

SEPTEMBER 2009



city of
WATSONVILLE
Parks and Recreation Facilities



master plan

FINAL

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Prepared by:

MIG, Inc.
800 Hearst Avenue
Berkeley, California 94710
www.migcom.com

acknowledgments

Watsonville City Council

Mayor Antonio Rivas
Mayor Pro Tempore Luis Alejo
Councilmember Manuel Quintero Bersamin
Councilmember Nancy Bilicich
Councilmember Greg Caput
Councilmember Emilio Martinez
Councilmember Kimberly Petersen

City Management

Carlos J. Palacios, City Manager
Beatriz Vázquez Flores, City Clerk
Alan J. Smith, City Attorney
Marc Pimentel, Administrative Services Director
Bill Hays, Assistant Finance Officer

Redevelopment and Housing Department

Marty Ackerman, Director

Community Development Department

Marcela Tavantzis, Interim Director
Suzi Aratin, Senior Planner
Bradley D. Olin, Associate Planner

Parks and Recreation Commission

Carlos G. Landaverry, Chair
Dianne M. Avelar
Daniel Dodge Jr.
Dobie Jenkins
Richard Salazar
Dee Dee Vargas

Parks and Community Services Department

Ana Espinoza, Director
Ernie Contreras, Park Services Manager
Adriana Flores, Administrative Assistant I

Public Works and Utilities Department

David Koch, Director
Bob Geyer, Assistant Director
Steve Palmisano, Senior Utilities Engineer
Bob Berry, Construction Manager

GIS and Information Services

Rex Boyes, GIS Coordinator
David Rosenow, GIS Technician II

Consultant Team - MIG, Inc.

Carolyn Verheyen, Principal-in-Charge
Joan Chaplick, Project Manager
Andi Nelson, Project Associate
Patricia Algara, Project Associate
Nicole Lewis, Project Associate
Maria Mayer, Project Assistant

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WATSONVILLE
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executive summary



executive summary

The City of Watsonville Parks and Recreational Facilities Master Plan is an overarching plan for the development and implementation of future parks and recreational opportunities. Carefully developed, the resulting document is the culmination of a comprehensive community outreach and involvement process.

Through a community survey, focus groups, questionnaires, and community workshops, the Department of Parks and Community Services engaged residents and stakeholders in order to learn about the community's needs with respect to the development of parks and recreational facilities.

The community's profile and existing parks and recreation resources were researched and analyzed. This information was compared to community feedback and reviewed for consistency with the City's Draft General Plan. The resulting document is the City of Watsonville's Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan, a plan that is addressed to the prioritization of possibilities within a cohesive vision.

VISION FOR PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Watsonville provides a system of well-designed parks and facilities that contribute to the vitality of the community and promote health, well-being and enjoyment for all residents.

The community's vision for the future, as well as the Department's mission and the community's core values, guides the goals and recommendations of this plan.

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is a brief summary of the recommendations included in this plan.

1. Provide safe and well-maintained parks and facilities that meet the diverse needs of a growing community.
2. Expand and improve trail connections to parks, open spaces and community destinations.
3. Celebrate Watsonville's cultural heritage and encourage community building through provision of culturally sensitive and competent programs, services and events.
4. Develop and provide recreation facilities and programs that support health and wellness and personal development.
5. Develop and partner with other departments, schools, and public and private organizations to meet community needs.
6. Encourage and support public involvement in park and recreation planning, design and advocacy.
7. Promote stewardship of parks, facilities and natural areas.
8. Build an innovative, responsive and dynamic organization that is financially stable and employs best practices to achieve community needs.
9. Create and enhance a positive community image and be a key contributor to economic development activities.

Financial implementation and specific recommendations are explored in the plan.

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WATSONVILLE
Parks and Recreation Facilities
master plan



introduction



introduction

The Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan was developed in collaboration with staff, elected and agency officials, and community members, with assistance from, MIG, Inc., a consulting firm based in Berkeley, CA. The plan represents an update to the existing master plan developed for the Watsonville Department of Parks and Community Services in March 1992.

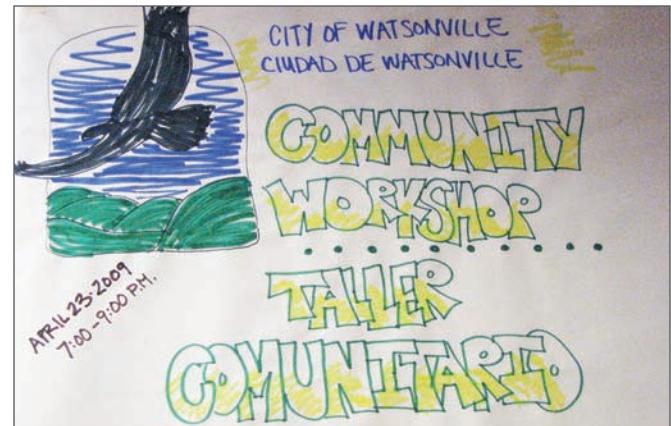
PLAN PURPOSE

The plan has three major purposes:

- Present a long-term vision and goals for the Department for the next 20 years;
- Describe current and future needs, interests and community preferences for parks, recreation, trails, and facilities; and
- Develop a process and priorities for managing the Department's commitments so that new requests and initiatives are considered in light of existing conditions.

HOW THE PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

The Plan was developed through the active participation of staff, community advisors, residents and elected officials through their participation in workshops, interviews, in-person and telephone surveys, and focus groups. More than 700 community members provided opinions and input that was used to develop this plan. The resulting master plan reflects current priorities and interests and provides the Department with flexibility to be responsive to the changing needs of this growing community.



Community members provided input in the community outreach process.

The Project Management Team consisted of staff from the Parks and Community Services Department and MIG staff. A Parks and Recreation Commission Parks Master Plan Sub-Committee played a significant role in developing and revising the Plan. Using trend analyses, data derived from the community outreach activities, and research on comparable communities, the Project Management Team worked with the Parks and Recreation Planning Commission and Parks Master Plan Sub-committee to develop the resultant plan and priorities. The group also reviewed several sources of information to identify strengths and opportunities, and benefits



Bicycle amenities in Kearney Street Park.

of parks and recreation. The Plan was presented to the Parks and Recreation Planning Commission and City Council prior to its review and approval.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANNING ACTIVITIES

During the development of this Plan, the City of Watsonville was in the process of updating its General Plan and developing a citywide Trails Master Plan. The master plan was developed in coordination with these efforts.

PLANNING DEFINITIONS

The Plan uses a number of key terms:

- **Vision:** The desired future state of Watsonville; the vision of success the organization strives to achieve.
- **Mission:** A description of why an organization exists.
- **Values:** The norms and qualities Watsonville community members and the organization value.
- **Goals:** The broad areas for improvement aligned to match the programs and services provided by the Department.

IMPLEMENTATION

This plan will serve as a framework for future decision-making, priority setting, and budgeting. The vision and goals included in the plan are intended to describe a desired future for the community while providing the Department the flexibility it needs to achieve its goals.

WATSONVILLE
Parks and Recreation Facilities
master plan

1

chapter



community profile



chapter 1: community profile

The first step in the master plan process was to create a community profile. The community profile includes a summary of current and future demographics and trends, and an analysis of existing parks, recreation facilities, programs and operations.

The purpose of the profile is to:

- Summarize current and future demographics in Watsonville;
- Provide an overview of the current park system, including an inventory of existing parks and definitions for each type of park in the proposed park classification system; and
- Initiate a discussion about these topics that will inform the final plan.

PLANNING CONTEXT

Watsonville is located in southern Santa Cruz County, immediately north of Monterey County. It is located in the fertile Pajaro Valley that is part of the crescent between the cities of Santa Cruz and Monterey. Watsonville is about 45 miles south of San Jose and 85 miles south of San Francisco and Oakland.

Watsonville serves as the urban center for southern Santa Cruz County. The city provides a wide range of opportunities for housing, employment, shopping, and recreation for south county residents. It is the second largest city in Santa Cruz County. Watsonville is also a leader in preservation of productive agricultural land and environmental resources.

In November 2002, residents passed the landmark "Watsonville Orderly Growth and Agricultural Protection" initiative, which established urban limit lines and designated planning areas for urban development over the next 20 to 25 years.

Geography and Climate

Watsonville has warm and dry summer days with temperatures in the lower 80s and cool nights with temperatures around 50. Winter high temperatures are in the upper 40s or 50s, while the nights can become quite chilly. The community is nestled among the hills and in close proximity to the Pacific Coast.

The City of Watsonville includes 6.4 square miles. The annual average precipitation around Watsonville is 22.41 inches, most of which occurs in the winter.

Key Demographic Findings

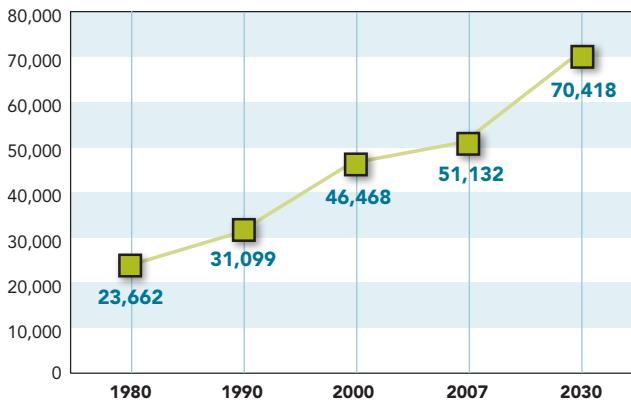
Demographic characteristics can influence recreational interests, health and fitness activities, and levels of participation in community programs. Factors such as age, household size and income can significantly affect an individual's ability to pursue, participate in, and enjoy recreational activities. Employment status, education level, and ethnicity also influence a person's choices and ability to engage in community activities.

Demographic information from 1980, 1990 and 2000 came from the US Census, while 2007 population estimates come from the California Department of Finance. Future population projections come from the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) 2004. Additionally, the report cites the US Census American Community Survey (ACS) for key current (2005 to 2007) demographic information.

Population Growth

Watsonville's population has grown significantly in the last twenty years. The City increased from approximately 23,662 people in 1980 to 51,132 in 2007. In the next twenty years, the population is expected to continue to increase, but at a slower rate.

Figure 1-1. City of Watsonville Population Change 1980-2030



Source: Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) 2004, US Census 2000, Department of Finance 2008.

Age

Generally, Watsonville's residents tend to be younger than Santa Cruz County and California residents as a whole.

According to the ACS, the average age of residents in Watsonville is 28, while the average age of Santa Cruz County residents is 37 and 34 in California. Between 2005 and 2007, 37 percent of Watsonville's population was under age 19, 11 percent and 8 percent more than the same age group in the county and the state, respectively. Eight percent of the population was over age 65, a rate that was lower than the county and the state.

According to the Watsonville Vista 2030, the City's current draft general plan, the senior population is expected to grow significantly over the next 20 years and comprise 17 percent of the population in 2030. The growth of the senior population is due, in large part, to the gradual aging in place of long term residents. The percentage of youth in the community is expected to decrease by 2030, according to the draft General

Plan. Youth ages 0 to 17 years old comprise 34 percent of the population in 2000 and are projected to comprise 26 percent of the population in 2030, a difference of 8 percent.

Residents' Ethnicity

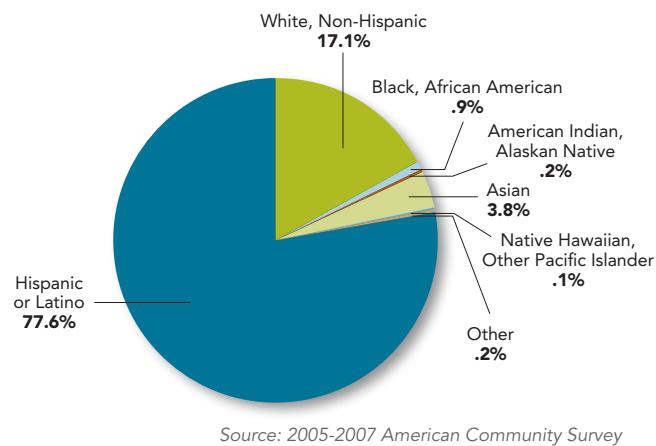
The ethnicity and cultural origin can be an important factor to consider when developing recreational programs and community services. Different ethnic groups may have interests in, and preferences for, civic celebrations, social gatherings, arts, and recreational activities currently not available in the community.

According to the 2005-2007 ACS estimates:

- 77 percent of the population consider themselves of Hispanic or Latino origin, an increase from 75 percent in 2000 and 60 percent in 1990.
- White, non-Hispanic population comprises 17 percent of the population, a decrease from 19 percent in 2000.
- Asian ethnic populations made up 4 percent, an increase from 3 percent in 2000.
- All other ethnic groups round out the remaining 4 percent.

The ethnic composition of Watsonville is not representative of the wider Santa Cruz County population. According to the 2005-2007 ACS, 64 percent of Santa Cruz County residents were white, non-Hispanic and 29 percent identify themselves as Hispanic or Latino.

Figure 1-2. 2005-2007 Watsonville Ethnicity Composition



Approximately 80 percent of Watsonville's households are defined by the US Census as families.

Households and Housing

According to the ACS, between 2005 and 2007, approximately 80 percent of Watsonville's households were families (two or more people related by birth, marriage, or adoption). The rate was 20 percent more than Santa Cruz County's rate. The remaining 20 percent of the households were either single or unmarried people living together. Approximately nine percent of households were seniors living alone, a rate one percent higher than the county.

Average household size increased from 3.24 persons in 1990 to 3.84 persons in 2000, but then decreased to 2.60 in 2005-2007 according to the US Census 1990 and 2000 and the ACS 2005-2007. Between 2005 and 2007, the home ownership rate in Watsonville was 49 percent. This was lower than both the state (58 percent) and county (60 percent). Approximately 49 percent of residences are owner-occupied and 51 percent are renter-occupied.

Median housing prices increased from \$224,700 to \$586,000 in the City between 2000 and 2007, according to the US Census 2000 and 2005-2007 ACS data. Since 2007, due to national economic conditions, housing prices have significantly decreased and high foreclosure rates have significantly reduced the value of residential units in the City, and across communities in the County. In June 2009, the median home price was \$483,000. According to neighborhood stabilization

data provided by the California Department of Housing and Development, between January 2007 and July 2008, Watsonville had an estimated 347 foreclosures and an estimated foreclosure rate of 7.1%. The county had a foreclosure rate of 4.1% during the same period. Additionally, Watsonville appears to have a higher repurchasing rate of foreclosed homes when compared to other communities.

The City upholds an ordinance that requires new housing developments to include affordable housing that is available to families who live and work in Watsonville. More than 450 affordable units have been approved since 2001. Vista Montana, for example, includes 133 affordable units and 47 ownership units, which include mixed single family and townhomes. The City also offers Home Buyer Assistance programs and Infill Housing Loans to residents. Local business owners in Watsonville report that the availability of workforce affordable housing directly impacts the success of their business.

Income and Poverty

Median household income in Watsonville was \$46,531 in 2007, about 75 percent of the median household income countywide (\$63,333). According to the 2005-2007 ACS, 19 percent of Watsonville residents lived in poverty compared to 11 percent of Santa Cruz County residents. The poverty rate of children ages 18 and younger in Watsonville is 24 percent compared with 13 percent of children countywide. The



Watsonville's residents tend to be younger when compared to the county and California as a whole.

percentage of Watsonville residents over 65 years and living in poverty is 9 percent, slightly higher than Santa Cruz County. Approximately 11 percent of the Watsonville population received food stamp benefits in 2007.

Disability

In 2000, approximately 20 percent of residents in Watsonville had disability status according to the US Census. By 2007, the percent of residents with disabilities had decreased to 15 percent, compared to 11 and 12 percent in the county and state, respectively.

Education

In Watsonville, approximately 33 percent of the adult population received an education level below high school compared to 15 percent in the county, according to the US Census. Twenty-four percent of Watsonville residents had graduated from high school between 2005 and 2007 and 17 percent of county residents had the equivalent education. Approx-

mately ten percent of Watsonville's population has a bachelor, graduate, or professional degree, which is significantly less than the number of people with higher education degrees in the county (38 percent).

The City of Watsonville supports and encourages education and skills development for local residents. The Department of Parks and Community Services provides class in computer skills, cooking, arts and crafts and homework help. The Center for Employment Training, a non-profit, is located in Watsonville and provides hands-on job training for youth and adults of all educational levels and backgrounds. Cabrillo College, a public California community college, is based in Santa Cruz County and provides classes in downtown Watsonville. Other nearby colleges and universities include: the University of California Santa Cruz, San Jose State University and California State University at Monterey Bay.

Employment

With an increasing population of residents age 18 to 64, Watsonville is projected to consist largely of working residents. The City strives to provide employment opportunities for residents within the community and to avoid becoming a bedroom community.

Between 2005 and 2007, the unemployment rate was ten percent in Watsonville and seven percent in Santa Cruz County, according to the ACS. In December 2004, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 17 percent, approximately double the countywide rate of 8.3 percent. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate was 13.1 in Watsonville in February 2009, a 0.6 increase from only a month earlier.

Agriculture-related business and manufacturing have historically comprised the majority of the employment base in Watsonville. The region is well known for its agricultural products. According to the Pajaro Valley Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture, technology, electronic companies, electrical products, aluminum extrusion, containers, eyeglass and lens fabricators, construction materials and heavy construction companies support Watsonville's agricultural base. The City's largest companies include Granite Construction, Inc., Titan Corp, Larse Farms Inc, and West Marine Inc. Currently,



Downtown Watsonville provides employment and retail opportunities for residents.

agriculture-related business industries provide over a third of the employment base in the City. These industries, though, provide low wages and, as the economic environment changes in the City, they will need to adapt to meet the needs of the Watsonville community.

Employment opportunities in the service sector have been growing in the past few years. Between 2005 and 2007, 37 percent of the population held management and service occupations in the City. The City's economic development program includes a heavy investment in growing the community's service sector. The City of Watsonville offers a number of incentives for businesses. Industrial development bonds and a loan guarantee program are available. Watsonville is also a designated State Enterprise Zone offering significant tax benefits to area employers.

One of the ways the Watsonville Parks and Community Services Department contributes towards economic development is by providing employment opportunities for individuals with special skills or talents. The Department recruits recreation leaders, sports officials, sports scorekeepers, and employs lifeguards, among other positions. The Department offers a multitude of classes in subjects ranging from computer skills to cooking. These learning opportunities and enrichment classes teach skills valuable for various employment opportunities.

Transportation and Travel

While most workers (71 percent) drove to work alone, a significant percentage carpooled (20 percent) and another 9 percent walked, biked, or took public transit, according to ACS data. Two percent of the workforce worked from home between 2005 and 2007. The mean travel time to work was 24 minutes. Santa Cruz Metro operates 43 routes throughout Santa Cruz County; five of these routes circulate within the City of Watsonville throughout the week. Monterey-Salinas Transit serves the greater Monterey and Salinas area, including Big Sur and Watsonville.

Highway 1 is the primary north-south corridor for vehicular transportation. The volume of cars has steadily increased over the years as people travel into the greater Bay Area for employment-related activities. Highway 152 is the primary east-west corridor through the City. The major arterial connects the community to Gilroy and Highway 101 in the east.

The City of Watsonville is expanding opportunities for walking and biking within and around town. The City of Watsonville Wetlands Trails Master Plan (2003) promotes the expansion and enhancement of the city's trail system. The Plan provides strategic direction to expand existing routes and strives to increase the opportunities for alternate travel.

Land Use and Growth

The City of Watsonville maintains an urban limit line. The urban limit line clearly defines rural and urban land uses. The City also maintains policies and programs that preserve surrounding agricultural land and underscore the City's goal to protect commercial agricultural lands and environmentally sensitive areas. Measure U, the Watsonville Urban Limit Line and Development Timing, helps direct where potential new growth should occur. Measure U established 20-year, 25-year, and westerly urban limit lines around the City and directed growth into several unincorporated areas. These areas include: Buena Vista, Manabe-Burgstrom, and Atkinson Lane areas.

TRENDS

The following trends in demographics and recreation influence community needs and parks and recreation planning and programming throughout Watsonville, and suggest implications for the Department's ability to deliver quality services. These trends are based on a review of materials prepared by the California Department of Parks and Recreation, the California Parks and Recreation Society, the National Parks and Recreation Association, and related leisure research.

Growing and Changing Population

Projected Growth

The City is anticipated to grow from a population of 51,132 in 2007 to 70,418 by 2030, an increase of 37 percent. Further, employment opportunities in the service sector are expected to increase in the future. Additional parks, facilities and recreation services may be needed in this area to meet increasing needs, which will likely create funding challenges. The City of Watsonville maintains a standard of 5 park acres per 1,000 population. The city presently has 2.8 acres of city-owned parkland per 1,000 residents. When City standards are applied to projected growth, the existing park land acreage does not meet future demand for parks. The City will need an additional 167.97 acres of park land by 2030 in order to address projected population growth.



Watsonville's senior population is expected to grow in the future.

Demographics

The City's senior population will grow in the future due to the aging in place of long term residents. However, aging baby boomers tend to remain active, both in physical and intellectual activities, and are likely to participate in recreation programs. Recreation activities will need to serve the older senior, who is less active and may have declining health, as well as the active older adult, who is retired, in good health and does not identify as a traditional "senior." The percentage of youth under the age of 18 has increased since 2000, but is projected to decrease by 8 percent by 2030. The number of adults age 19 to 65 is projected to grow.

Ethnicity

Watsonville's Hispanic and Latino population will continue to increase, while the City's white, non-Hispanic population will continue to decrease. The Latino culture and its generally larger and more familial household structure will continue to play a major role in the future of Watsonville. As the Department develops programs that are responsive to the needs and interests of its residents, it will need to continue to address potential barriers to participation, for example, by continuing



About 15 percent of Watsonville's population has some type of disability.

to provide program materials and support in both English and Spanish.

Disability

Around 15 percent of the population in Watsonville has some type of disability. It can be assumed that this percentage will increase as the population continues to age, however between 2000 and 2007 the number of people with disabilities decreased from 20 percent to 15 percent of the overall population. To serve this population, Watsonville should continue to provide accessible and inclusionary facilities and programs.

Shifting Economic Conditions

Income and Poverty

The average household income in Watsonville is 25 percent less than the surrounding region and 19 percent of residents are living in poverty. Median household income in Watsonville was \$46,531 in 2007, about 75 percent of the median household income countywide (\$63,333). High housing costs in Watsonville and the modest income of many residents has often resulted in "doubling up" or multiple families living together in one household. Local incomes impact the

ability of some residents to participate in fee based programs or in programs requiring transportation, and work schedules may limit participation during typical program hours. Residents may take advantage of free entertainment and recreation opportunities with a trend towards financial conservatism.

Current Economic Challenges

The 2009 US economic recession directly impacts the Watsonville economy and community. Unemployment in February 2009 was 13.1 percent in Watsonville. The Local Government Association analyzes the impact the current recession has on migrant laborers; migrant workers may leave the country to return home. After 20 years of business, the downtown, regionally-serving department store, Gottschalks, closed. The largest retailer in the City is Target. The City expects a growing service industry in the years to come. The current economic conditions challenge the social and economic fabric of the Watsonville community.

Parks and recreation facilities are increasingly valued for their role as catalysts in economic and community development. Animated public spaces, natural green space and special events serve as magnets for residents and out-of-town visitors. They also provide free or low-cost recreation and entertainment close to home.

Responsibilities of the Parks and Community Services Department

The City of Watsonville's Parks and Community Services Department oversees the parks and recreation facilities operations in addition to a variety of other programs the city. The Department's mission is "to create community through people, parks, and programs." The Department is managed by a Director who oversees the Parks Division, Neighborhood Services Division, the Recreation Division, volunteer and special events staff, and administrative staff.

Finances

Given shrinking federal, state, and local revenue, many park and recreation agencies are looking for new, creative sources of funding to continue to provide quality parks, programs and services. To manage rising construction costs, some cities

have required developers to construct new parks for them. The City of Watsonville's in-lieu park fees require developers to either dedicate land to parks and open space or pay an impact fee. Creative sources of funding include: facility-specific fees, grants and nonprofit foundation partners.

Partnerships and Organization Management

The growing use of partnerships in parks and recreation is a response to shrinking resources and increased competition for available funding, as well as public interest in better accountability and stewardship. The Parks and Community Services Department could explore relationships with potential partners, including school districts, non-profit agencies, business, grass-roots organizations, religious organizations and individuals.

Additionally, while resources appear to be dwindling, agencies place an increasing emphasis on mission-led or core businesses, better fiscal management and organization, and enhanced planning to provide services as efficiently as possible.

Park Design and Maintenance

The design and upkeep of parks increasingly reflects the needs and desires of an active community. A customized, community-based Master Plan Update process should be informed by public participation, redefined levels of service, adaptive use opportunities, and expectations for conveniently-located, safe, well maintained parks and facilities.

EXISTING PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM

Policy Background

The Watsonville 2005 General Plan is in the process of being updated. The updated Watsonville Vista 2030 General Plan is in the final stages of development and is in the process of being approved. The Recreation, Parks and Open Space chapter includes key goals and policies that, when approved, will guide the planning and development of the City of Watsonville Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan Update.

The goals of the draft Watsonville 2030 General Plan are as follows:

► **Goal 1. Meet Community Needs for Park, Open Space, and Recreational Facilities.**

Enhance the quality of life by assuring the provision of services, programs, and facilities that reflect the leisure needs and desires of the community.

► **Goal 2. Provide a Full Range of Well-Maintained Parks and Recreational Facilities Commensurate with Watsonville's Population and Park Standards.**

Parks, recreation facilities, trails and open space shall be developed in accordance with the Parks Master Plan. Parks shall be distributed throughout the City in accordance with Parks Master Plan policies with due regard for specific needs and available lands within the planning areas/neighborhoods.

► **Goal 3. Provide a Network for Trails Along Natural Areas to Promote Safe Travelways and Appreciation of Sloughs, Creeks, and the Pajaro River.**

The City shall develop and maintain a trail system that encourages both appreciation and respect for natural habit and provides safe, secure passageways in and around the community.

► **Goal 4. Provide Comprehensive Programs and Services.**

Recreation and community service programs shall promote human development, health and wellness, cultural unity, community problem-solving, community image and safety.

► **Other Goal Areas. Other Department Goal Areas include: protection of environmental resources, provision of recreation experiences, and promotion of economic development.**

Existing Parkland and Facilities

The City of Watsonville oversees 184.12 acres of park land, including opportunities for both active and passive recreation. The City's park system consists of a variety of recreation attractions, such as parks, playgrounds, sports fields, natural ar-



Seaview Ranch Park is a gathering spot for families and friends.

eas and open space, trails, recreation facilities, and access to the wetlands and levee trail system. In addition to parkland resources, the Parks and Community Services staff maintains various landscaped areas throughout the city including street medians in Vista Montana.

The Parks and Community Services Department provides recreation programs for both youth and adults including sports leagues and instruction, special interest classes, a

variety of recreational classes, and trips and excursions. In addition, the Department is responsible for operations and maintenance of five community centers located in different city parks.

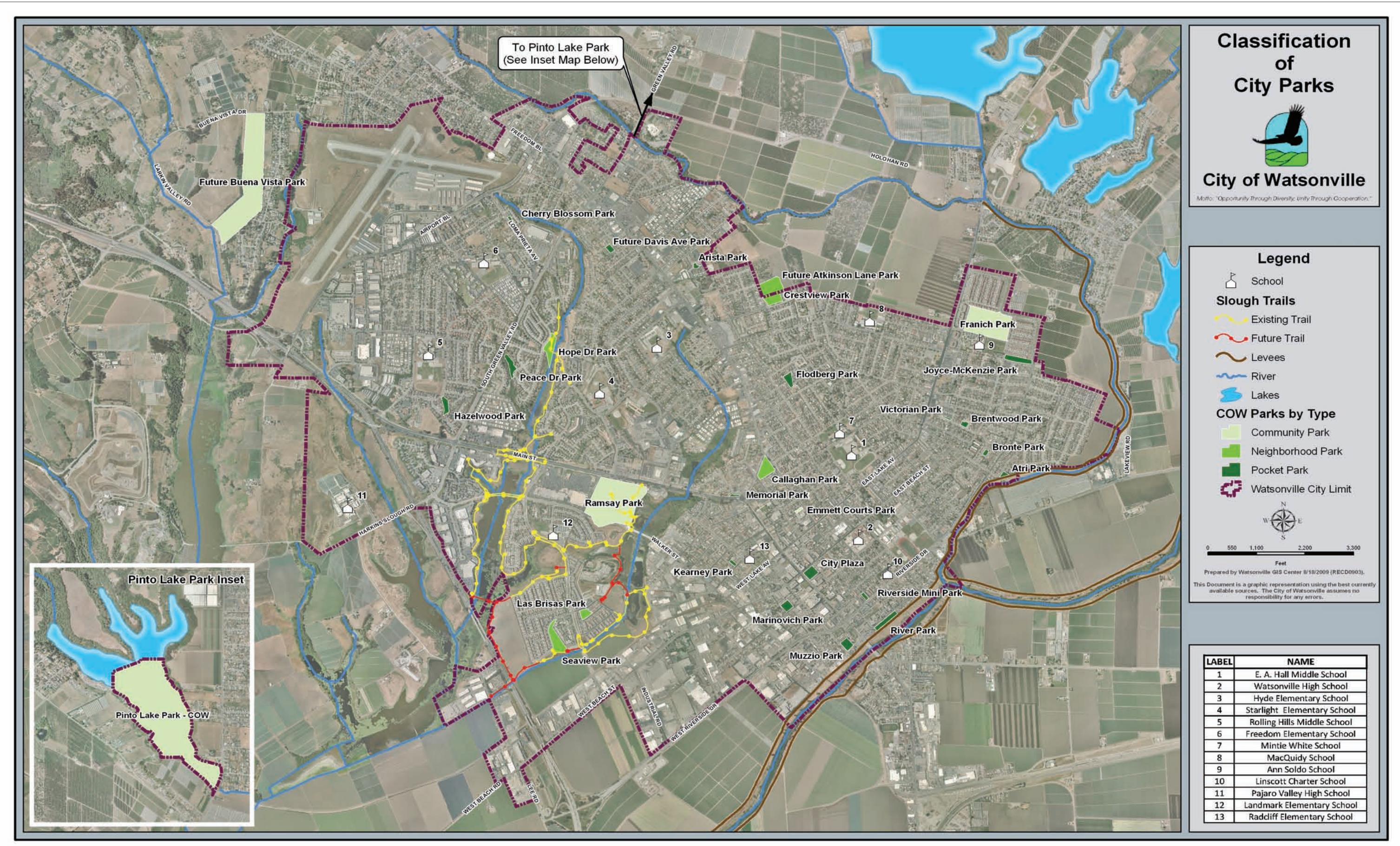
Appendix A includes a complete inventory of existing parks and facilities.

chapter 1

Table 1-1. Existing and Planned Parks

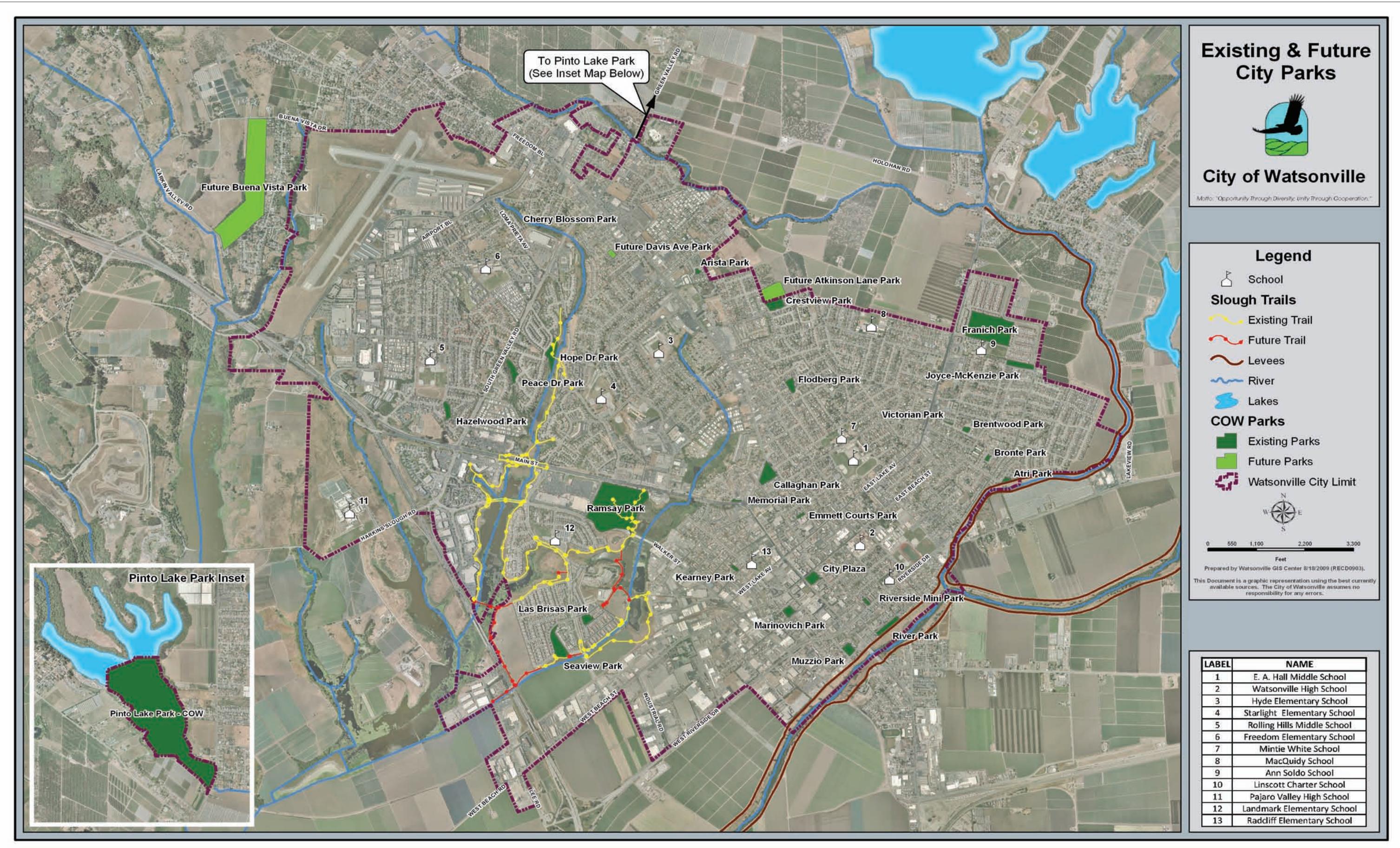
Parks	Address	Type	Acres
Pinto Lake Park	451 Green Valley Rd.	Community	78.50
Cherry Blossom Park	41 Loma Prieta Ave.	Pocket	0.15
Arista Park	52 Arista Ct.	Pocket	0.27
Crestview Park	301 Crestview Dr.	Neighborhood	2.01
Franich Park	795 Vista Montana Dr.	Community	14.02
Joyce-McKenzie Park	500 Joyce Dr.	Pocket	1.72
Victorian Park	106 Weeks Dr.	Pocket	0.13
Brentwood Park	320 Brentwood Dr.	Pocket	0.41
Bronte Park	615 Bronte Ave.	Pocket	0.28
Atri Park	602 Atri Ct.	Pocket	0.32
Flodberg Park	219 Alvarado St.	Pocket	1.07
Hope Drive Park	75 Hope Dr.	Neighborhood	2.46
Hazelwood Park	297 Herman	Pocket	1.07
Peace Dr. Park	62 Peace Dr.	Pocket	1.40
Ramsay Park	1302 Main St.	Community	25.91
Callaghan Park	225 Sudden St.	Neighborhood	2.64
Emmett Courts Park	37 Sudden St.	Pocket	0.15
Kearney Park	119 Kearney St.	Pocket	0.29
City Plaza	358 Main St.	Pocket	1.40
Marinovich Park	118 Second St.	Pocket	1.03
Riverside Mini Park	127 Riverside Dr.	Pocket	0.34
Muzzio Park	26 W. Front St.	Pocket	1.12
River Park	100 East Front St.	Pocket	1.43
Seaview Ranch Park	Lighthouse Ave.	Neighborhood	4.00
Memorial Park	Main St & Freedom Blvd	Pocket	0.22
Las Brisas Park	1028 Nueva Vista Ave.	Pocket	1.00
Future 37 Davis	37 Davis Street	Pocket	0.50
Future Buena Vista Park	617 Buena Vista Dr.	Community	35.28
Future Atkinson Park		Neighborhood	5.00
Total Facilities			184.12

Figure 1-1. Existing Parks by Type



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Figure 1-2. Existing and Planned Parks by Type



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Watsonville community members value their open space and natural resources.

Existing Parks

The City of Watsonville includes 26 existing parks and 1 planned pocket park, 1 planned neighborhood park, and 1 planned community park. The City supports 184.12 acres of park land. Table 1-1 on page 18 provides a listing of parks in the city.

The following park classification system is used for Watsonville parks:

- Pocket Parks;
- Neighborhood Parks; and
- Community Parks.

The existing Parks and Open Space Master Plan includes definitions for these three park types. The draft General Plan Update does not include parkland definitions. The Department's existing definitions have been updated and redefined (see Recommendations section). The following are general descriptions of pocket, neighborhood, and community parks.

Pocket Parks: Pocket parks are small parks that serve residents in immediately adjacent neighborhoods. Pocket parks provide basic recreation amenities, such as playgrounds, benches, and landscaping. Pocket parks generally are $\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 acres in size and have service areas of $\frac{1}{4}$ mile or less.

The Parks and Community Services Department currently provides 19 pocket parks such as River Park and City Plaza.

Neighborhood Parks: Located within walking and bicycling distance of most users, neighborhood parks provide close-to-home recreation opportunities for surrounding neighborhoods. These parks are designed primarily for non-supervised, non-organized recreation activities, supported by facilities such as playground equipment, outdoor courts, picnic tables, pathways, and multi-use open grass areas or small sports fields. Neighborhood parks provide access to recreation for nearby residents, enhance neighborhood identity, and preserve open space. These parks generally are 2 to

chapter 1

10 acres in size and serve residents within a $\frac{1}{4}$ - to $\frac{1}{2}$ -mile distance.

The Parks and Community Services Department currently provides 11.11 acres of neighborhood parks at 4 sites.

Community Parks: Community parks are larger parks that provide both active and passive recreation opportunities that appeal to the entire community. Typically, these sites are designed for active recreation, supported by facilities such as sport fields, outdoor courts, skate parks, and recreation centers. Community parks can accommodate large numbers of people and offer a wider variety of facilities than neighborhood parks, such as disc golf, volleyball, tennis courts, dog parks, group picnic areas and shelters. These parks may also include significant natural areas and trails. For this reason, community parks require more support facilities, such as off-street parking and restrooms. The minimum size of community parks is generally between 15-20 acres.

The City of Watsonville has three community parks: Pinto Lake, Ramsay Park, and Franich Park, which altogether total 118.43 acres. Future Buena Vista Park is planned and totals 35.28 acres. The site was identified in the General Plan process as an area to be annexed.

Existing Natural Areas and Open Space

Natural Areas and Open Space are permanent, undeveloped spaces which are managed primarily for their natural resource value, and secondarily for recreational use. Natural Areas and Open Space may include wetlands, wildlife habitats, steep hillsides, or stream corridors. These parks may preserve or protect environmentally sensitive areas, such as unique or endangered plant species. These spaces can provide opportunities for nature-based recreation, such as trail use, bird watching, and environmental education. The size and shape of each natural area will vary depending on the resource it protects.

The City of Watsonville is surrounded by open spaces including agricultural land, the Pajaro River, Salsipuedes and Corralitos Creeks, and Struve and Watsonville Sloughs. The active recreational use of the majority of these open spaces is limited. However, these open spaces contribute to flood control and protect wildlife.



The Neighborhood Services Division provides valuable resources for local residents.

Trails

Trails are linear open spaces that provide trail corridors and/or green buffers within neighborhoods and communities. Trails typically follow features such as streets, abandoned railroad rights-of-way, power lines or waterways. These corridors often contain hard-surfaced or soft-surfaced trails, along with amenities such as trailheads, viewpoints, seating areas and interpretive displays. They provide public access to natural features, preserve open space, and can support trail-related recreation and transportation. These corridors may serve specific neighborhoods, the entire City, and the region as well.

The Wetlands Trails include 6.85 miles of trails and twenty-three trail entrances in Watsonville neighborhoods providing opportunities to walk, jog, or bicycle. Additionally, Watsonville residents use the city's levees for recreational purposes, which include 2.94 miles of developed trails.

Existing Recreation Facilities

The City of Watsonville provides a variety of unique facilities to encourage residents to participate in recreation activities. This section determines the types of facilities to be analyzed in the needs assessment phase of the planning process. It lists the current inventory of these facilities:

Community Center	Horseshoes
Dog park	Picnic tables
Skatepark	Group picnic tables
Environmental education opportunities	Water/lake amenity Water play feature
Trail/levee access	Children's playground
Soccer fields	Tot lot playground
Baseball fields	Barbeque
Tennis courts	Restrooms
Basketball courts	Shade structure
Sand volleyball courts	Additional information

Appendix A: Parks and Facilities Inventory provides a comprehensive list of the city's parks and the facilities and amenities located in each park.

Community Centers

The City maintains and operates five community centers, which include:

- Callaghan Park Cultural Center;
- Gene Houliaris and Waldo Rodriguez Youth Center;
- Marinovich Community Center;
- Muzzio Community Center; and
- Ramsay Park Family Center.

These recreation facilities host numerous recreation programs and classes, which are described in the following section.

Other Major Facility Providers

In addition to the Parks and Community Services Department, there are several other agencies and organizations that make a significant contribution to the number of recreation facilities in Watsonville. These are noted briefly below.

City of Watsonville Public Works and Utilities Department

The City of Watsonville Public Works and Utilities Department manages recreation facilities in the City including the Science Workshop at Marinovich Park and Nature Centers at Ramsay Park. The Department also manages the four miles of trails that extend through the Struve and Watsonville Sloughs.

Table 1-2 includes the recreation facilities operated and maintained by the Department, non-profit organizations, and groups.

Table 1-2. Other Community Facilities

Other Community Facilities	Address	Area
Corralitos Women's Club	33 Browns Valley Road	1,500 sq.ft.
Corralitos Community Center (Padre's Hall)	35 Browns Valley Road	3,000 sq.ft.
Grizzly Flat	Intersection of Eureka Canyon Road and Grizzly Flat Road	215 acres
Golf Range	101 Ranport Road	8 acres
Mello Center	215 East Beach Street	6,978 sq.ft.
Pajaro Valley Arts Building	37 Sudden Street	.12 acres
Senior Center	114 East Fifth Street	10,000 sq.ft.
Veterans Building Memorial Building	215 E. Beach Street	18,187 sq.ft.
YWCA Childcare Street	118 Second Street	2.670 sq.ft.

Source: City of Watsonville, March 2009.

The Senior Center is leased to a non-profit and the YWCA Childcare center at Marinovich Park is leased to the YWCA. The non-profit and YWCA, respectively, operate and maintain these facilities.

The Corralitos Women's Club and Community Center (Padres Hall) are also leased to non-profit groups. Thus, activities and services at these facilities are not provided by the City.

The Pajaro Valley Arts Building is owned by the City and leased to the Pajaro Valley Arts Council. The facility is in front of the Department-operated Emmett Courts.

The Veterans Memorial Building is a historic building owned by the County of Santa Cruz and leased to the City. The City leases it to various cultural groups, non-profits, and sports leagues. The Mello Center, across the street from the Veterans Memorial Building, is operated by the City and used by non-profits, independent theater programs, and the high school.

Pajaro Valley Unified School District

The Pajaro Valley Unified School District is located in the City of Watsonville. The City maintains a joint-use agreement with the school district. The following existing and planned schools are located in the City of Watsonville.

Table 1-3. Inventory of Existing and Planned Schools

Public Schools	Acreage
Rolling Hills Middle School*	18.58
Starlight Elementary School	9.24
Ann Soldo Elementary School*	8.1
Pajaro Valley High School	37.2
Landmark Elementary School	6.88
Watsonville High School	24.58
Mintie White Elementary School	4.93
Hyde Elementary School	9.33
Linscott Charter School	1.31
E.A. Hall Middle School*	14.3
MacQuiddy Elementary School	6.88
Radcliff Elementary School*	2.0
Freedom Elementary School	9.8
Total School Acreage	153.13

* The City has a current recreational use agreement with these schools.

In addition to public schools, there are several private schools in Watsonville including Green Valley Christian School, Mount Madonna School, and St. Francis Central Coast Catholic School, among others.

Park System Evaluation

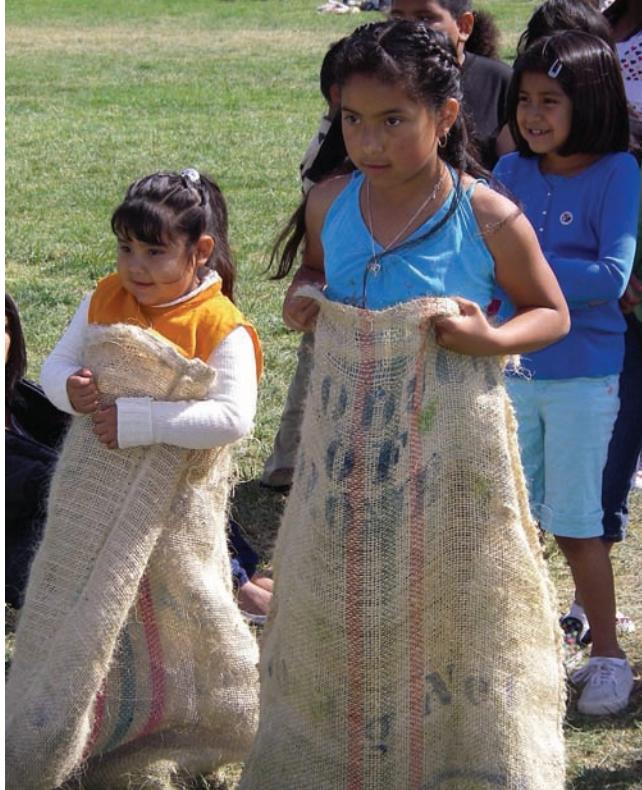
In February 2009, a parks tour was completed to identify the overall condition of existing park amenities and facilities and to evaluate the park system according to its strengths and weaknesses. The Parks and Community Services Department provides a variety of parks and facilities that support diverse recreation experiences for many residents in the City.

Generally speaking, Watsonville's park system offers an abundance of recreational opportunities for residents. Residents tend to frequent their local neighborhood parks. Parks are well-used by a variety of users during the day for a variety of passive and active recreational pursuits including:

- Basketball;
- Tennis;
- Volleyball;
- Fishing;
- Playground use;
- Relaxation;
- Skateboarding; and
- Gathering with friends.

The Department has benefited from the generosity of residents and interest groups. Several parks and recreation facilities in Watsonville have been donated or renovated by various organizations or residents including tennis court renovations at Ramsay Park and horseshoe pit facilities at Joyce-McKenzie Park.

Parks are generally well-maintained. The parks typically do not suffer from problems with excessive litter, water leakage and stagnation, and broken or unusable equipment and facilities. Graffiti is an on-going maintenance issue for the Department. City law requires that graffiti be removed within 48 hours. Consequentially, the parks maintenance staff spends a fair amount of time removing graffiti and tags. Additionally, there is public perception by some residents that some



The Department provides a variety of recreation opportunities for youth.

parks are unsafe. Marinovich, Muzzio, Flodberg, Emmett Courts, and River Parks have been gathering places for gangs and have been the scene of or are in close proximity to crime activity and gang-related violence. Maintenance staff, as a result, take steps to minimize crime and violence by maintaining communications with neighbors closest to the parks and searching for hidden weapons on park sites.

Parks could be enhanced with the following:

- Uniform signage.
- Established maintenance standards by park type.
- Weekend maintenance staffing.
- Updated or renovated amenities including: fybar ground cover, barbeques, additional and repaired shade structures, graffiti abatement and removal, and tree planting.
- Connecting trail system.

- Expanding joint use agreements with the Pajaro Valley School District.
- Addressing flooding and drainage issues in Crestview and Ramsay.
- Park system design guidelines.

A few facilities need minor improvements or modifications to ensure they meet American with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines. This might include modifications to the molding around the edge of the entrance to a children's play area. Park system design guidelines can be updated to guide future park development according to current ADA standards.

Department staff stated that, in the past, community members have suggested extending park hours, increasing the amount of security lighting in parks, and reducing the amount of litter in parks.

The Public Works and Utilities Department is conducting an audit of irrigation systems in parks. The audit will provide recommendations for parks and water conservation when complete.

Existing Recreation Programs

City Programs

The City of Watsonville has a variety of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities that allow the Parks and Community Services Department to offer a variety of recreation programs for diverse age groups and interests.

Eight major service areas have been identified for recreation programming. These are described briefly below:

- **Summer camps:** sport camps, etc. for school-age youth and teens.
- **Specialty classes:** enrichment classes for youth and adults in areas such as dance, cooking, video, guitar, computer classes, etc.
- **Youth sports:** dodgeball, soccer, baseball, and basketball.
- **Adult sports and fitness:** fitness classes, basketball, volleyball, softball, and golf.
- **Special events:** Family fun nights, youth entertainment nights, Day of the Child/Earth Day Celebration, Spirit of



The Fourth of July Parade is a highlight for community members.

Watsonville 4th of July Parade, the Farmer's Market, Watsonville Strawberry Festival, etc.

- **Child care/youth development:** After school enrichment programs such as homework help.
- **Day trips and excursions:** Field trips to cultural sites, sports, outdoor recreation, beach bonfire, etc.
- **Aquatics:** water safety, swimming lessons, recreational swim.

Ages Served

The Department's programs and events are designed to serve a variety of residents. Specific programs target various ages, including adults, teens, youth, and seniors. Age-related programming ranges from the Secret Valentine dance for middle school students to driver's education courses for teens to day trips for seniors. As stated earlier, the Department also provides events geared towards families, such as Day of the Child/Earth Day.

The Department has provided fitness or specialty classes for seniors on a limited basis. This may, in part, be due to the Department's lack of a senior-specific facility. Many seniors rely on the Watsonville Senior Center which is a city facility that works in partnership with several non-profit providers.

Program Format

The City of Watsonville's programs are offered in a variety of formats. These include specialty classes (weekdays, weekends, two-day workshops), field trips/tours, sport leagues, sport competitions, youth camps (half-day, day-long, week-long, school breaks), and drop in activities (e.g., computer classes, homework help, etc.). Special events are offered in a variety of formats depending on their content and location.

Program Registration and Fees

There are five options for registering for the Department's recreation programs: in person, on-line, by mail, by phone and by fax. A registration form is provided at the middle of the Recreation Guide. The Recreation Guide is bilingual in Spanish and English.

WATSONVILLE
Parks and Recreation Facilities
master plan

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community input



community input

The City of Watsonville placed a priority on engaging the community in the development of the master plan. Community input was solicited using a variety of methods to ensure broad participation from youth, adults and seniors.

Since Watsonville's multilingual population is relatively large (72 percent of the population in 2007 according to the American Community Survey), activities were conducted in both Spanish and English to ensure community members could respond in their preferred language.

Community members were consulted using a variety of methods including: a statistically valid Phone Survey of 300 residents, a Parks and Community Services Questionnaire, focus groups conducted with youth and seniors, community workshops, and intercept surveys. The Parks and Community Services Questionnaire was modeled after the Phone Survey and was distributed to interested groups and community members. The intercept survey questions were also modeled after the Phone Survey and abbreviated to form a one-page survey. The one-page survey was distributed at the city-sponsored Day of the Child/Earth Day event and participants provided written responses. One side was in Spanish, the other in English. In total, more than 700 residents and their families provided input for the Master Plan.



Community workshop participants exchanged ideas and shared their opinions on a weeknight.

PARKS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PHONE SURVEY AND QUESTIONNAIRE

Phone Survey Methodology

Godbe Research conducted a Parks and Community Services Survey in April, 2009. The survey was administered by phone in English and Spanish, and designed to obtain statistically valid results representative of households throughout the Watsonville city limits. A statistically valid sample of 300

residents participated in the survey, and the method provides a 94.4 percent level of confidence with a margin of error of +/- 5.6 percent. Over one-third of participants responded in Spanish.

The survey was designed to achieve the following research objectives:

- Identify the current usage of city parks and recreation facilities, and the barriers preventing their use;
- Gauge resident satisfaction with city parks; recreation programs, events, and facilities; and neighborhood services;
- Survey participation in sports and athletic activities; and
- Assess the importance of the following:
 - Sports and recreational activities
 - Availability of facilities and sites for sports and recreational activities
 - Availability of recreational programs and classes

Cross tabbing of survey results allowed the project team to determine which factors were influenced by age, family size, ethnic or cultural identity and general area of residence.

Questionnaire Methodology

The City of Watsonville Park and Community Services Questionnaire was printed and distributed to interested groups and community members at the Farmer's Market, local health clinic, community resource center, and school associations. The questionnaire was offered in Spanish and English and over half of participants chose to respond in Spanish. A total of 65 residents completed the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was modeled after the Phone Survey so there could be some comparability with the statistically valid results of the Phone Survey. However, due to the difference in methodology, the results cannot be combined with the Phone Survey results.

Key Findings

Key findings from the Parks and Community Services Phone Survey and Questionnaire are listed below. Complete findings and the survey instrument are available under separate cover as the Parks and Community Services Survey Report, May 2009.



Adult sport programs are popular among community members.

Parks and Community Services Phone Survey

Percentages given in this section reference the 300-person statistically valid sample used in the Phone Survey.

Quality of Life

- Phone Survey respondents are quite satisfied with the sense of community in their neighborhood (85 percent very/somewhat satisfied), and satisfaction is particularly high among monolingual Spanish-speaking residents.

Sports and Recreational Activities

- More than half of the surveyed residents reported participation in sports, athletic or fitness activities (55 percent); soccer was the most popular athletic activity followed by basketball, running or jogging, and baseball.
- The availability of sports and recreational activities is highly important to Watsonville residents including:
 - Walking, hiking or running (87 percent very/somewhat important)
 - Biking (80 percent very/somewhat important)
 - Basketball (75 percent very/somewhat important)
 - Soccer and Swimming (74 percent very/somewhat important)
 - Baseball (72 percent very/somewhat important)



The Strawberry Festival is a well-attended special event sponsored by the Department.

Parks and Recreation Facilities

- About 71 percent of survey respondents had visited a city park or recreation facility during the last 12 months, and close to three-quarters of these households are most likely to visit in the afternoons.
- Approximately 25% of survey respondents do not visit city parks or recreation facilities. Survey results indicate that the main barriers to use of city parks or recreation facilities largely reflect residents' personal preferences, rather than a defect or problem with the facilities; these respondents most frequently cited that they have "no time" (41 percent) or "no interest" (22 percent).
- Residents reported more frequent use of city parks and recreation facilities located within their neighborhood than those located outside their neighborhood.
- Residents rated the availability of facilities and sites for sports and recreation as highly important to households. Approximately 4 out of 5 residents rated the following facilities and sites for sports and recreation as "very important."
 - Trails for walking and biking
 - Community center with shared space for youth, adult, and senior programs
 - Children's play areas and play equipment

Programs and Events

- About 25 percent of the Phone Survey respondents indicated they attended a city recreation program or event sponsored by the Watsonville Parks and Community Services Department.
- Watsonville residents are highly satisfied with the services provided by the Parks and Community Services Department. Services rated as highly satisfying include:
 - Registration system for recreation programs and classes
 - Availability of city-wide events and festivals
 - Quality of service provided by parks and recreation department staff
- Residents rated the availability of recreation programs and classes as highly important to their household. Priority programs include:
 - Health and fitness programs (92 percent very/somewhat important)
 - After-school programs for children and teens (91 percent very/somewhat important)
 - Children's programs (91 percent very/somewhat important)
 - Teen programs (89 percent very/somewhat important)
- The availability of recreation activities and programs was more important to residents ages 18 to 44, households with children, monolingual Spanish-speaking residents, and the residents who had visited city parks and recreation facilities in the past 12-month period.

Parks and Community Services Questionnaire

The 65 questionnaire respondents had many opinions similar to Phone Survey respondents. The results of the questionnaire were generally found to be similar to or supportive of survey findings.

Quality of Life

Eighty percent of questionnaire respondents reported satisfaction with the sense of community in their neighborhood.

Sports and Recreational Activities

- Participating in swimming, basketball, soccer, and walking, hiking or running are important to questionnaire respondents.



The Youth Center, located in downtown, offers recreation facilities and programs for Watsonville youth.

Parks and Recreation Facilities

- A majority of questionnaire respondents visit city parks or recreation facilities.
- The availability of children's play areas and play equipment, gymnasium with space for dance, gymnastics, and indoor sports courts, swimming pools, and trails for walking and biking were most important to questionnaire respondents.

Programs and Events

- Questionnaire respondents cited program participation costs and fees, a lack of information, and time constraints

as barriers to participating in city recreation programs or events.

- Questionnaire results, similar to Phone Survey results, suggest the department's use of multiple methods would be most effective in informing residents about programs and events.
- Questionnaire participants are most satisfied with the availability of city-wide events and festivals.
- Consistent with the Phone Survey, questionnaire respondents find children's programs to be the most important



Senior Focus Group members gathered after lunch at the Senior Center to discuss parks and recreation.

recreational program or class, followed by after-school programs for children and teens.

FOCUS GROUPS FOR YOUTH AND SENIORS

Methodology

Focus groups were conducted in April 2009 for youth and senior residents of Watsonville. Due to positive response to the Department's recruitment efforts, approximately 30 Watsonville youth ages nine to eighteen participated. The 30 youth were split into two groups and two focus groups were conducted concurrently. The senior focus group met after lunch in the Senior Center and approximately 15 people participated. A series of questions were asked based on the interests of each group. Focus groups lasted approximately one hour.

Key Findings

Youth Focus Group

The Youth Focus Group participants were eager to share their ideas and recreation preferences. Participants spoke favorably of Department staff and the quality and variety of programs offered. These findings reflect the opinions of youth who are actively engaged in using Departmental programs and services.

Sports and Recreational Activities

- Youth participants noted they spend their free time participating in the following recreation activities: soccer, flag football, miniature golf, video games, hanging out with friends, dodge ball, handball, wrestling, sewing and knitting, bench press and weights, skateboarding, and drawing.

Parks and Recreation Facilities

- Youth participants go to the Youth Center to meet with their friends; play pool, basketball, and video games; lift weights; attend band nights; and use the library.
- Youth participants described their favorite park features as skate parks, wildlife, the slide and frogs at Ramsay Park; basketball courts and swings at Kearney Park; rock climbing, space net, and swings at Franich Park; and the central location of Callaghan Park.
- Youth participants expressed interest in longer hours at the youth centers, nutritious food for purchase, additional places to hang out, a round table, a skate zone, an outdoor area with grass, and computers.
- Youth participants were in favor of a swimming pool, more open space, safer trails, a bigger skate park, more basketball courts, and a paintball facility.

Programs and Events

- Youth participants suggested the following recreation classes: surfing, cooking, free-style, paintball, dancing and singing.
- Youth participants enjoyed city-sponsored dances, and requested that the event be free and feature high quality DJs.
- Youth participants expressed interest in participating in day trips to Oakland, San Francisco, the zoo, San Jose, Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, Six Flags amusement park and overnight camping trips to Yosemite.
- Youth participants are discouraged from visiting parks on their own due to the presence of potential gang activity on their way to and from parks.
- When asked for advice on how to reach youth who were not currently participating in Department programs, they suggested reaching out to youth via schools and the

internet. The Department currently maintains social networking sites for interested community members including a MySpace and Facebook page, as well as a Twitter account.

Senior Focus Group

Senior focus group participants were contacted at the Watsonville Senior Center. They were enthusiastic about sharing their opinions about and preferences for recreation activities. Their opinions reflect those of seniors actively using City programs and services.

Sports and Recreational Activities

- Senior participants shared that they enjoy dancing, gathering with their friends, crocheting, cooking, walking, playing with their grandchildren, Tai Chi, and line dancing.

Parks and Recreation Facilities

The majority of senior participants visit city parks, including Ramsay, Pinto Lake and Las Brisas, to walk, take their grandchildren to play, and volunteer.

- Senior participants expressed interest in the inclusion of more barbeques, shade trees, campfire pits, benches, and flowers in city parks.
- Senior participants identified the following barriers to visiting city parks: a lack of transportation and parking, child care needs, and limited space in parks to have large family gatherings.
- Senior participants expressed appreciation for the Senior Center and the benefits it provides them including: new friends, a safe gathering space, nutritious meals, and activities. They requested speed bumps in front of the center to slow traffic and adjacent parking.
- Senior participants were in favor of a multi-generational community center with a dedicated area for seniors.
- Senior participants expressed interest in the inclusion of day care in parks and facilities (such as the Senior Center) and a swimming pool.

Programs and Events

- Senior participants were in favor of more classes and programs including exercise classes such as chair fitness, crocheting programs, arts and crafts, baking classes, line



Community members value trees and shade in their public and open spaces.

dancing, Tai Chi, jazzercise, and music opportunities. Seniors identified the Senior Circle program, hosted at the Watsonville Community Hospital, as a model. Senior Circle is a national, nonprofit organization that provides its members, age 50 years old and up, with free activities, events, classes, and in-hospital privileges.

- Senior participants expressed interest in participating in excursions including walking trips, and day trips to San Francisco, Carmel, San Jose's performance center and the opera. They suggested providing at least one-month advance program notice.
- Senior participants recommended that the department provide information and advertise city senior programs and activities at the Senior Center.

COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

Methodology

Approximately 17 residents attended one of two community workshops hosted by the City to inform residents about the master plan process and invite them to identify vision concepts, community needs and priorities. Workshops were held at two different locations and at different times of the week to allow maximum opportunity for community members to provide feedback and input in the Master Plan Update process.



Community workshops provided an opportunity for residents to speak directly with Department staff.

Each meeting featured a brief presentation by MIG that provided an overview of the master plan update process, a profile of the community, and the existing condition of parks and recreation facilities in Watsonville.

Participants were asked to share their opinions about what they liked best about the City's parks and recreation facilities. They were asked to share any issues and concerns they had about the parks and to suggest park and facility improvements and additions. The size of the group allowed for extended, informal discussion.

Participants spoke positively and expressed appreciation for the city parks, recreation facilities, programs, and events. Participants described the parks and facilities as well-tended and well-distributed throughout the city such that most neighborhoods had a park in close proximity. Participants

also highlighted the quality of park amenities and the variety of recreation opportunities in the city. Some participants were supportive of improving and increasing trail connections throughout the City and surrounding region. While the Department does not have responsibility for trails in the City, meeting participants noted it was important that the Departments of Parks and Community Services and Public Works and Utilities collaborate to ensure that residents are able to use and enjoy trails in their City.

When asked to share their issues and concerns, no significant deficiencies were identified. Some participants expressed concern about safety in and near some parks, along portions of trails, and traveling to and from recreation facilities. For example, some participants commented that on some sections of slough trails they felt isolated or vulnerable to potentially negative interactions with transients or gang members.

Participants suggested that there were some actions the Department could take to improve safety within its area of responsibility. For example, participants noted they felt safe when there was a staff presence in the parks. They also noted that some minor improvements in some parks, such as lighting, fencing, or strategic changes to the landscaping that minimize hiding and trouble spots might have a positive impact on park safety. It was suggested that safety along trails, in the slough, for example, might be improved by providing guided walks led by volunteer docents. Participants expressed that establishing a regular presence of trail users might help to reduce or redirect negative activities in these areas.

They also identified some barriers to participation such as transportation, especially for residents seeking to use facilities that are not located in their immediate neighborhood.

Key Findings

Sports and Recreational Activities

- Community workshop participants identified walking, hiking and jogging; birding; playing with their children on the playground equipment; attending City festivals and events; and playing tennis, baseball, and volleyball as activities they enjoy in Watsonville parks. Few of the meeting participants expressed that they were active in league sports.

Parks and Recreation Facilities

- Community workshop participants expressed strong appreciation for their parks and recreation system; they value existing amenities and facilities.
- Areas west of Green Valley, near Freedom School, near Davis Avenue, and Rolling Hills were identified as parts of the city that are underserved by parks.
- There is a strong interest in more parks including: open space, passive space, neighborhood parks and a community park similar to Franich Park.
- Community workshop participants were in favor of additional park amenities in parks including: trees for shade and piñatas, barbeques, more lighting near children's playgrounds, more space for sports, community gardens, and restrooms (e.g. Seaview Ranch Park).
- Community workshop participants expressed interest in more recreation facilities including: tennis courts, basketball courts for younger children, dog-friendly parks near the airport, bigger skate park, and more space for sports.
- The availability of affordable and safe transportation was identified as a barrier to park and recreation participation.
- Restoring and expanding the trail system using greenway and bikeway strategies was highlighted as a priority for participants.

Programs and Events

- Community members were in favor of additional recreation activities including: cultural activities, Aztec and folklórico dance, a wetlands walk, and programs for seniors and youth such as after-school activities and competitive sports leagues.
- Participants suggested partnering with schools to host programs and to develop joint use agreements.
- Participants suggested outreaching to schools and mobile home parks.



Over 240 community members completed a one-page survey at the Day of the Child/Earth Day Celebration.

COMMUNITY EVENTS – DAY OF THE CHILD/EARTH DAY SURVEY

Methodology

Two hundred and forty community members completed a one-page survey while attending the Day of the Child/Earth Day Festival in April 2009. MIG and City staff invited attendees to complete the survey, which was available in both English and Spanish. As an incentive to complete the survey, participants were eligible for a ticket in a raffle for prizes that included two baskets of various toys and fitness items.

Approximately one half of the 240 respondents chose to complete the questionnaire in Spanish.

Key Findings

Sports and Recreational Activities

- Survey respondents predominantly recreate by playing soccer and walking, hiking, or running.

Parks and Recreation Facilities

- Survey participants value their parks and recreation opportunities, including City-sponsored special events.
- Nearly all survey participants visit city parks at least once a month.



Department staff work with youth to learn and explore.

- Survey participants visit the city parks to use the children's play areas and to walk and run; Spanish-speaking adults generally visit city parks to walk and run.
- Overwhelmingly, children's play equipment and play areas are most important to survey participants.
- Consistent with the Phone Survey and questionnaire, Day of the Child/Earth Day survey participants do not visit parks because they feel unsafe or have no time. Spanish-speaking adults are less likely to feel unsafe in parks than other respondents.
- Survey respondents are in favor of a city facility that services seniors, teens, youth and adults in one location.

Programs and Events

- After-school and children's programs are most important to survey participants.

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