



VII - OPEN SPACE  
PARKS AND TRAILS ELEMENT



# VII OPEN SPACE, PARKS, AND TRAILS ELEMENT



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## VISION STATEMENT

The City of Rancho Cordova will have a premier system of parks and open spaces that serve the needs of all residents. Parks of all sizes and types will attract residents and regional visitors to enjoy a variety of recreational and cultural programs and services. Rancho Cordova will be recognized nationally for its recreational amenities including the American River Parkway, Folsom South Canal, and connected open space and trail systems networked throughout the community. Open space will compliment both the City's natural assets and the traditional park system, providing accessible lands that support a healthy community. The park system will promote a Citywide identity and will become a regional destination for recreation.

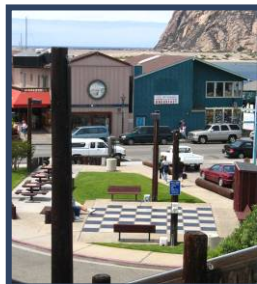
## INTRODUCTION

Open space, parks, and trails are lands and facilities that provide enjoyment and beauty to the residents of the community. Incorporating each of these elements throughout the City will provide a place for active and passive recreation, help to preserve natural resources, and improve air quality. Rancho Cordova will create a system of open space, parks, and trails that is regionally unique, blending recreation and the natural environment (including natural resource areas).

The City's open space network will consist of a wide range of open space improvements including regional trails, green infrastructure, greenways, neighborhood greens, urban plazas, and streets.

## PURPOSE

This Open Space, Parks, and Trails Element identifies the need to maintain existing open space and natural recreational areas, as well as to create additional areas for the enjoyment of residents and the protection of the environment. In combination, the Open Space, Parks and Trails Element and the Natural Resources Element represent the conservation element of the General Plan. The Natural Resources Element identifies the ways in which the City will





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protect, maintain, and enhance its natural resources. The goals, policies, and actions provided are intended to achieve the City's vision of open spaces that are accessible to all members of the community. This Element establishes a policy framework and action program for the improvement, expansion, and maintenance of the City's open space.

### RELATED PLANS AND PROGRAMS

The Open Space, Parks, and Trails Element relates to several other plans and programs, including the following:

- **Open Space Performance Standards.** Under review when Rancho Cordova prepared this General Plan, the Open Space Performance Standards will establish standards for open space, trails, green infrastructure, greenways and neighborhood outdoor gathering places to guide the development of these important community amenities. These standards will serve as the City's action program for the improvement, expansion, and maintenance of the City's open space.
- **Cordova Recreation and Parks District (CRPD) Master Plan.** Under revision when Rancho Cordova prepared this General Plan, the CRPD will establish park requirements, parks plans, and recreation programs for the entire District, including the City of Rancho Cordova. CRPD provides park and recreation services to the City and works with the City in the establishment of parks policies.
- **Quimby Act.** State legislation allows local jurisdictions to require dedication of land for park and recreation purposes. This Element establishes the City's parkland dedication requirement.
- **American River Parkway Plan.** The American River Parkway Plan was adopted by Sacramento County in 1985 to manage the Parkway's natural resources, to allow recreation in a natural environment, and to coordinate Parkway planning and management efforts. The American River Parkway is a celebrated amenity within the community and establishes the framework for the network of trails described in this Element and the Circulation Element. The County is currently updating the American River Parkway Plan and the City of Rancho Cordova is a partner in the planning efforts to preserve and enhance the area and recreational uses adjoining the City's northern boundary.
- **Pedestrian Master Plan.** Under review when Rancho Cordova prepared this General Plan, the Pedestrian Master Plan will establish polices, programs, and

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projects to improve the pedestrian system with the City of Rancho Cordova. Many of the City's planned pedestrian facilities are off-street shared trails as outlined in this Element and the Circulation Element.

- **Bicycle Study and Bikeway Master Plan.** The Bikeway Study analyzed existing bicycle facilities and contributed to the planning of the bikeway network for the General Plan. The Bicycle Master Plan will direct the implementation of the bicycle network described in the General Plan.
- **Folsom South Canal Roadmap.** Folsom South Canal Partners (including the City) was formed to explore ways to enhance the Folsom South Canal and the relationship to its surroundings. The Roadmap compiles information about the canal, outlines the goals and vision of the Partners, identifies a framework for future partnerships and agreements, and informs and guides a more detailed future planning effort.
- **Upper Laguna Creek Collaborative.** The Collaborative is advocating the planning, design, and development of a parkway along the Upper Laguna Creek. The City is participating in and supporting the effort of the Collaborative to develop a plan for Upper Laguna Creek. Future successes will be incorporated into the General Plan implementation documents such as the Trails Master Plan.
- **Rancho Cordova Design Guidelines.** The Citywide Design Guidelines identify objectives, standards, and guidelines that are intended to encourage, promote, and require high-quality, pedestrian-oriented development while allowing flexibility in the design solutions. Design concepts of project and community identity and public gathering places should be applied to the City's parks and open space areas.
- **Caltrans standards.** Caltrans establishes State minimum standards for several types of transportation facilities including trails outlined in this Element and the Circulation Element.

### RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER GENERAL PLAN ELEMENTS

The Open Space, Parks, and Trails Element relates closely to the Natural Resources Element, as well as the Land Use, Urban Design, Circulation, Cultural and Historic Resources, and Safety Elements. The Land Use Element includes the open space land inventory and the Natural Resources Element addresses open space for the preservation and conservation of natural resources. Pedestrian path and bikeways are described and shown at a macro scale in the Circulation Element. Open space for special environmental and/or hazardous conditions are



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addressed in the Safety Element. Where the overlap can be identified, cross references are provided to alert the reader to specific sections of the related elements.

### ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS

#### OPEN SPACE, PARKS, AND TRAILS SETTING

Rancho Cordova has a variety of open space, parks, and trails resources, and most are managed by an independent agency, the Cordova Recreation and Park District (CRPD). The City of Rancho Cordova does not provide its own park facilities, but relies instead on the CRPD. Providing parks is a cooperative effort, combining the City's land use authority and CRPD's efforts to build and operate park and recreation facilities. CRPD manages numerous parks that provide recreation opportunities, including swimming pools, picnic areas, basketball courts, soccer fields, and playgrounds. Hagan Park, a 75-acre park near Cordova High School, has a variety of amenities, including swimming pools, a petting barn, and a miniature steam railroad.

The American River Parkway is a regional amenity, with over 20 miles of trails along the American River extending from Discovery Park to Folsom Lake. The Parkway abuts the City's northern boundary with miles of river frontage. The Parkway is accessible at numerous locations in Rancho Cordova, including Hagan Park.

Rancho Cordova lacks the creek corridors, ravines, and ridgelines that typically result in accessible open space in neighboring communities like the City of Folsom. Additionally, parkland in Rancho Cordova has historically not been provided at a rate adequate for first class outdoor recreation. Trends in population growth and recreation are projected to place additional pressure on park facilities.

#### ISSUES THIS ELEMENT ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE

This Element identifies several issues in achieving the City's open space, parks, and trails vision, including the following issues identified during the preparation of the General Plan:

- Establishing additional open space for outdoor recreation, especially in currently undeveloped areas.
- Creating a premier park system, with a variety of facilities, landscaping types, and recreational uses – dispersed throughout the community.



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- Ensuring that parks and open space are accessible to every resident in Rancho Cordova.
- Enhancing existing parks and trails, especially access to and improvements along the American River Parkway and Folsom South Canal trails.
- Creating a Citywide trails network with regional connections, allowing convenient and safe access to all pathways.
- Collaborating with the Cordova Recreation and Park District, the American River Parkway Committee, and school districts serving the City.
- Designing major trails and significant public spaces to take advantage of scenic vistas.
- Establishing adequate funding to assure that park, open space, and trail facilities are properly maintained.

### GOALS, POLICIES AND ACTIONS

The goals of this element are as follows and are listed subsequently with corresponding policies and actions.

- **Goal OSPT.1: Create a premier system of public parks and recreation programs that meet the needs of all residents.**
- **Goal OSPT.2: Establish a system of open space areas that connect all parts of the community and provide opportunities for passive and neighborhood-based recreation.**
- **Goal OSPT.3: Create a system of pedestrian and bicycle trails that maximize usage while providing places for walking and bicycling without conflicts with motor vehicles.**
- **Goal OSPT.4: Encourage public use of all trails and open space and promote public input in creating and maintaining these resources.**



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### **GOAL OSPT.1 - CREATE A PREMIER SYSTEM OF PUBLIC PARKS AND RECREATION PROGRAMS THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF ALL RESIDENTS.**

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**Policy OSPT.1.1** - Review all proposals for new residential development to ensure each project complies with the City's minimum standards for parkland dedication, and is consistent with Cordova Recreation and Park District goals.

- **Action OSPT.1.1.1** - Require developers of all new residential development to dedicate parkland at a rate of five acres of land per 1,000 population. When necessary, provide an in-lieu payment option, which allows the developer to fund the acquisition of acceptable land equal to the dedication requirement. Calculate required parkland dedication exclusive of required open space.
- **Action OSPT.1.1.2** – Consult with the Cordova Recreation and Park District prior to determining the acceptability of lands proposed for dedication as public parkland including grading, circulation, and drainage.
- **Action OSPT.1.1.3** – Establish a procedure for determining an appropriate in lieu fee amount that ensures CRPD will have adequate funds to purchase required parkland for which in lieu fees are paid.

**Policy OSPT.1.2** - Coordinate with the Cordova Recreation and Park District to ensure that parks are provided, developed, and operated in a way that ensures that the City's parks goals are achieved throughout the community.

**Policy OSPT.1.3** - Encourage park development adjacent to school sites and other compatible uses (public and private) for enhanced civic space and integration into the community.

- **Action OSPT.1.3.1** – Continue to lead the region in the co-location of park and school sites and promote joint use agreements between school and park districts.
- **Action OSPT.1.3.2** – Work collaboratively with the Park District in the land planning process to support the co-location of park with public/quasi-public and non-residential lands to encourage the integration of compatible uses and creation of dynamic gathering places within the City's neighborhoods. Well-designed pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between compatible uses will be a critical component of success.

Cross reference:  
ISF 2.3

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**Policy OSPT.1.4** – Ensure that adequate and reliable funding sources are established for the long-term maintenance of parks and trails.

- **Action OSPT.1.4.1** - Ensure that sufficient funding for maintenance of parks is assured prior to approval of any Final Subdivision Map that includes public parks and/or related facilities.
- **Action OSPT.1.4.2** - Consider creating a fee and assessment program to provide increased funding for existing parks, in collaboration with the Cordova Recreation and Park District. This could include local or regional bond measures or assessment districts, public or private grants or partnerships, homeowners associations, or other methods deemed appropriate by the City.

**Policy OSPT.1.5** - Support the Cordova Recreation and Park District in their construction and maintenance of recreational facilities.

- **Action OSPT.1.5.1** - Continue to work with the Cordova Recreation and Park District on this issue, and implement funding mechanisms as part of the City's review and approval of new development projects.
- **Action OSPT.1.5.2** - Explore the possibility of the Cordova Recreation and Park District constructing a community pool that is usable year-round.
- **Action OSPT.1.5.3** - Expand the Cordova Senior Center at the Lincoln Village Community Park, and the construction of new senior community facilities as demand for such facilities increases.



**Policy OSPT.1.6** – Provide sports and recreation facilities sufficient to attract regional sporting events.

- **Action OSPT.1.6.1** - Continue to work with the Cordova Recreation and Park District in the planning and execution of park and recreation facilities to accommodate a variety of regional sports venues.
- **Action OSPT.1.6.2** – Work cooperatively with the Sacramento Sports Commission and Chamber of Commerce Visitor and Tourist Bureau to attract and host regional sporting activities.

Cross reference:  
ED 1.9.1

Cross reference:  
ED 1.9.3 and  
1.9.4



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### **GOAL OSPT.2 – ESTABLISH A SYSTEM OF OPEN SPACE AREAS THAT CONNECT ALL PARTS OF THE COMMUNITY AND PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PASSIVE AND NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED RECREATION.**

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**Policy OSPT.2.1** - Review all proposals for new residential development to ensure compliance with the City's minimum open space standards.

- **Action OSPT.2.1.1** – Adopt City Open Space Standards as an action program to implement the open space policy framework in this Element. The standards will clearly define the City's requirements for the improvement, expansion, and maintenance of open space. Such standards shall include provisions for two types of open space: 1) Mandatory Open Space, and 2) Performance Based Open Space.



- **Action OSPT.2.1.2** -Require developers of all new residential development to dedicate open space land at a rate of 1.75 acres of land per 1,000 population, generally comprised of:

- Open Turf, Tree Canopy and Dog Parks;
- Neighborhood Greens; and
- Communitywide Open Space.

- **Action OSPT.2.1.3** – Consider partial credit for mandatory open space within drainage facilities when certain criteria are met.
- **Action OSPT.2.1.4** - Exempt from the minimum open space requirements residential subdivisions of ten acres or less which are not part of a master-planned development meeting the minimum open space requirement, at the City's discretion.
- **Action OSPT.2.1.5** – Require all new development projects to provide a system of connected open space that includes greenway, trails, nodes, and green infrastructure (see City Open Space Standards), in proximity to all new residents.
- **Action OSPT.2.1.6** - Ensure that funding for maintenance of open space is sufficient prior to approval of any Final Subdivision Map of development that includes open space facilities or amenities.

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- **Action OSPT.2.1.7** - Consider including encumbered land (such as a power line easement) that meets all other requirements for open space for inclusion in the open space system on a case-by-case basis.

**Policy OSPT.2.2** - Create a plan for identifying and maintaining open space.

- **Action OSPT.2.2.1** - Adopt a comprehensive Open Space Preservation Plan as the action program that clearly implements the City's open space policy framework and provides clear direction for the maintenance of open space lands.

**Policy OSPT.2.3** - Maximize the potential benefits of natural resource mitigation lands within urban development.

- **Action OSPT.2.3.1:** - Encourage projects to accomplish the following:
  - Align roads and public spaces to take advantage of vistas over mitigation lands;
  - Site publicly accessible trails adjacent to the boundaries of mitigation lands to take advantage of the open character and uninterrupted edge of the mitigation lands; and
  - Consider locating public parks adjacent to mitigation lands to create a greater sense of open space and to take advantage of opportunities for vistas and trail connections.
- **Action OSPT.2.3.2** - Through the development review process, incorporate design features that increase visual access to natural resource mitigation lands.

**Policy OSPT.2.4** – Ensure that where land designated or proposed to be designated for open space contains Native American historical, cultural and sacred sites, the City consults with the tribe as to the level of confidentiality required to protect the site and as to appropriate dignity to afford the site in any management plan.

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**GOAL OSPT.3 – CREATE A SYSTEM OF PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE TRAILS THAT MAXIMIZE USAGE WHILE PROVIDING PLACES FOR WALKING AND BICYCLING WITHOUT CONFLICTS WITH MOTOR VEHICLES.**

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**Policy OSPT.3.1** - Develop a trails system that provides for maximum connectivity, so that all trails are linked for greater use as recreational and travel routes.

Cross reference:  
UD 4.5.1

Cross reference:  
CHR 1.3.2

Cross reference:  
C.2.1, C.2.5



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- **Action OSPT.3.1.1** - Create and adopt a comprehensive Trails Master Plan that includes information on current resources and plans for future development, including designating locations and types of trails.
- **Action OSPT.3.1.2** - Review all new development projects and public works projects and require compliance with the Trails Master Plan prior to approval.
- **Action OSPT.3.1.3** - Provide appropriate pedestrian and bicycle linkages to existing facilities, particularly to those facilities within the American River Parkway and the Folsom South Canal.
- **Action OSPT.3.1.4** - Develop and implement a capital improvement plan to construct new bridges, grade-separated crossings, and ramps at key intersections of major trails and roadways.

**Policy OSPT.3.2** - Participate with Sacramento County and other organizations to identify funding sources to maintain and enhance the American River Parkway.

- **Action OSPT.3.2.1** – Work cooperatively with Sacramento County to fund enhancements within the American River Parkway, consistent with the American River Parkway Plan.



**Policy OSPT.3.3** - Provide major off-street trails with grade-separated crossings or enhanced at-grade pedestrian crossings, especially across four-lane streets and collector roadways, to provide safe routes free from conflicts with vehicles.

- **Action OSPT.3.3.1** - Include funding for grade-separated and enhanced at-grade pedestrian crossings through the development review and entitlement process and pursue grants and other funding for trails.

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### **GOAL OSPT.4 – ENCOURAGE PUBLIC USE OF ALL TRAILS AND OPEN SPACE AND PROMOTE PUBLIC INPUT IN CREATING AND MAINTAINING THESE RESOURCES.**

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**Policy OSPT.4.1** - Support updates to the American River Parkway Plan to encourage retaining the natural setting of the parkway and the passive recreational uses.

Cross reference:  
C 2.7

Cross reference:  
LU.4.1.3,  
LU.3.1

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- **Action OSPT.4.1.1** - The City will continue to work with the current signatories to the American River Parkway Plan to add Rancho Cordova as a full member with all the rights and responsibilities thereof.
- **Action OSPT.4.1.2** - Provide staff support and/or funding to facilitate updates to the American River Parkway Plan.
- **Action OSPT.4.1.3** - Identify and support programs which serve the special recreational and open space needs of seniors, youth, and other special needs groups that may be underserved within the community.
- **Action OSP 4.1.4** - Determine the need for special facilities for seniors (e.g., more benches and flat paved walking areas near the river).
- **Action OSPT 4.1.5** - Determine the need for special facilities for youths consistent with natural resource protection.

**Policy OSPT.4.2** - Support programs which increase the use and safety of off-street trails.

- **Action OSPT.4.2.1** - Encourage the use of volunteers and community groups to provide maintenance and safety patrols on trails through the provision of funding and staff assistance to leverage volunteer efforts.
- **Action OSPT.4.2.2** - Promote the City's premier system of parks, trails, and open space to all users through education, marketing, and community activities.
- **Action OSPT.4.2.3** - Support trails events and trail use through publicity, proclamations, participation, and funding, community events (e.g., Eppie's Great Race, Fourth of July Celebration, Kid's Day, Nimbus Salmon Festival) that cross community and neighborhood boundaries, and help bring together various segments of the population.

