

6.0 PARKS AND RECREATION ELEMENT

6.1 Introduction

Parks and Recreational facilities are key elements of every urban environment. However, the state of California does not require the inclusion of a Parks and Recreation Element in its list of required General Plan components. The City of Calexico recognizes the importance of parks and is committed to maintaining and improving its parks system and therefore has chosen to include this Element in its General Plan.

Historically, parks have been passive areas of greenery that have provided refuge from the concrete environment of urban living by offering amenities such as large grassy areas, trees, and ponds. In more recent history, many cities have taken a decided turn away from providing passive parks to providing those that facilitate active recreation. Active recreation requires additional park facilities such as soccer fields, swimming pools, playground equipment, softball fields, and tennis courts. Now, however, many cities have come to realize that an appropriate balance should be sought between active and passive parks. The informal nature of passive parks allows for impromptu activities such as Frisbee or kite flying. Achieving balance between park types requires an understanding of the needs of local residents.

As more and more land is developed and economic resources become increasingly constricted, land acquisition for new parks and the maintenance thereof has become a challenge for many communities. Yet, parks represent an important resource in Calexico—they are sources of aesthetic beauty and respite from urban living, they are community activity, family recreation, and youth sports centers, and ultimately, a source of civic pride.

6.2 Existing Conditions

6.2.1 Regional Parks and Recreation Areas

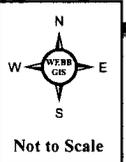
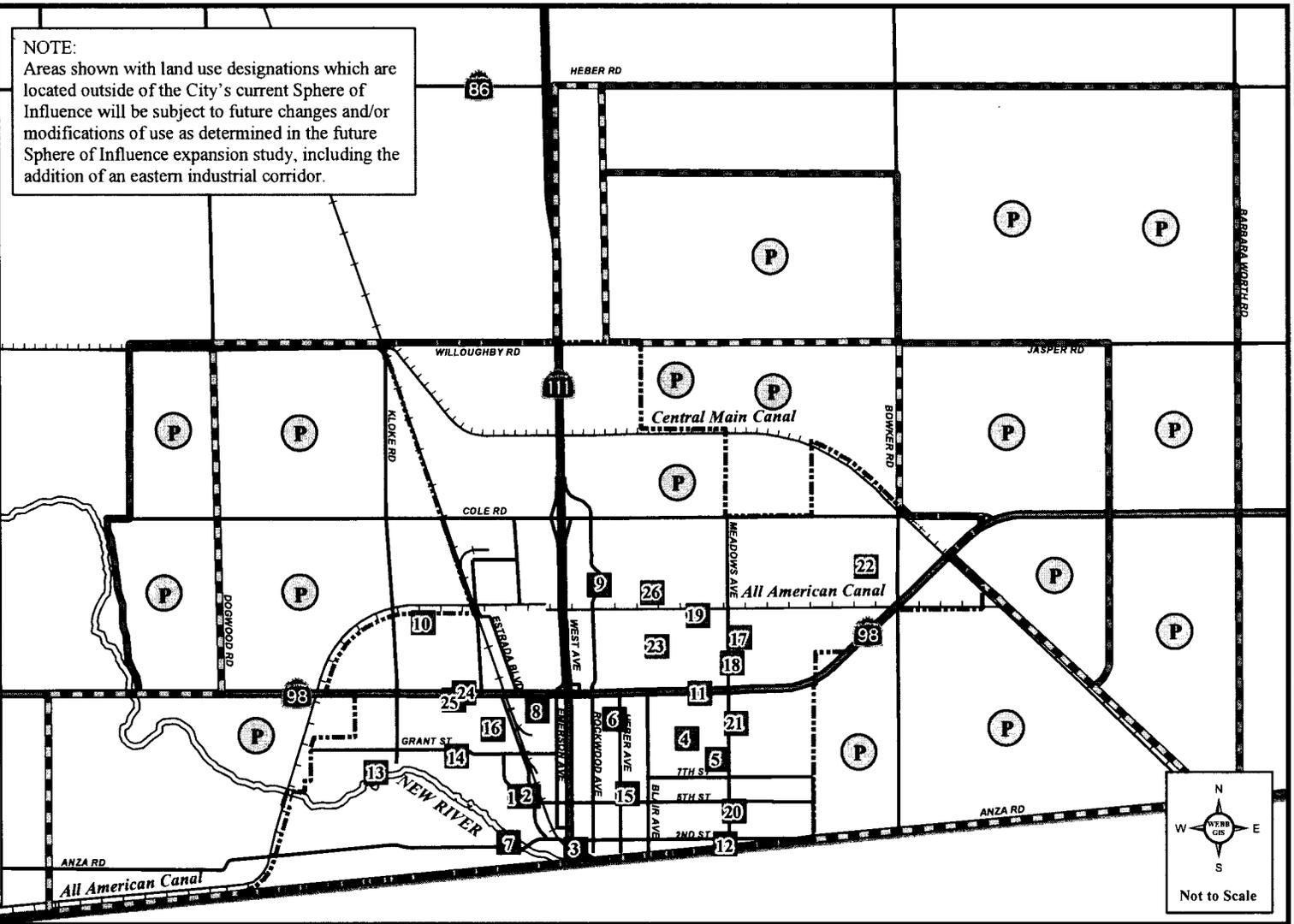
The City of Calexico benefits from numerous regional recreational facilities. To the east, northeast of the City is the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area, encompassing approximately 40 miles of dunes that reach up to 300 feet high. There are various off-road vehicle recreation opportunities associated with the dunes. To the west, northwest of the City is Anza Borrego Desert State Park, the largest state park with over 600,000 acres. Anza Borrego provides hiking, camping, backpacking, and wildflower viewing. In addition, there are numerous other recreational opportunities outside of the City limits but in proximity, including Crucifixion Thorns Natural Area, Coyote Mountains Wilderness, Fish Creek Mountain Wilderness, Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area, the Colorado River, and many others.

6.2.2 Citywide Parks

As of 2004, the City has 22 parks totaling more than 60 acres. Figure P-1 shows the locations of existing parks within the City and future areas within the SOI where parks should be located. Table P-A list the existing parks, their individual acreage, and selected facilities. Parks are typically categorized by their size and service area which is discussed later in this document. The City has numerous smaller parks that, according to the City park classification (found in Policy 1f of this element), would not qualify as either Neighborhood or Community Parks. The City has voiced its need for a central community park to serve as a focal point of the City and provide various recreational facilities such as a swimming pool, soccer fields, and recreation center.

- 1 ALEX RIVERA FIELD
- 2 AMERICAN LEGION FIELD
- 3 BORDER PARK
- 4 COMMUNITY PARK
- 5 CRUMMETT PARK
- 6 EMERSON FIELD
- 7 FRIENDSHIP PARK
- 8 HEBER PARK
- 9 KENNEDY GARDENS PARK
- 10 LAS CASITAS PARK
- 11 LIONESS PARK
- 12 MIGUEL CORTEZ PARK
- 13 NOSTROS PARK AND LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD
- 14 RIO VISTA PARK
- 15 ROCKWOOD PLAZA PARK
- 16 RODRIGUEZ PARK
- 17 EL DORADO PARK
- 18 MEADOWS PARK
- 19 RANCHO FRONTERA PARK
- 20 RANCHO ELEGANTE PARK
- 21 VILLA SANTA FE
- 22 CEASAR CHAVEZ PARK
- 23 VALLE DE ORO PARK
- 24 WILLIAMS GREENBELT PARK
- 25 MARTINEZ PARK
- 26 ZAPATA PARK

NOTE:
 Areas shown with land use designations which are located outside of the City's current Sphere of Influence will be subject to future changes and/or modifications of use as determined in the future Sphere of Influence expansion study, including the addition of an eastern industrial corridor.



Source: City of Calexico

LEGEND

INTERNATIONAL BORDER	LONG-TERM SPHERE OF INFLUENCE	ALL AMERICAN CANAL
CITY LIMITS	HIGHWAY	CENTRAL MAIN CANAL
NEAR-TERM SPHERE OF INFLUENCE	PROPOSED FREEWAY	NEW RIVER
MID-TERM SPHERE OF INFLUENCE	RAILROAD	PARKS
	STREET	FUTURE PARK(S) - LOCATION TO BE DETERMINED

Figure P-1

Parks and Recreation Facilities
 City of Calexico General Plan



TABLE P-A: EXISTING PARK ACREAGE AND FACILITIES

Map Locator	Public Park or Recreational Facility	Acres	Activities
1	Alex Rivera Field	3.5	Baseball Field
2	American Legion Field	3.5	Softball Field
3	Border Park (International)	0.5	Concessions
5	Community Park	1.0	Community Center
4	Crummett Park	5.5	Library, Amphitheater, Horseshoes
6	Emerson Field	3.4	Baseball Field, Concessions
7	Friendship Park	0.8	Gaming Area
8	Heber Park	2.0	Gaming Area
9	Kennedy Gardens Park	4.5	Tot Lot, Baseball Field, Basketball Court
10	Las Casitas Park	6.0	Soccer Field, Baseball Field, Barbeque
11	Lioness Park	2.3	Fitness Trail
12	Miguel Cortez Park	0.5	Tot Lot, Basketball Court,
13	Nosotros Park and Little League Field	8.1	Baseball fields
14	Rio Vista Park	0.5	Tot Lot,
15	Rockwood Plaza Park	4.0	Gaming,
16	Rodriguez Park	8.8	Tennis, Basketball, and Handball Courts, Baseball Field
17	El Dorado Park	7.7	
18	Meadows Park	4.6	
19	Rancho Frontera Park	2.5	
20	Rancho Elegante Park	3.0	
21	Villa Santa Fe	3.8	
22	Cezar Chavez Park (proposed)		
23	Valle De Oro Park	2.7	
24	Williams Greenbelt Park	2.3	
25	Martinez Park	0.8	
25	Zapata Park		

6.3 Establishing a Vision

The *Vision* for community parks and recreation will ensure their adequate development in a way that reflects the needs of the residents of the City. The Parks and Recreation Element is responsive to the City's *Vision* because it:

- a. Seeks to create adequate park facilities and recreational services which are necessary components of high quality of life for residents and visitors.
- b. Helps to ensure an appropriate balance of new development and associated services.

- c. Contributes to the physical as well as mental well-being of residents.
- d. Enhances the overall quality of the City and therefore increases the City's desirability as a place to invest, possibly strengthening the local economy.
- e. Strengthens the City's overall sense of "community".
- f. Fosters inter-governmental agency partnerships and cooperation, especially with the local school district.
- g. Provides recreational opportunities to all residents, regardless of their age, socioeconomic status, or housing tenure.
- h. Facilitates parks and recreational facilities that could be a source of community pride.
- i. Reduce the use of retention basins as public parks.

6.4 Goal, Objectives, and Policies

6.4.1 Goal

To provide continued investment in existing parks while creating high-quality new facilities that satisfy the underserved and future needs of the community. Park planning will be flexible in nature and therefore be responsive to demographic or other social changes, thus ensuring a high-quality, long-term viable park system.

6.4.1.1 Facility Types

Objective 1

To provide a variety of parks facilities and recreational services that satisfies the diverse interests and needs of the community.

Policy 1

- a. Develop a system of parks and recreational facilities that are sensitive to the needs of seniors, children, families, active adults, teenagers, and persons with disabilities.
- b. Give similar attention to passive or individual uses (such as walking, biking, and skating) as is given to formal recreation or sports groups.
- c. Offer equal levels of park service to all areas of the community.
- d. The City should annually review its parks and recreation facilities and programs and update them accordingly as user needs and preferences change.
- e. The City should annually review its parks and recreation facilities and programs and update them accordingly as user needs and preferences change.

- f. The City shall allow the use of private parks and recreational facilities to satisfy development park requirements. Private parks should be created and maintained through Community Facilities Districts (“CFD”) or Homeowner’s Association (“HOA”). Uses include, but are not limited to, golf courses, tennis facilities, and sport courts.
- g. The City should add a Commercial Recreation designation to its zoning code which would allow for the development of private recreational facilities that are operated for profit through the collection of user fees.
- h. The City should develop a minimum 20 acre community park, preferably in the center of the City, to meet the current needs. An additional community park shall be developed to serve Calexico’s growing population within the next 10 years.
- h. Establish the following park classifications within the City:
 - **Pocket Park.** Pocket parks are less than 2 acres in size and are not necessarily intended to be used for active recreational activities beyond children’s play equipment. Pocket parks may be used for, but not limited to, land use buffers, picnic and sitting areas, and playgrounds.
 - **Neighborhood Park.** Neighborhood parks shall be 5-10 acres in size. Neighborhood parks serve residents within a ½ to 1-mile radius and the characteristics thereof shall be examined to determine the proper facilities for each park. Wherever possible, neighborhood parks should be located at the center of the residential area that they serve. Standard facility provisions are as follows in Table P-B:

TABLE P-B: NEIGHBORHOOD PARK FACILITIES PER RESIDENT SERVED

Facility Type	Facility/Number Served
Soccer/ Football Field	1/1,500
Basketball/ Volleyball	1/500
Tennis Court	1/2,000
Children’s Play Area	1/5,000
Baseball Diamond	1/12,000
Softball Diamond	1/6,000
Racquetball Court	1/2,000

- **Community Park.** Community parks shall be between 20 and 50 acres in size and serve a population of about 20,000. This park type serves several neighborhoods within a 2-mile radius. Community parks can be simultaneously passive and active

recreation areas because of their larger size. Community parks require adequate parking facilities and should be located at roughly the center of the target area served.

6.4.1.2 Facility Design and Location

Objective 2

Create high-quality, fully functional, demand-responsive parks that serve the needs of the public in accordance with specific design standards. Parklands and recreational facilities should be compatible with adjacent land uses.

Policy 2

- a. The City shall develop a community park of at least 20 acres that includes such facilities as, but not limited to: lighted playing fields, a swimming pool, a multi-purpose or specific-use trail system throughout the park, and a passive recreation area.
- b. The community park shall be the site of community-wide athletic events and community activities. As such, it should be located, if possible, near the center of the City.
- c. Wherever possible, community parks should be located near public transportation.
- d. Incorporate wherever possible or appropriate, public art or historical themes into park design.
- e. Design new parks and improve existing ones, where possible, to prevent certain activities such as outdoor facilities, parking areas, nighttime lighting, and other elements from negatively impacting adjacent land uses.
- f. Allow no more than 50% of the total parkland requirements of new developments to be met by land used for retention basin purposes.
- g. Require all retention basins to be landscaped.
- h. Each park classification type shall adhere to the following design standards:
 - **All Parks.** All parks should be landscaped with drought-tolerant plant materials in an effort to conserve water. In addition, automatic irrigation systems should be used and provisions made for adequate drainage. All sidewalks shall be constructed of concrete or rubberized materials. Biking or multi-purpose trails are encouraged and may be constructed with materials such as decomposed granite or other soil-stabilized material (see City of Calexico Bicycle Master Plan, 2003). As much as possible, parks should be barrier-free to the physically disabled.

- **Pocket Park.** Due to the wide variation in size and the propensity for pocket parks to be located in irregular and difficult parcels, design standards for pocket parks are limited to those listed above for “All Parks”.
- **Neighborhood Park.** Neighborhood parks should be 5-10 acres in size; no less than 5 acres if adjacent to a school, and at least 10 acres otherwise. They shall have restroom facilities and have at least one designated grassy area measuring, at minimum, two acres in size. Neighborhood parks should not be divided by any natural or human-made barriers. They shall include adequate on- and off-street parking and shall include at some or all of the following recreational facilities, as appropriate: tennis court, picnic areas, children’s play area, trails, basketball courts, hand-ball courts or other active recreation facilities. The Planning Commission shall review all proposed improvements to determine if said improvements meet the needs of the neighborhood upon recommendation by the Parks and Recreation Commission.
- **Community Park.** Community parks should have at least 20 useable acres, and serve 20,000 people in approximately a two-mile radius. Off-street parking must be provided at community parks and close proximity to public transportation is strongly sought. Locating community parks adjacent to school facilities could help satisfy parking requirements as well as offer shared use of certain facilities such as gym and swimming pools. Community parks shall include developed playing fields, picnic areas, and a system of hiking trails and bicycle paths, and include other recreational facilities such as swimming pools and those found in Neighborhood Parks. The number and types of facilities located at each community park shall be subject to review and approval by the City Council upon recommendation by the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Planning Commission.

6.4.1.3 Financing

Objective 3

The City should maintain and expand the current parks and recreation system by implementing financing strategies.

Policy 3

- a. The City shall continue the implementation of the Quimby Act (Government Code 66477, City Ordinance 953) which allows the City to require the dedication of land (3 acres of park area for each 1,000 subdivision residents) or cash in-lieu fees (or a combination of both) as a condition of residential development approval.
- b. The City should acquire new parkland through the capital budget process, the scheduling of the Quimby Act funds, and grants.
- c. Consider using eminent domain to acquire additional parkland in instances of greatest need, such as creating a community park in the center of the City.
- d. The City should explore increasing parks and recreational facilities through the upgrade of existing open space or the conversion of other public or quasi-public lands, such as utility right-of-ways and the designated open space lands along the New River upon successful implementation and cleanup of the New River via the New River Improvement Project described in Section 5.2.5 of the Conservation Element..
- e. Aggressively pursue all forms of federal, state, county, corporate, private foundation, and endowment support to aid in the acquisition, maintenance, programming, and operation of park and recreational facilities.
- f. Consider the sale of bonds as a means to acquire new park lands or recreational facilities.
- g. Allow revenue-generating activities on public parkland and encourage, design or facilitate future events that are compatible with the facility's design. Examples include hosting commercially-sponsored events, granting private concessionary rights, booking private ceremonies, and some commercial advertising.
- h. Work with community groups, organizations, clubs, and private businesses to encourage them to take a greater interest and financial responsibility in local parks and recreational facilities. Examples include facility and program sponsorship, facility financial support, and goods and services donations.
- i. The City Council may considered the construction and operation (where appropriate) of private recreational facilities as satisfying the

parkland dedication requirements set forth in City of Calexico Ordinance 953. The ongoing operation costs of private facilities shall be paid in perpetuity by the owner, a homeowner's association, a community facilities district ("CFD"), or an assessment district. Private recreational facilities shall meet the same requirements and design standards as similar public facilities.

- j. The City should pursue acquiring or preserving open space through the various available financing mechanisms. Some of the available mechanisms include:
- Infrastructure Financing District (Uses tax increment funding; Govt. Code 53395, *et. seq.*)
 - Community Facilities District (CFD)/Mello-Roos (Govt. Code 53311)
 - Special Assessments
 - Lease-Purchase Agreements
 - Land Banking/Lease Back (Specifically suited for agricultural lands)
 - Transfer of Development Rights
 - Formation of a regional open space district (suited for agricultural land)
 - Open space easements under the Conservation Easement Act (California Code Section 815-816)

6.4.1.4 Public Facility Joint Use

Objective 4

Increase the amount of usable park land and maximize the efficiency of recreational facilities and programming by continuing to seek opportunities to create joint/multiple use arrangements.

Policy 4

- a. Implement Joint-Use Agreements with Calexico Unified School District whereas issues such as types and timing of use, liabilities, maintenance, and other responsibilities are addressed.
- b. Locate parks wherever feasible adjacent to school property in order to provide the maximum level of usable park acreage and efficient use recreational facilities.
- c. Incorporate community service uses such as child day care and senior care centers into park facilities.

- d. Coordinate recreational activities with other local communities such as El Centro and Brawley at times in which participation would be mutually beneficial.
- e. Work with Imperial Irrigation District (“IID”) to explore the possibility of converting the land adjacent to the canal to public open space and/or constructing a walking and/or biking path along/ within proximity to the canal, or both. The *2003 City of Calexico Bicycle Master Plan* proposes a 6.3 mile Class I bike and multi-use trail along the All American Canal.

6.4.1.5 Maintenance of Recreational Facilities

Objective 5

The City shall maintain, renovate, upgrade, and replace its recreational facilities regularly to prevent a state of disrepair.

Policy 5

- a. Annually inspect and evaluate all park facilities and equipment for repair needs and every five years for renovation needs.
- b. Develop a Capital Improvement Program to pay for the equipment and facilities needing repair or replacement.

6.4.1.6 Community Heritage

Objective 6

The community park system should celebrate the City’s natural, historic, and cultural heritage wherever possible.

Policy 6

- a. Attempt to incorporate community art, including sculptures, painting and other visual art forms, performing arts, and other exhibitions and special events into park design and programming.
- b. Use the public park system for the preservation of historic structures that would otherwise be lost to development, either by acquiring the structure and turning it and the adjacent land into a park, or relocating historic structures to park land, if feasible.