

10 Needs Analysis

The vision for parks and trails in El Dorado County is to offer access to a diverse selection of recreation opportunities that provide multiple benefits, including:

- Health and wellness for residents of all ages and abilities;
- Centers for community gathering and events;
- Enhanced sense of place and local identity;
- Protection for El Dorado County's unique natural and cultural resources; and
- Economic development associated with recreation based tourism and quality of life.

There are many regional recreation partners involved in achieving this vision with El Dorado County, including the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, California State Parks, local cities, special districts, and numerous volunteer recreation and resource advocacy groups. While El Dorado County residents enjoy access to many spectacular outdoor recreation opportunities, there are some significant recreation needs that are not currently being met. This Master Plan examines the role of El Dorado County in meeting these needs through development of specific County-owned and operated parks and trails facilities as well as strategic collaborations with these other regional partners.

10.1 Parks

Several needs related to neighborhood, community and regional parks were consistently identified throughout the process of gathering public input and analyzing existing parks. However, in order to develop realistic and effective strategies to address these needs it is essential to first examine the population distribution and consider how well existing park resources are meeting the General Plan guidelines.

Population Distribution in El Dorado County

Population density in the unincorporated parts of El Dorado County is quite variable. Even though the General Plan provides countywide guidelines for the acquisition and development of park lands by park type, the distribution of park facilities must have some correlation to the population and needs of the residents intended to be served by the facilities. The General Plan provides the following classification of community types within the County.

Community Region:

The General Plan defines Community Regions as “those areas which are appropriate for the highest intensity of self-sustaining compact urban-type development or suburban type development within the County.” For purposes of park and trail planning, it is useful to recognize that public services, including parks and trails, are provided to Community Regions in various ways depending on how the region is organized. Types of Community Regions include:

Incorporated City: Public services including parks and recreation are provided primarily by the city. Placerville and South Lake Tahoe are the two incorporated cities in El Dorado County.⁸

Community Service District: Density and land use are comparable to a city, but public services including parks and recreation are provided by a Community Service District (CSD). There are two CSDs in Eldorado County: El Dorado Hills CSD and Cameron Park CSD

Rural Community: The remaining community regions in El Dorado County are Camino/Pollock Pines, Diamond Springs, El Dorado, Shingle Springs, and the unincorporated areas surrounding the City of Placerville that have similar densities. Public services for these areas are primarily provided by the County.

Rural Center: The General Plan classifies “existing defined places which provide a focus of activity and goods and services to the surrounding areas” as Rural Centers. These are areas of higher density development located throughout the rural area of the County. Public services are generally provided by the County; however, the Georgetown Divide Recreation District (GDRD) has been established to provide park services to residents living within its boundaries. Rural Centers located in the GDRD include: Cool, Garden Valley, Greenwood, Georgetown, Kelsey, Mosquito, Quintette, and Pilot Hill. Other Rural Centers in El Dorado County include Coloma, Fairplay, Grey’s Corner, Grizzly Flat, Kyburz, Latrobe, Little Norway, Lotus, Mount Ralston, Pleasant Valley, Mt. Aukum, Nashville, Oak Hill, Phillips, Rescue, Somerset, Strawberry, and Chrome Ridge.

Rural Region: All areas not included in a Community Region or Rural Center are classified as Rural Regions. In these areas there is limited availability of infrastructure and public services, with an emphasis on preservation of agricultural and forest/timber land uses.

The parks needs expressed by County residents vary significantly depending on where they live and the types of recreational activities they prefer.

⁸ Rural communities in the Tahoe Basin are not listed because they are addressed by the Regional Plan for the Tahoe Basin as adopted by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Existing Types of County Parks

Another consideration in addressing park needs on a County-wide basis is the current classification of County-owned park acreage by park type. According to the General Plan, the County aims to provide a total of 5 acres of park land per 1,000 residents, in the proportion of 2 acres of neighborhood parks, 1.5 acres of community parks, and 1.5 acres of regional parks.

Since the population of the County in the areas not served by another park provider is approximately 63,000 people, and the County currently owns a total of 278 acres of park land, there is a net park land deficit of about 36 acres. However, this deficit is not evenly spread across park types. The County owns 78 acres of regional park land in excess of the General Plan guidelines. The community park acreage is 5 acres more than the guidelines. The deficit of neighborhood park acreage is 121 acres. However, classification of park types is not exact: regional parks may function as community parks, and both of these may function as neighborhood parks, depending on location and types of features. Therefore, a meaningful evaluation of park land deficits does not look just at acres, but also take into account the location of existing parks, the types of facilities at each park, the area served by the park, and the recreation preferences of the residents who use the park.

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks are intended to be used primarily by people living within walking or biking distance, or approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ mile for children. County residents living outside of the areas officially served by Placerville, El Dorado Hills CSD, and Cameron Park CSD have very limited access to neighborhood parks. Bradford Park is the only County-operated neighborhood park and is located in Shingle Springs. Pioneer Park and Henningsen-Lotus Park are both much larger County facilities, but they also function as neighborhood parks for nearby residents in Somerset and the Coloma-Lotus area respectively. The General Plan also identifies a role for the County in assisting with the acquisition and development of neighborhood parks

While many areas of the County do not have access to neighborhood parks, developing a new neighborhood park in a sparsely populated area provides much less benefit than developing the same park in an area with more residents. For example, the focus of the Georgetown Divide Recreation District is specifically on community parks rather than neighborhood parks because there is such a low residential density in the District. Neighborhood parks need to be built in areas where the residential density warrants the investment. The emphasis for neighborhood park development should be on the more densely populated Rural Communities lacking such resources.

Another important consideration for neighborhood parks is the size of the park. While the General Plan guidelines establish a range of 2 to 10 acres for a neighborhood park,

the cost per acre to develop and maintain a smaller neighborhood park is higher than for a larger neighborhood park. A larger park also provides more opportunities for a diverse range of facilities to meet the recreation needs of a broader range of residents.

In addition, as new urban and suburban residential development occurs within the County, new neighborhood parks should be built to serve these residents.

The following needs are related to neighborhood park facilities, along with some potential implementation strategies.

1. Provide neighborhood parks in the more densely populated areas of the County not served by a special district. These areas are Diamond Springs, El Dorado, Shingle Springs, Camino/Pollock Pines, and the areas surrounding the City of Placerville.
 - 1.A. Continue to require neighborhood park land dedication or fees-in-lieu as part of the residential development review process.
 - 1.B. Support establishment of Community Service Districts with associated assessments to build, operate, and maintain neighborhood (and community) parks.
 - 1.C. Where parks are lacking in already developed areas, identify potential neighborhood park sites as close by as is feasible. Acquire and improve these parcels through a combination of donations, volunteers, partnerships with other public agencies, grants, and CSD assessments.
 - 1.D. Establish joint use agreements with schools to secure public access to play areas, sports fields, and gymnasiums particularly in areas where vacant land for neighborhood park development is not available.
2. Neighborhood parks should include facilities and improvements that will provide recreational opportunities for all age groups as well as families.
 - 2.A. Neighborhood parks should provide the following basic amenities: a multi-age play area, accessible walking path, open turf area, and a covered picnic area.
 - 2.B. Additional neighborhood park improvements such as sports courts or fields, restrooms, enclosed dog play areas, etc. may be included as space and budget allow.
 - 2.C. Neighborhood residents should have a role in selecting which improvements will be provided in their neighborhood park.
 - 2.D. The size of any given neighborhood park should be established after considering the population it will serve and the types of facilities needed, with medium to larger parks being favored over very small parks.
3. Residents in more urbanized areas should be able to get to a neighborhood park by walking or biking along a safe, accessible route.
 - 3.A. A pedestrian/bicycle access route connecting neighborhoods to parks should be required as a condition of approval for new residential developments.

- 3.B. Parks in new developments should be located adjacent to schools to leverage access to shared resources including safe pedestrian/bicycle routes.

Community Parks

Community parks typically serve a much larger area than neighborhood parks because the type of improvements at community parks provides incentive for people to travel a greater distance to the park. Community parks may also function as neighborhood parks for people living nearby or as regional parks depending on the type of improvements. Per the General Plan's guidelines, the County aims to establish 1.5 acres of community park land per 1,000 people. This equates to 94 acres for the number of County residents currently living outside of the service areas of other recreation providers. The County in fact owns 99 acres of community park land but only 73 acres have been improved.

The improved community park acreage comprises Pioneer Park, Henningsen-Lotus Park, and Joe's Skate Park. The unimproved 26 acres are located in Camino/Pollock Pines, an area where population density warrants development of a community park facility. Approximately 21 acres of community park improvements are needed to meet the General Plan guideline. These improvements could be at the site already owned by the County or at other locations secured through partnerships and joint use agreements. In either scenario, the nature of the park improvements should reflect the current and projected recreation preferences of the residents who will use the parks.

The General Plan also identifies a role for the County in assisting with the acquisition and development of community parks. As mentioned above, the Georgetown Divide Recreation District has identified development of a community park in each of the Divide communities as one of its main objectives.

The following needs address community parks, with some potential implementation strategies.

1. Provide a park for the Camino/Pollock Pines community.
 - 1.A. Identify which improvements preferred by Pollock Pines residents can be implemented at the Pollock Pines Community Park site for relatively low cost and/or with volunteer labor and donated resources. Recent input from the community focused on walking trails, picnic facilities, small play areas, interpretive information, and exercise stations
 - 1.B. Identify opportunities to collaborate with EID to add improvements to the Forebay Reservoir property to complement County park facilities
 - 1.C. Reconsider whether or not the major improvements that have been conceptually planned for the Pollock Pines Community Park site are the most cost effective way to spend recreation resources in the Pollock Pines community given the site topography and other constraints.

- 1.D. Consider identifying other locations and/or existing facilities for sports fields and buildings that would be less expensive to develop and/or share through joint use agreements. Such approaches may be a faster and less expensive way to provide these resources to the community.
2. Assist the Georgetown Divide Recreation District with making community park facilities available to residents.
 - 2.A. Complete the transfer of ownership of the Greenwood Community Center to the Georgetown Divide Recreation District. This would allow the District to make better use of the facility by extending rentals for local private business and family usage. Currently, the District is constrained from using the facility in this way because of County liability concerns.
 - 2.B. Look for opportunities to partner with Georgetown Divide Recreation District to implement improvements at the historic Bayley House site to provide community recreation resources for District residents at a location that also has a regional value as an historic site.
 - 2.C. As the Georgetown Divide Recreation District moves forward with grants and other implementation efforts for development of community parks to serve its residents, identify the ways in which the County can encourage and facilitate these efforts.
3. Optimize recreation value of Henningsen-Lotus Park.
 - 3.A. Demand for the pavilion at Henningsen-Lotus Park is often in excess of capacity. Constructing a second pavilion feature or at least another shade structure would increase the number of reservation based activities that could be going on at once. Overall park carrying capacity as a function of available parking would still need to be maintained.
 - 3.B. Access to the sports fields could be improved by changing the reservation process from an annual meeting to a real-time online reservation process similar to that used by the Georgetown Divide Recreation District and Black Oak Mine School District to coordinate reservations at their facilities.
 - 3.C. Georgetown Divide residents are interested in using Henningsen-Lotus Park for local events and community festivals because there are no comparable facilities developed yet in District parks. However, coordination and planning for these events require dedicated County staff which is in short supply. GDRD staff could partner with County staff to share the burden of coordinating these events and reservations.
 - 3.D. The community input process resulted in several other suggestions for possible future facilities at Henningsen-Lotus Park, including tennis courts, a dog park, a small gymnasium, more barbecues, and a white water facility in conjunction with shoreline restoration.

4. As new residential development occurs, identify mechanisms to acquire, develop and maintain community park resources in proportion to the General Plan guidelines.
 - 4.A. Consider the unique social, recreation, and economic needs of the residents who will be served by a community park so that the park has a character consistent with the community identity. There is a great diversity of community character in El Dorado County and this diversity should be reflected in the character of community parks.
 - 4.B. Make sure new community parks also function as neighborhood parks for areas that lack neighborhood parks by providing comparable improvements.
 - 4.C. Continue to require land dedication or fees-in-lieu towards meeting the General Plan community park guidelines as part of the development review and entitlement process.
 - 4.D. Support establishment of Community Service Districts with associated assessments to build, operate, and maintain community (and neighborhood) parks.
 - 4.E. Encourage alternative ways to secure public access to the types of resources found at a community park through partnerships with private businesses and organizations.

Regional Parks

Regional parks are intended to serve a much larger area, and typically have unique or special features that may very well attract visitation from outside of the County. Regional parks may also function as neighborhood or community parks depending on the types of improvements provided. The County has been very successful in acquiring regional park land and currently has 174 acres, or 80 acres in excess of the General Plan guidelines. However, all of this land is not fully improved for recreation use. The regional park facilities with some recreation improvements are the El Dorado Fairgrounds and Chili Bar. There are opportunities for additional improvements at these locations, however. Unimproved regional parks are Cronan Ranch, Bass Lake Regional Park, and the proposed Railroad Park (6 acres). The following needs associated with regional park facilities have been identified.

1. El Dorado Fairgrounds

The El Dorado County Fairgrounds are owned by El Dorado County and operated by the El Dorado County Fair Association. Venues include the Placerville Speedway, Henningsen Equestrian Arena, Imagination Theater, and a wide variety of other indoor and outdoor event and meeting spaces. Facilities are available on a reserved rental basis and are heavily used for a diverse range of regional and community events.

The County has also received a grant of \$133,000 in 2003 to refurbish two ball fields for Girls' Softball use located on Fairgrounds property near Ray Lawyer Drive. However, lack of adequate parking and use of the fields for Fairground staging activities have held up the project. A second grant for \$1.73 million was requested in 2010 to reconstruct and configure the historic Dub Walker American Legion regulation size baseball field in the Fairgrounds and create parking to serve all three fields. Field configuration as proposed will also allow for regulation league and junior soccer fields to be laid out in the infields. The grant was not successful, but concept plans and the CEQA Initial Study have been completed. These ballfields should be completed and made available on a reservation basis similar to the fields at Pioneer Park and Henningsen-Lotus Park to help meet the significant demand from local sports leagues for baseball fields, especially in the populous areas surrounding Placerville.

2. Chili Bar

The County has completed a feasibility study for potential day use and camping improvements at Chili Bar Park that would complement the existing rafting activities while extending recreational use. The areas identified for these uses are outside of the conservation easement held by the American River Conservancy. The next step in making this exceptional location available to more residents and visitors is to get additional public input and finalize a concept plan. With a final concept plan, a cost estimate for improvements as well as accurate operating revenues and expense projections could be developed. This information would provide the basis for the County to begin securing implementation grants for from any number of state and federal sources, and potentially exploring public/private partnerships for operations and development.

3. Cronan Ranch

El Dorado County owns a 64-acre parcel within the greater 1,400 Cronan Ranch Plan located at the Pedro Hill Road entrance. There are various uses that could be implemented at this location that would provide recreation value to County residents and visitors without degrading the open space values of Cronan Ranch. Community input gathered for this Master Plan suggested uses for this parcel including an equestrian arena, covered picnic area, restrooms, play structures, and disc golf. A concept plan needs to be developed for this parcel that identifies which uses are most appropriate for the site and provide the greatest value to local residents as well as visitors. With a concept plan in place, efforts to secure implementation resources and operational agreements can be pursued.

4. Bass Lake Regional Park

The County undertook a comprehensive planning effort in 2001 to 2003 to develop plans for the Bass Lake Regional Park. The proposed improvements include multiple sports fields, picnic areas, a dog park, play areas, a community center, habitat areas,

interpretive features, an outdoor classroom, and trails. During the EIR Notice of Preparation public scoping meeting in 2003 the community expressed concerns about the potential for the park as designed to adversely impact the neighbors and existing natural resource. A phased approach to the project was proposed, but has not moved forward due to budget and staffing issues.

The concept plan is now 10 years old, and needs to be revisited taking into consideration new residential developments, local parks, and road projects in the area. On a regional basis, there continues to be a need for both youth and adult sports fields but the relative value of the other proposed improvements should be reexamined to reflect anticipated demographics and recreation preferences. More passive uses such as trails and nature areas may have greater value as the El Dorado Hills and Cameron Park communities are becoming more densely developed. These types of uses would also have fewer environmental impacts and cost less to develop and maintain. As a phased approach, the plan should scale back development of the active use facilities to focus on those for which there is the greatest demand. These are also more likely to be facilities that are revenue generating and may be suitable for a public/private development and operation agreement.

5. Railroad Park

Planning for Railroad Park has been ongoing for several years. The County has approved a concept for the site including exhibit space for the El Dorado County Museum's collection of railroad artifacts, a section of operational track, and multiuse pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian trails. As part of this Master Plan process, residents of the El Dorado and Diamond Springs communities provided additional suggestions for what they would like to see at the site, including neighborhood park amenities such as a play structure and picnic area. The County is actively pursuing grants to implement this project, together with significant community volunteer resources including the El Dorado Western Railway Foundation and the Friends of the El Dorado Trail.

10.2 Recreation Facilities

In addition to looking at what types of parks are needed and where they should be located, it is also important to identify specific significant facilities that are lacking based on residents' recreation needs. The analysis of existing facilities and input from the residents suggest there are several types of recreation facilities for which demand is exceeding availability. The need for access to these facilities is primarily to serve residents who live outside of the service areas of the other regional recreation partners, and who are largely relying on these other providers and schools for access to these facilities. The specific number of these facilities needed is based on an analysis of population and existing facilities as shown in Table 18.

Table 18 - Facilities per Population Served

Facility Type	Current Facilities in County Parks	Current Population per Facility	Proposed Guideline		Current Facilities Needed	School Facilities
			Population per Facility	Number of Facilities		
Play Area	3	21,000	3,000	21	18	38
Tennis Court	0	NA	6,000	11	11	24
Outdoor Basketball Court	2	31,500	6,000	11	9	In general, at least 1/campus
Baseball Field	0	NA	25,000	3	3	6
Softball Field	2	31,500	7,000	9	7	6
Little League Baseball Field	2	31,500	7,000	9	7	24 Various sizes
Soccer or Multiuse Field	6	10,500	6,000	11	5	34
Equestrian Arena	2	31,500	20,000	3	1	
Swimming Pool	0	NA	45,000	1	1	2
Gymnasium/Multi purpose Room	0	NA	20,000	3	3	15
Meeting/Event Space	5	12,600	15,000	4	-1	
Community Center	1	31,500	30,000	2	1	
Group Picnic Area	3	21,000	8,000	8	5	19 shade structures with picnic tables
Skateboard Park	1	63,000	45,000	1	0	
Disc Golf Course	1	63,000	45,000	1	0	
Amphitheater	0	NA	45,000	1	1	
Dog Park	0	NA	50,000	1	1	

The proposed guidelines are expressed in terms of how many people a single facility could be expected to serve based on local demand for that facility and recreation preferences. The guidelines were derived by looking at similar numbers used by other recreation providers in the County, notably the City of Placerville, El Dorado Hills CSD, and Cameron Park CSD and making adjustments to reflect community differences.

Play Areas and Outdoor Basketball Courts

There are three play areas two outdoor basketball courts at existing County parks. Most area schools have a play structure and outdoor basketball court, but access is limited depending on the individual school and some residents are not sure if they are allowed to be on campus outside of school hours. Joint use agreements between the County and the schools should be put in place to clarify which play areas ad courts may be used and

when. All new County neighborhood and community parks should include play areas, preferably designed for multiple ages and abilities. Basketball courts may also be included depending on the needs of the community the park will serve.

Tennis Courts

None of the County neighborhood or community parks has any tennis courts. Approximately 11 courts are needed to serve the current population. The four area high schools have a total of 24 courts. These do not adequately address the need because they are heavily used by the schools and availability is limited. Tennis courts could be included in new neighborhood and community parks and added to Henningsen-Lotus Park.

Sports Fields

Baseball, softball, and Little League fields and multiuse/soccer fields are in very high demand. The privately organized sports leagues in the County are significant users of these facilities, together with residents who use them on an informal basis. Currently, the sports leagues secure access to facilities by reserving fields located in public parks and paying fees for use. Due to the shortage of park facilities, many teams are also working under similar fee-based arrangements with local schools to get access to their fields when the facilities are not reserved for school hours. Use arrangements may also include donated maintenance to address the increased level of use and security stipulations.

The use agreements with the schools are very helpful, but they typically must be re-negotiated every year. Planning and arranging for facility access from season to season is highly unpredictable and a significant drain on the all-volunteer resources of these organizations. School facilities are also available only a fraction of the time that public park facilities are available since the schools need them for their own after school and weekend events. They are also not a substitute for multi-field complexes which are needed for tournament events.

To address the lack of access to these key sports facilities, the County should enter into long-term joint-use agreements with the schools. The County could then include school fields with other County park facilities in a comprehensive management and scheduling approach. It will also be important to identify resources through grants, donations, and public/private partnerships to get additional sports facilities built that are suitable for league and tournament play. Such facilities are potentially important regional recreation features that could bring recreation based tourism spending to the County.

Equestrian Arena

There are two equestrian arenas at County parks. One is located in the south county at Pioneer Park, and the other in Placerville at the Fairgrounds. There are also several pavilions at the Fairgrounds. There is also a very active and enthusiastic equestrian

community in the north county. A third equestrian arena is needed to serve this area and could potentially function as a regional facility in conjunction with Cronan Ranch.

Swimming Pool

None of the County parks has a swimming pool. Residents utilize pools owned and operated by the City of Placerville, the El Dorado Hills CSD, and the Cameron Park CSD. The need for another pool is in part met in part by the arrangements made by the local recreation program providers and swim leagues to use the pools at the three area high schools. The pool operated by the City of Placerville is only open during the summer months due to costs associated with year round operation.

Indoor Recreation and Event Space

Multi-purpose rooms, gymnasiums, and community centers provide the indoor spaces needed for meetings, weddings, family events, classes, and various indoor sports. Most areas of the County have access to limited space for small to medium meetings and events through County facilities and those provided by local organizations such as the Pollock Pines-Camino Community Center Association and the Diamond Springs / El Dorado Firefighters' Association. Options for larger indoor rental options are available at the Fairgrounds. However, there is still a need for additional community meeting space and multiuse/gymnasium space that can be used for basketball, classes, volleyball, and other indoor sports. There are no such facilities at County parks, but many of the area schools have multipurpose/gym spaces. These are very well-utilized by the schools and local recreation programs through joint use agreements. There is probably very little extra capacity that can be gleaned from these facilities. A new community center facility that included a gym or several large multi-purpose rooms would substantially meet this need. The population to be served by this facility includes the residents of the unincorporated communities surrounding the City of Placerville who currently rely on overtaxed City facilities.

Group Picnic Areas

Group picnic areas are one of the most sought after facilities for a wide variety of family and community events. The three County group picnic areas are heavily used on a reservation fee basis and another five could potentially be used to meet demand. These could be located in existing parks, or included as improvements planned for Pollock Pines and Cronan Ranch.

Amphitheater

An amphitheater was included in the Pollock Pines Community Park concept plan. Depending on design and construction costs, this is still a very good location for such a facility, with its proximity to the Highway 50 corridor and the popular Sly Park Recreation Area. It could have a regional as well as community appeal that would

provide important economic benefits for the Camino/Pollock Pines area businesses by attracting visitors for performances and events.

Dog Park

While many County residents live on large rural parcels, those who live in the more densely developed communities along Highway 50 expressed a desire for a dog park where their pets could run off safely off-leash. A dog park is included as part of the new animal shelter that is to be constructed in the community of El Dorado.

10.3 Trails

There is tremendous support for walking, biking, and equestrian trails among El Dorado County residents. Trails not only provide recreation, transportation, and wellness benefits for residents but they provide important incentives for expanded geo-tourism to the County and the associated economic benefits. Other economic benefits accrue as people and employers are motivated to relocate to more walkable/bikeable communities. Trails also provide a way for people to experience and appreciate the abundant natural resources that give the County its unique character, and potentially increase stewardship for these same resources.

The 1990 El Dorado County Hiking and Equestrian Trails Plan (1990 Plan) identified 29 existing and proposed regional trail alignments needed to connect population and recreation centers in the County. The plan includes County, State and Federal trails. Many of these trails are conceptual with the alignments following existing roads. Others are simply lines drawn on the plan suggesting possible routes to connect existing trail segments to create a meaningful regional network. The plan also identifies 22 existing and potential trailheads intended to provide staging and access to the trail network. The plan does not address local trails, except to say that neighborhood plans should include local trails where possible.

The adopted goal of the 1990 Plan to establish a countywide trail system that integrates Federal, State, County and local trails for public use remains relevant today. However, the plan does not establish implementation priorities and does not reflect some of the changing trail use trends of the last 20 years. These include: a much greater diversity of trail users such as mountain bikers; more emphasis on trails as an urban recreation amenity; and the increasing interest in the overlapping recreation and transportation uses of trails. Trails implemented since 1990 also need to be acknowledged in the regional network, such as the South Fork American River Trail, and the Cronan Ranch trails. Other trail needs that have been identified are summarized below.

El Dorado Trail/Sacramento Placerville Transportation Corridor (SPTC)

The completion of the El Dorado Trail/SPTC from the County line to Camino as a Class 1 trail with an equestrian side path is a clear priority from a transportation, recreation,

and geo-tourism point of view. This will need to be accomplished in phases as already identified by the County in 2007.

Pony Express Trail

The implementation of a continuous trail from the terminus of the El Dorado Trail in Camino to the City of South Lake Tahoe would generally follow the historic Pony Express Trail alignment. This should continue to be pursued but significant technical analysis is needed to identify alignment, design, and acquisition details. The terrain may also limit the range of potential trail uses.

Other Priorities

Numerous other potential regional trail projects are identified by the 1990 Plan. Many local trail projects were identified by community input to this Master Plan. In general the needs expressed fell into the following categories:

Connections between Parks, Schools, and Community Centers

Residents are increasingly interested in being able to walk or bike to parks, schools and community centers from their homes. An example of this type of project is the Northside Trail that is to connect Auburn Lake Trails, Cool, and Northside Elementary School along Highway 193 and Highway 49. There is also a need for a similar trail in the Camino/Pollock Pines community, possibly following the Pony Express Trail alignment. These are trails that clearly serve local transportation and recreation function, while contributing to the livability of the community by reducing automobile trips.

Community Paths

Safe places are needed for children and older adults to walk or cycle within their local communities without having to depend on the automobile to get to there. These two groups have particular safety needs such as slower speeds and more resting places that may dictate special design consideration.

Regional Connectors

The SPTC/El Dorado Trail/Pony Express Trail alignment is envisioned as the major east-west trail route connecting all the communities along the Highway 50 corridor. There is a need to provide other regional connectors to link the communities in the south County and to link the Georgetown Divide communities. Connecting trails are also needed to link regional parks such as Folsom State Recreation Area, Cronan Ranch, Marshall Gold Discovery Park, and potentially Chili Bar.

The design of these regional connectors would ideally provide facilities for pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian users. However, ownership and terrain may preclude the ability to secure a sufficiently wide easement for all uses. In such cases, uses will need to be selected based on community priorities and feasibility.

Trailheads

Trailheads and staging areas are crucial functional and safety elements of a successful trail system. In addition to the trailheads identified in the 1990 Plan to serve regional trails, local trailheads are needed to provide access/egress points from neighborhoods. These smaller trailheads also break up long trails into segments that are manageable for younger and older trail users.

Trailheads need to be clearly marked so that people don't head off in the wrong direction, and should provide information about the difficulty of the trail ahead. Staging areas that are shared by equestrians and other trail users need to be designed with safety and trail capacity in mind.

Trail Standards

With the increasing popularity of all types of trail uses, there is an increasing need to design multiuse trails that will be safe and functional for equestrians, walkers, and cyclists. The vast majority of trail users who provided input to this process recognized the economic benefits of being able to accommodate all three uses within one alignment, although not necessarily on the same track. Trail design standards established in the 1990 Plan need to be revisited to reflect these multiuse objectives in a variety of urban and rural settings.

Standards also need to be established for signage and trail use rules to promote safety especially on multiuse trails.

Trail User Education

Trail use is the fastest growing area of recreation activity in the State of California. This means there are more miles of trails being built, and more people using trails with a greater variety of physical ability and experience. Many people simply don't know what to do on a multiuse trail when they encounter an unfamiliar situation. It is essential that more education be made available to trail users of all types to promote a safe and enjoyable trail experience. Education needs to happen on multiple levels to be effective, including school programs, trailhead signage and literature, and presentations to and by trail advocacy groups. This is an effort that would most effectively be carried out as a coordinated effort involving the many trail interests in the County to make sure education is consistent and comprehensive.

10.4 Operations and Coordination

Funding

Lack of funding for both development and operation of parks and trails has been a significant issue for many counties in California for the last several years. Future General Fund revenues tied to property taxes are like to remain depressed for at least the near future. Funding strategies that do not rely on the traditional tax base need to be

emphasized in order to keep providing the park and trail facilities that are so important to the health and well being of County residents and communities.

Grants

Competition for federal, state, and private grants is fierce. However, substantial sums continue to be given away to worthy projects. The County resources required to successfully pursue grants could be minimized by sharing grant writing staff with other partner organizations, or leveraging County staff time to oversee and manage multiple interns or subsidized workers such as AmeriCorp volunteers.

In order to be successful at winning grants, the County needs to:

- broaden awareness of which grants are available;
- have a list of well-defined projects that have been vetted for feasibility, regulatory compliance, and value to the community;
- match grants with projects that are clearly aligned with the objectives of the grantor;
- develop relationships with partner organizations who will provide letters of support;
- demonstrate the administrative capacity to manage grants; and
- submit well-crafted and realistic proposals.

Quimby Dedication and Impact Fees

Under the County's Subdivision Ordinance which implements the Quimby Act, land or fees in-lieu of land are to be dedicated to the County as part of the residential subdivision approval process to be used for park and recreational purposes. The amount of land or in-lieu fees may not exceed the equivalent of 3 acres of land per 1,000 residents unless the existing acreage of neighborhood and community parks is in excess of that amount. In such a situation up to 5 acres per 1,000 residents may be required.

When the subdivision is located within the boundaries of, the fees are collected by the County and passed on to the corresponding agency. Otherwise, the fees are retained for County parks and recreation projects. The City of Placerville has a similar ordinance.

Additional development park impact fees are collected by El Dorado Hills CSD, Cameron Park CSD, Georgetown Divide Recreation District, and the City of Placerville pursuant to the "Mitigation Fee Act" as found in Government Code § 66000 et seq. The intent of the impact fees is to fund park and recreational facility improvements needed to serve new residents so that access to such facilities, including trails, for existing residents is not degraded.

El Dorado County does not collect development park impact fees. An alternative approach is to require new park construction as a condition of approval, but this is only

practical when there are enough new residential units being built to clearly warrant a whole new park. Consequently, the pace of neighborhood park development has not kept up with population growth throughout the County. As new population moves to the County this imbalance will only get worse if development impact fees or other effective alternatives are not implemented.

Sponsorships

The multifaceted benefits of parks and trails extend to many aspects of life in El Dorado County from health to economic development. There are businesses and organizations that benefit from having parks and trails available either for their own activities, commercial ventures, or the use of their employees. By developing a clearer picture of the businesses and organizations that enjoy these benefits, educating them about the value they are receiving, and asking their input on park and trail implementation priorities, a focused effort to pursue meaningful, sustainable sponsorships can be undertaken.

Operations

Administrative Consistency

As new park and trail projects are designed and implemented, either by the County alone or by developers, there must be consistency between the Parks and Trails Master Plan requirements and design standards and direction in the Design and Improvements Standards Manual and Minor Land Division Ordinance for dedications. This will help project proponents have a clear idea of what they will encounter during the entitlement process, and ensure consistent quality between County and privately developed improvements.

Staffing

Dedicated professional staffing is needed to plan for and manage the County's parks and trails and be responsible for the coordination and collaboration with the many regional and community park and trails partners. This type of oversight is critical to maximizing the value of park and trail resources. While contract services may be used for specific projects, permanent staff is needed to direct these projects and interface with the public in a consistent and knowledgeable manner.

Maintenance

Maintaining existing County park and trail facilities is critical both for public safety and to avoid expensive repairs resulting from ongoing neglect. As new facilities are planned, consideration must be given to how the appropriate levels of maintenance will be provided and sustained. Strategies for reducing ongoing maintenance costs should be explored during the design process. Facilities should not be constructed if maintenance cannot be provided.

Coordinated Information Resources

There are so many organizations providing recreation and trail opportunities in El Dorado County that getting information in a coordinated fashion can be challenging. The internet has also increased the public's expectation for the quantity and quality of available information. Park and trail users in the County are looking for web-based applications to help them easily identify places to go and what they can do when they get there. They are looking for a user-oriented approach to information in which they can go to one location to get information from multiple sources irrespective of who owns or operates the facility.

Another information need is for online reservation services. Many park agencies are using this approach to accept facility bookings, show real time availability of facilities, and notify users of policies or facility changes. This saves time for the public and staff and potentially increases facility usage.

Collaboration

Public/Private Partnerships

A partnership between the County and private businesses or non-profit organizations may facilitate the development and sustainable operation of certain types of park and trail facilities more quickly than if the County was solely responsible for the venture. These types of opportunities need to be embraced when they clearly provide a benefit to County residents.

Public/Public Partnerships

Inter-jurisdictional coordination is essential to effectively leverage resources for management and implementation, and to create the most enjoyable and safest possible recreation experience. This is especially critical where trails and parks managed by one entity adjoin those managed by another. A multi-faceted approach is needed to support coordination between El Dorado County and the many public recreation providers in the County, including the federal, state, and local agencies. This might include operational policies for communication between staffs to share information about facility conditions, hours of operation, fees, and use restrictions, as well as developing shared web-based information sites that could be accessed by the public.

An important benefit of this collaboration is the opportunity to leverage funding, maintenance, and operational strategies that will help multiple recreation providers.

Volunteers

There are a wealth of talented and motivated people who are passionate about contributing to some element of the parks and trails vision for El Dorado County on a volunteer basis. Marshalling these resources represents a significant economic and social benefit to the County. While there are various issues associated with the use of

volunteers related to liability and oversight, there is a significant body of experience in the region from other jurisdictions and organizations who have successfully addressed these issues to create highly effective volunteer programs. The benefit of embracing volunteer resources is not just in the services they provide, but also in the greater sense of community cohesiveness and belonging experienced by the volunteers.

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