate and sustainable new park design and development and existing park maintenance.

**PR-2a Natural resource protection.** Protect natural areas and wildlife habitat within parks and open space land to the greatest extent feasible. Integrate recreational use in natural areas, where not in conflict, through appropriately designed trails, trailheads, and interpretive resources to achieve the community's desire for access.

**PR-2b Park and Recreation Master Plan.** Use the Park and Recreation Master as a guide for the provision of parks and recreation in the City and implement the plan in a manner consistent with the Arcata General Plan. Periodically update the plan to reflect changes in the environment, economy, population, and land use and the unique needs of Arcata residents. Use Appendix B, Design and Development Guidelines for direction regarding the amenities and facilities to be provided for each park type.

**PR-2c Park system improvements.** Parks and recreation projects that provide desired levels of service and minimize energy and water use, sustain existing resources, improve maintenance efficiency, reduce life-cycle costs, and otherwise promote environmental sustainability should be given high priority. Park and Recreation Master Plan recommendations should be used as a guide for new park and trail development to meet community needs and as a guide to prioritize the renovation and rehabilitation of existing parks. In general, prioritize projects that:

1. Enhance sustainability;
2. Increase trail connectivity;
3. Improve park access;
4. Expand recreation opportunities and opportunities for physical activity;
5. Serve future growth areas;
6. Enhance natural areas;
7. Support community values and strengthens the community;
8. Utilize available funding; and
9. Encourage participation and recognition of partners for matching funds and volunteer efforts.



**PR-2d Active use amenities.** Provide active use resources in new parks to expand recreation opportunities in the City using the Park and Recreation Master Plan Appendix B, Design and Development Guidelines. Priority should be given to the redesign and integration of active use resources into the following existing neighborhood parks, where feasible:

1. Bloomfield Park
2. Cahill Park
3. Mountain View Park
4. Vinum Park
5. Westwood Manor Park
6. Windsong Park
7. Valley West Park

**PR-2e Trail improvements.** Provide an interconnected, multi-purpose trail system with regional linkages that includes mountain bike, fitness, nature, and equestrian trails and that enhances individual mobility. Priority should be given to the following trail projects identified in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan:

1. Arcata Rail with Trail Corridor integrated with the Great Redwood Trail
2. Annie and Mary Rail-Trail
3. Hammond Trail
4. Aldergrove Open Space/Arcata Community Forest trail connection
5. Route 255 Connection

6. Baylands Trail
  7. Arcata Ridge Trail – enhancements to existing trail segments connecting the Arcata Community Forest Tract and the Sunny Brae Forest
  8. Jacoby Creek Forest Trails – Conduct planning with community partners and adjacent property owners to identify feasible public access opportunities for the future.
  9. Carlson Park and Giuntoli connection
- PR-2f **Mobility and Accessibility.** Design new, and enhance existing, parks and recreation facilities to be inclusive for all community members, including people with cognitive and physical disabilities; multi-lingual/multi-cultural users; groups hosting events; teams; and seniors.
- PR-2g **Maintenance best practices.** Use best management practices to ensure that parks are maintained at the desired levels of service. Prepare a Maintenance Management Plan and Natural Resource/Open Space Management Plan that reflects each facility's use, assigned maintenance tier, and level of service and that incorporates the anticipated lifecycle of facilities and projects and an appropriate reinvestment and replacement schedule.
- PR-2h **Art in parks.** Consider public arts, both visual and opportunities for public performing arts, in planning for new public spaces and in activating existing public spaces. Integrate arts and cultural activities with City parkland through the implementation of the City of Arcata General Plan and the Strategic Arts Plan.
- PR-2i **Community Health in Parkland Planning and Development.** Research has found that residents who live adjacent to green space have lower levels of illness and disease than people of similar income levels who do not, and that that social cohesion is partially dependent on residents' ability to connect through public spaces and facilities within them. Rates of physical activity, in turn, are linked to a range of health outcomes including emotional wellbeing, risk of mental disorders, body weight, blood pressure, heart disease, respiratory illness, and social interaction. Design public spaces to promote community connection, engagement with Arcata's natural environment, and physical activity.

### **POLICY PR-3 COORDINATED OPEN SPACE, PARK AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES PLANNING AND USE**

**Objective.** Undertake effective ongoing coordination between local and regional parks and natural resources agencies, community groups, and the private sector that enhances environmental sustainability and the availability of park and open space for Arcata residents.

- PR-3a **Coordinated recreational use of Community Forests and Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary.** Work with local and regional partners to protect and enhance the roles of the:

1. Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary as an important regional natural and recreational area and as an essential component of the City's wastewater treatment plant; and
2. Arcata Community and Jacoby Creek Forests as a source of watershed protection, wildlife habitat, and sustainable timber harvesting to support City park acquisition, development, and maintenance.

PR-3b **Coordinated recreational use with schools and State/Federal Agencies.** Coordinate closely with community organizations, schools, Cal Poly Humboldt, the private sector, and local, state, and federal agencies in developing creative solutions for meeting recreation program and facility needs. Consider developing a formal partnership with the schools to maintain and program sports fields at school sites, in particular a formal partnership with Cal Poly Humboldt to address existing and potential increases in service demands for City parks and recreation facilities from planned increases in student enrollment, faculty, and other staff.

PR-3c **Use and management of indoor and athletic facilities, special recreation facilities and gathering areas.** Work with community groups, sports organizations, and other coalitions to define mutually compatible recreational facility needs and mechanisms for the operation, maintenance, and enhancement of these facilities.



### 3.2.3 IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

#	IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	TIME FRAME
PR -1	<b>Design and Development Guidelines</b>  Use the Park Design and Development Guidelines as the standard for park and recreation improvements, facilities, and amenities. (Park and Recreation Master Plan Implementation C)	Environmental Services Department	Ongoing
PR -2	<b>Parkland Dedication Program and Schedule</b>  Continue to implement fees/dedications pursuant to Quimby Act (California Government Code § 66477, as amended), including (1) the preparation and maintenance of a five-year schedule specifying how, when, and where it will use the land or fees, or both, to develop park or recreational facilities to serve the residents of subdivisions, plus a regularly scheduled re-evaluation of the formula for fees in lieu of land based on current persons per dwelling unit and fair market value of land; and (2) a procedure to ensure that accounting and use of parkland fees is consistent with 66477(a)(6).	Environmental Services Department	Every five years starting in Year 2
PR -3	<b>Level of Service Standards-Parkland to Population</b>  Update the Park and Recreation Master Plan Community Needs, Level of Service Standards-Parkland to Population.	Environmental Services Department	Every five years starting in Year 2
PR-4	<b>Increase Use of Public Spaces</b>  In collaboration with community organizations, establish a calendar of City-sponsored programs and events taking place in public spaces, including offerings that encourage physical activity, educational opportunities, arts programming, and community outreach.	Environmental Services Department, City Manager's Office	Ongoing
PR -5	<b>Park Funding</b>  Continue to implement the strategic funding options outlined in the Park and Recreation Master Plan, Implementation A through C (Park and Recreation Master Plan Implementation A, B, and C), and continue to use a portion of net forest revenues for park development, maintenance, and acquisition.	Environmental Services Department	Ongoing

#	IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	TIME FRAME
PR -6	<b>Park Development and Maintenance</b>  Continue to implement Park and Recreation Master Plan recommendations relating to park development and maintenance, including those for Master Planning and Design, universal design upgrades, Natural Resource Management, and Maintenance Practices.	Environmental Services Department	Ongoing
PR-7	<b>Maintenance Management Plan and Natural Resource/Open Space Management Plan</b>  Prepare a Maintenance Management Plan and Natural Resource/Open Space Management Plan that reflects each facility's use, assigned maintenance tier, and level of service and that incorporates the anticipated lifecycle of facilities and projects and an appropriate reinvestment and replacement schedule. Prioritize improvements to areas with comparatively less open space/public facilities access as part of the ongoing established public space maintenance schedule.	Environmental Services Department	Ongoing starting in year 2
PR-8	<b>Natural features and built facilities</b>  Prioritize improvements to areas with comparatively less open space/public facilities access as part of the ongoing established public space maintenance schedule	Parks and Recreation Department	Ongoing
PR -9	<b>Coordinated Open Space, Park and Recreational Facilities Planning and Use</b>  Update the Park and Recreation Master Plan every ten years. Use periodic updates to identify opportunities for enhanced partnerships with agencies and organizations to enhance City parks and recreation facilities and activities. Coordinate updates and regional trails planning with Humboldt County, Humboldt County Association of Governments, Great Redwood Trail Agency, Redwood Community Action Agency, Redwood Coast Mountain Bike Association and the Humboldt Trails Council.	Environmental Services Department	Every ten years starting in Year 2