



Section  
**11**

**Parks and Recreation**

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# Parks and Recreation

**GOAL PR-1**

Meet the community's need for recreation, cultural resources, and on-going education.

**GOAL PR-2**

Work with the City and other entities to ensure that there are a variety of parks, recreational facilities, and points of river access.

**GOAL PR-3**

Promote a greater sense of community through events, gathering places and shared facilities.

Parks help to foster a sense of community by providing a place for residents to come together for relaxation, exercise, and celebration. These gathering places can act as the social centers of a community, providing space for recreational activities for people of all ages and backgrounds. Parks also provide a place for the community to connect with nature. They can also serve as wildlife corridors in urbanized areas, helping maintain a healthy biological community.

A wide range of parks and recreational facilities and services exist in the Ukiah Valley. Opportunities include: County and City parks, Mendocino College recreational facilities, public school playgrounds, and the 12th District Fairgrounds. Less developed open space areas, such as along the Russian River and the Federally-owned recreation areas also provide recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike. Limited hiking, bicycling, and equestrian trails also exist on public land in the Valley. Proposals to fund and build expansions or upgrades to existing facilities will be needed to serve future residents of the Valley.

While it is essential to fund unmet recreational



*Low Gap Park*

needs, it is equally important to maintain and improve existing parks, facilities, recreational activities and open space. Traditionally, recreation programs have tried to balance the development of new facilities with the funding and upkeep demands from existing community programs and facilities.

As demand for recreation facilities and activities grows and changes, the County intends to focus its efforts in the following critical areas:

- Continue to maintain and develop athletic fields and support facilities;
- Provide parks in underserved neighborhoods;
- Provide a multi-use community center (such as the Alex Rorabaugh Center);
- Expand paths and trails for recreational use and to link recreation facilities;
- Ensure that the recreational needs of disabled persons, at-risk youth, and senior citizens are also met.

The County intends to meet these needs through the more efficient delivery of services, fees that more closely reflect the cost of providing the services, community support through donations of time and materials, and special grant programs.



*Lake Mendocino Recreation Area.*

The County also intends to continue and to expand cooperation with the Ukiah Unified School District and other agencies to enable the shared use of public parks and facilities.

### **EXISTING PARKS, RECREATION AREAS, AND FACILITIES**

#### ***Federal Recreation Areas***

There are two Federal Recreation Areas within the Ukiah Valley: Lake Mendocino and Cow Mountain. These areas attract Valley residents as well as people from throughout the San Francisco Bay Area.

The Lake Mendocino Recreation Area occupies 5,110 acres in the northeastern portion of the Ukiah Valley, including the vast surface area of the lake itself. Operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Lake Mendocino is a multi-purpose reservoir, offering day-use facilities, boat launching locations, and overnight campground sites.

The 60,000-acre Cow Mountain Recreation Area is located in the Mayacamas Mountains and is managed by the Bureau of Land Management. Approximately 1,296 acres of this area falls within the Ukiah Valley and is accessible from Mill Creek Road. Cow Mountain offers back country recreation such as hiking and horseback riding trails, hunting, camping, and off-highway vehicle use.



**County Regional Parks**

The County of Mendocino manages Mill Creek County Park and Low Gap Regional Park. Adjacent to Cow Mountain Recreation Area, Mill Creek Park has two reservoirs for swimming and fishing, hiking trails, picnic areas, and an equestrian trail. Low Gap Regional Park is located in the City of Ukiah (west of the County Administration Center on Low Gap Road) and also offers a variety of recreational opportunities.

**The Russian River**

The Russian River provides various recreational opportunities, such as swimming, fishing, inner tubing and picnicking. Public access to the Russian River is only allowed at specified public access points. There are four public access points to the

river near the City of Ukiah: the City’s Softball Complex in the northeast portion of the City, the Vichy Spring-Perkins Road crossing, Riverside Park located at the end of Gobbi Street, and the Talmage Road crossing.

**Mendocino Community College**

Mendocino College, located in the northwestern portion of the Valley, provides a variety of recreational facilities, some of which are available for public use. Public facilities include an all-weather track, six tennis courts, a disc golf course, and two outdoor volleyball courts. The College also has a gym which is used by organized basketball leagues.

**Twelfth District Fairgrounds**

The State of California’s Twelfth District Fairgrounds is located on the east side of North State Street and is bisected by the Ukiah City limits boundary. Recreational facilities include a golf driving range, horseshoe pits, and car race track and arena. The many buildings at the Fairgrounds also provide space for educational and social events.

**City of Ukiah Parks and Recreation**

The City of Ukiah provides a variety of neighborhood and community parks, a museum, the Civic Center, athletic fields, and recreational programs used by City and Valley residents and visitors.

Regional facilities are enjoyed by residents of the Ukiah Valley and others. The Ukiah Municipal Golf Course is a regional facility with eighteen holes and a clubhouse. Carpenter Park, a passive park on Main Street in central Ukiah, has the



*Alex Thomas Plaza located in the City of Ukiah.*

distinction of encompassing the Grace Hudson Museum and the Sun House Museum, a registered State Historic Landmark. The Ukiah Civic Center located downtown on Seminary Avenue, two blocks west of State Street, houses City governmental offices and provides land for passive recreation activities. Alex Thomas Plaza serves as a community gathering place for special events as well as daily use.

Community parks are major facilities designed to meet active recreation needs for residents of the City as a whole, and are also used by Valley residents. Todd Grove community park, located in northwestern Ukiah, offers the only public swimming pools in Ukiah. Riverside Park

facilities, including a BMX bicycle “moto-cross” track and Little League fields, are being expanded. Baseball facilities are provided by Anton Stadium located just southwest of Todd Grove Park and the City’s Softball Complex in northeastern Ukiah adjacent to the Russian River. School sites with play fields are also utilized to varying degrees to meet neighborhood park needs.



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## **FUTURE NEEDS**

### ***Accessible Neighborhood Parks***

Residents in portions of the outlying areas of the Valley, such as Talmage, enjoy the nearby Federal and County recreation areas, but are lacking small scale neighborhood parks. Other areas such as Calpella depend heavily on their local schools to provide recreational opportunities and gathering spaces. Due to the small scale of most development projects in Mendocino County, recreational facilities have not been required for approval. Since 2000, only one small neighborhood park was constructed as part of a development project (West Forks Subdivision off of Lake Mendocino Drive). As populations in the outlying areas expand, so will the need for recreational facilities.

A Neighborhood park is defined as an area which is convenient and accessible for active and passive recreation to residents within a prescribed service area. Basic elements often include turf playfield, playground equipment, and landscaped picnic/seating area. Other elements may include hardsurfaced courts, restrooms, group barbecue, incorporation of natural or cultural features, and on-site parking.

Opportunities exist for the development of park facilities in the UVAP planning area. The Alex Rorabaugh Recreational facility, adjacent to the Grace Hudson Elementary School site, will address many neighborhood park and recreational needs of those in the southern half of the Ukiah Valley. Other facilities could also be included in any redevelopment project within one of the three Redevelopment Zones that contains a residential component.

### ***Recreational Trails***

A network of accessible public hiking, mountain bicycling (non-motorized) and equestrian trails can enhance community recreational opportunities and tourism in the Ukiah Valley. The expansion and development of trails in the Valley should be coordinated with trail segments along public roadways. Further discussion of bicycle paths, routes and lanes can be found in the Circulation and Transportation Element of the UVAP.

The City, County and various other public entities control a substantial amount of land that could be developed for hiking, mountain biking, equestrian trails and staging areas. Trails development emphasis should continue to be focused upon the use of public lands and rights of way, as well as lands voluntarily granted for trail use.

The County recognizes that the development and expansion of trails on or adjoining agricultural and other private lands, whether by easement or fee title, can create conflicts. Trails can also pose conflicts with private property rights from trespassing, theft, vandalism, loss of privacy and increased liability. A comprehensive Trails Master Plan to address these conflicts must be developed and put into place prior to trail route acquisition, development, or use.

### **Collaboration**

The Mendocino County Fairgrounds, Ukiah Valley Conference Center, Alex Rorabaugh Recreational facility, Mendocino-Lake Community College, other school facilities, conference and meeting rooms, and facilities owned by churches and civic organizations represent substantial recreational opportunity. These facilities and spaces may be more effectively used if issues such as uneven geographical distribution, inadequate transportation services, inefficient event scheduling, rental costs, or liability concerns can be addressed. If public and private sectors cooperate, shared facilities could be developed and operated.

*Note:*

*For additional policies that may apply, please see the County of Mendocino General Plan, adopted August 2009.*

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## **PARKS AND RECREATION GOALS, POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES**

### **GOAL PR1**

**Meet the community's need for recreation, cultural resources, and on-going education.**

**Policy PR1.1: Provide a geographically balanced network of parks and community facilities.**

### **PR1.1a Parks and Community Facilities Needs**

#### **Assessment and Master Plan**

Conduct a Valley-wide Parks and Community Facilities Needs Assessment and develop a Facilities Master Plan. The assessment should include:

- An inventory of existing parks and community facilities, including their distribution and range of classifications (such as neighborhood, local or regional resources);
- Baseline demographic and population data;
- Valley-wide opportunities for park and facility space;
- Program recommendations for additional park and community facility space needed in the Valley; including identification of top priority projects;
- Implementation strategies; including potential funding sources; and
- Identification and development of opportunities for community gathering sites.

### **PR1.1b Priority Project Implementation**

Following completion of the Facilities Master Plan, implement priority projects; including new park and facility development and/or park and facility improvement projects.

**PR1.1c Riverside Park Expansion**

Collaborate with the City of Ukiah to expand the City-owned Riverside Park recreational facilities in cooperation with surrounding land owners, ensuring compatibility with existing agricultural uses. Measures to consider for maintaining compatibility include:

- Limitations on the areas of the park to be generally accessible;
- Control over the hours of park operations; and
- Provisions to ensure that park activities do not interfere with the “right-to-farm” of adjoining agricultural uses.

**PR1.1d Periodic Parks and Facilities Evaluation**

Develop a mechanism for periodic re-evaluation of parks and community facility use to ensure efficient allocation of space for priority activities.

**Policy PR 1.2: Provide a comprehensive trail network, along with pedestrian and bicycle connections, to recreational destinations throughout the Valley.**

**PR1.2a Trails Committee**

Assemble a community-based trail planning committee to assist the County and the City in planning for trails routes, route acquisition and trail use. The committee should include well-balanced representation from interest groups such as hikers, mountain bikers (non-motorized), equestrians, agricultural land owners, and others affected by potential trail routes.

**PR1.2b Trails Master Plan**

Develop a comprehensive Trails Master Plan in collaboration with a trails committee and the City. Trails Master Plan components should include:

- Assessment of existing trail networks;
- Location of gaps in trails and pedestrian pathways between key recreational destinations;
- Identification of potential improvement areas and proposed trail expansion areas;
- Proposed mechanisms to address: trail maintenance, public safety, as well as private property protection from trespass, vandalism and intrusion;
- Implementation strategies; and
- Potential funding sources.

The Trails Master Plan development process should include:

- Coordination with the County’s Hiking and Equestrian Trail Plan;
- Focus on developing or improving connections between existing trails and public lands;
- Maximum use of publicly-owned lands, rights of way, and lands voluntarily offered for location of trail routes, trailheads and staging areas; and
- Outreach strategies to address public expectation and education in the trail dedication process.

Ideally, a Trails Plan should be incorporated into a broader Parks and Recreation master plan that would include other recreational elements as well.

***PR 1.2c Financing Strategies***

Explore financing strategies outside of the County's General Fund to support trails committee work, master plan development, trail expansion and improvements. Investigate possible grant eligibility and potential partnerships and collaborations with the City of Ukiah, School Districts and faith organizations within the UVAP planning area.

**Policy PR1.3: Provide a variety of community-based recreational and educational programs.**

***PR1.3a Programs and Services Needs Assessment***

Conduct a Valley-wide Programs and Services Needs Assessment. The Assessment should include:

- Baseline demographic data and assessment;
- A survey of community needs and interests;
- An inventory of current programs and services offered;
- A summary of opportunity areas and gaps in existing programs and services;
- Recommended new programs and services to best meet community needs and interests;

- Proposed locations to support specific program types;
- Gaps in available facilities to host proposed programs and services;
- Implementation strategies; and
- Potential funding sources.

***PR1.3b Periodic Programs Re-evaluation***

Develop a mechanism for periodic re-evaluation of programs and services to ensure that current programs continue to meet evolving community needs.

**GOAL PR2**

**Work with the City and other entities to ensure that there are a variety of parks, recreational facilities, and points of river access.**

**Policy PR2.1: Pursue creative funding solutions to implement park and facility development, expansion and improvements.**

***PR2.1a City-County Collaboration***

Collaborate with the City to identify properties for acquisition and potential funding sources to meet shared goals in improving public access to parks and recreational facilities.

***PR2.1b Joint Use Agreements***

Initiate discussions with the City, School Districts and the faith community to explore cooperative agreements for joint-use of City, school or church grounds for community parks and recreational use. Partnership arrangements might include: sharing of or collaboration to upgrade existing facilities, development and/or maintenance of new facilities.

**Policy PR2.2: Pursue strategic outside funding solutions to implement program improvements.**

***PR2.2a Grants***

Investigate eligibility for grant funding to support program development and staffing of proposed programs.

***PR2.2b Park Land Dedications***

Require that new development provide park land for new residents. In lieu of developing on-site recreational facilities, the developer may compensate the County (appropriate in-lieu fee rates to be determined by appropriate nexus study) by providing a fee per acre of required land.

***PR2.2c Impact Fees***

Determine feasibility of impact fees required to fund a share of regional recreational facilities; consider charging developers an impact fee per unit of new housing per the study findings.

***PR2.2d Ongoing Park Operations and Maintenance***

Provide for ongoing funding of park operations and maintenance through assessment districts, homeowners associations, and other means.

**GOAL PR3**

**Promote a greater sense of community through events, gathering places and shared facilities.**

***Policy PR 3.1: Host community-sponsored cultural and recreational events.***

***PR 3.1a Events and Festivals***

Stimulate community center patronage and provide opportunities for community gathering with organized cultural and recreational events and festivals.