



Photo of Grape Arbor Park



CITY of CALABASAS

Section 7

RECOMMENDATIONS AND POLICIES

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INTRODUCTION

This section of the document recommends specific courses of action to meet the needs described in the previous sections.

A. Park Facility Plan

The Park Layout Plan is a graphic representation of existing and future parks and other proposed recreation facilities. A map locating existing and proposed park sites is shown on page 7-8. Some important notes about the Layout Plan are:

1. A letter of the alphabet and number (such as NP-4) defines each site on the Layout Plan. The number is for site identification only and corresponds to text in this section. The letters represent the type of existing or proposed park and are keyed as follows:

<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Park Type</u>
MP	Mini Parks
NP	Neighborhood Parks
CP	Community Parks
SU	Special Use Areas

2. On the Layout Plan map, an asterisk illustrates each proposed park or facility site. The intent is to show a general location of where it should be located to serve the community. The actual location will be determined based on land availability, acquisition cost and the property owner's willingness to sell.
3. The location and arrangement of the parks and facilities are designed to serve the City for the next 20 years.

B. Development Concept

The "ideal park system" for a community is one made up of a hierarchy of various park types, each offering certain types of recreation and/or open space opportunities. Separately, each park type may serve only one basic function, but collectively they will serve the entire needs of the community. By recognizing this concept, Calabasas can develop a more efficient, cost effective and usable park system.

However, within the city, the main factor limiting the ability to meet recreation needs is the lack of available park land. Although there is a good supply of land available suitable for use as natural open space because of topography and natural resources, there is very limited available land for more traditional parks, especially for larger parks containing sports fields.

Calabasas has established a strong foundation in its current park system. The proposed park system for Calabasas centers on the premise that a multi-use neighborhood or community park should be located within about a mile radius of most residents. Due to land constraints, the City will need to continue to find creative ways to meet the community's need for parks and facilities. For example, in places where park land is not available, a school site may be used to provide park facilities.

The City's core system of parks (neighborhood and community) will provide the basic recreational opportunities within Calabasas. Supplementing these parks will be specialized recreation facilities and open space areas serving the entire community.

C. Park Planning Concepts

Mini-Parks

Calabasas has two mini-parks in its current inventory. In areas where land is scarce, mini-parks can provide park facilities to neighborhoods that would otherwise not be served. However, it is not recommended that Calabasas seek to acquire any additional mini-parks due to high maintenance cost and limited recreation value of this type of park. If a mini-park site is proposed, it should only be added to the City's park inventory if it meets the following policies:

- The site should be in an area not already served by a park.
- The site should be accessible to the general public and have frontage on a public street. It should not be located within a gated or otherwise limited access neighborhood.

This policy should apply to undeveloped park sites and developed park sites homeowners associations or other groups wish to turn over to the City.

Neighborhood Parks

In most communities, neighborhood parks are located within walking distance of residents (about one-half mile). Although Calabasas would like to provide parks within walking distance of all its residents, there is recognition this is an unattainable goal due to the lack of suitable park land in the City. Therefore, Calabasas has established a goal of providing neighborhood or community park facilities within a mile of most residents.

A service area analysis of the existing park system revealed that many areas of Calabasas, particularly in eastern Calabasas, are not served by a neighborhood or community park. With the reclassification of Gates Canyon Park to a community park, Grape Arbor Park is the only neighborhood park in Calabasas.

Neighborhood parks are needed in eastern Calabasas. Due to a lack of suitable park land, neighborhood park facilities are proposed on school grounds to serve areas without parks. The school/park concept calls for upgrading a portion of the school grounds with better irrigation, play equipment, and turf, if necessary, and, if possible, providing small recreation facilities, such as picnic tables, benches and a shelter structure. Ideally, some facilities on school grounds would be available to the public during daytime hours. Since the school grounds are closed to the public during school hours, special fencing may be needed to allow public access to park facilities during the day. Due to site constraints, it may not be possible to meet this ideal at some school sites. To encourage LVUSD to participate in this concept, Calabasas should offer to partner in the development and maintenance costs of any new or improved park facilities. It is recommended the City seek formal use agreements with LVUSD to provide park facilities at the recommended school/park sites.

Community Parks

Due to land constraints, community parks in Calabasas are smaller than in many other communities. Since the sites are smaller than typical, the concept for the community parks in Calabasas is to provide at least one unique feature at each of the sites, in addition to basic park amenities, which include:

- Children's playground
- Open multi-use grass area
- Rest rooms
- Picnic areas
- Internal pathways
- Outdoor basketball court
- Site amenities (picnic tables, benches, bike racks, drinking fountains, trash receptacles, etc.)
- Parking appropriately sized for facilities included.

Any park site should include enough relatively level ground to provide the facilities listed above. Other facilities to include, if space permits, are sport fields (unlighted), sand or grass volleyball courts, and shelter buildings.

When Gates Canyon Park is upgraded, the western portion of Calabasas will be served by parks. Even with the proposed school parks, eastern Calabasas will continue to be underserved. Therefore, it is recommended that a community park offering larger scale opportunities for recreation be provided in eastern Calabasas. Despite the challenges in acquiring a large enough parcel, it is important to provide active recreation opportunities for east side residents, even if only a small community park can be provided. If an opportunity arises to secure a community park site on the east side, the City should act upon it quickly if the site is suitable.

Special Use Areas

Calabasas has four special use areas and based on public input, there is community interest in additional facilities to serve community needs. Some facilities may be provided as stand-alone special use areas, while others may be incorporated into other parks or city facilities. The discussion on Specialized Facilities provides greater detail on the proposed specialized facilities.

Natural Open Space / Greenways

The City of Calabasas has been very proactive in the protection of natural open space, both through ownership of land and through partnerships with other agencies. Calabasas owns almost 300 acres of natural open space, including the new Wild Walnut Park. In addition to the acreage owned by the City, there are hundreds of acres of natural open space within city limits owned by other agencies or non-profits. It is recommended that Calabasas seek, at a minimum, to maintain the current ratio of open space as the City's population grows. This refers to natural open space owned by the City of Calabasas. It is also recommended that the City of Calabasas continue to seek protection of open space that will preserve environmentally sensitive areas or protect steep hillsides, habitat, or rare species. Finally, Calabasas should continue to partner and coordinate with other agencies to provide protection of natural open space.

Trails

Many trails pass through the natural open space areas in Calabasas, including those areas owned by the City as well as those owned by other groups. In addition, several major regional trails pass through Calabasas. Concurrent with the preparation of the Park and Recreation Master Plan, the Calabasas Planning Division is in the process of creating a Trails Master Plan for the City. The Trails Master Plan will address trails standards and responsibilities, and will outline the roles of the Community Services Department and other City departments in providing trails to serve residents.

From a recreation standpoint, linkages and access are major considerations for a trail system. Linkages refer to the connections between hiking trails and the path systems in parks. Although the Trails Master Plan will address trails, it is recommended that trail linkages from existing parks be carefully considered to maximize opportunities for Calabasas residents to access the hiking trails. It is also recommended that the Trails Master Plan effort coordinate with the Park and Recreation Master Plan to ensure that these linkages are provided. In addition, the City should seek to provide trailheads at strategic trail access points so that Calabasas residents can easily access the trail system.

D. Specific Park Recommendations

The following are recommendations and suggested alternatives for existing and proposed park sites. It is important to note that the implementation of these recommendations and suggestions may vary, depending on available funds and the community's priorities for capital improvements. The index below indicates the page each site is discussed.

Table 7-1
Index of Park Recommendations
City of Calabasas

Site Number	Park Name	Page Number
EXISTING		
MP-1	Freedom Park	7-8
MP-2	Highlands Park	7-8
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CP-9	East Side Community Park	7-12

Park Type Key

MP	Mini Parks
NP	Neighborhood Parks
CP	Community Parks
SU	Special Use Areas
OS	Open Space Areas

**Table 7-2
Summary of Park Recommendations
City of Calabasas**

Site Number	Park Name	Existing Acres/ (Proposed Acres)	Action
MP-1	Freedom Park	1.7	Minor improvements
MP-2	Highlands Park	0.5	Minor improvements
NP-3	Grape Arbor Park	3.0	Upgrade
NP-4	Bay Laurel School Park (P)	(1.0)	Negotiation with LVUSD, development
NP-5	Chaparral School Park (P)	(1.0)	Negotiation with LVUSD, development
NP-6	The Oaks/Millennium School Park (P)	(1.0)	Negotiation with LVUSD, development
CP-7	Juan Bautista de Anza Park	8.0	Minor improvements
CP-8	Gates Canyon Park	7.0	Significant development
CP-9	East Side Community Park (P)	(7.0)	Planning, acquisition, and development
SU-10	Agoura Hills/Calabasas Community Center	4.5	Minor improvements
SU-11	Bark Park	0.8	Minor improvements
SU-12	Creekside Park	11.8	Minor improvements
SU-13	Tennis & Swim Center	7.5	Minor improvements

(P) Proposed Site

PARK LAYOUT PLAN

Freedom Park**MP-1**

Freedom Park is an existing mini-park located in a residential neighborhood. Freedom Park was the first park built by the City of Calabasas after incorporation. Although it is adjacent to the new A. C. Stelle Middle School, it can only be accessed from the residential neighborhood due to the steep topography.

Like the rest of Calabasas' parks, Freedom Park is in very good condition. Although it is small in size, it provides much needed recreation facilities in an area of Calabasas deficient in parks.

At publication, a proposal by the surrounding neighborhood to gate itself was under consideration at the City. If this proposal is approved, the neighborhood streets would become private property and Freedom Park would be located within the gated neighborhood. The neighborhood has proposed a public access walkway from Mulholland Highway to Freedom Park. However, there would be no vehicular access and the park is not visible from Mulholland. Although this park mainly serves residents of the surrounding neighborhood, losing direct public access to this park is not a good precedent to set. Despite the public access walkway, if access to the surrounding streets is limited, Freedom Park will essentially become a private neighborhood park that must be maintained and upgraded by the City.

Only minor improvements are needed at this park:

- Provide ADA access improvements.
- Provide a “doggie bag” station. In addition to placing one at Freedom Park, the City should consider providing these at most of the parks, or establish a program where they are provided in parks upon request.
- Additional Trees

Highlands Park**MP-2**

Highlands Park is an attractive existing mini-park located within an established residential neighborhood, tucked into the hillside. The surrounding neighborhood is characterized by steep topography, and the streets are quite narrow and don't have sidewalks. Access to the park is somewhat challenging due to the topography, the narrow streets, and limited on-street parking.

Despite its small size, Highlands Park is well designed, and appears to be fairly low maintenance. Only minor improvements are needed at this park:

- Provide erosion control measures.
- Provide ADA access improvements.

Grape Arbor Park**NP-3**

Grape Arbor Park is the only existing neighborhood park in the City of Calabasas. A former Los Angeles County park, Grape Arbor has a pleasant character and a nice range of facilities. Grape Arbor Park receives heavy use from residents throughout Calabasas, most likely a result of the very popular picnic shelter. According to the community survey results, Calabasas residents visit Grape Arbor Park an average of eight times a year.

Although Grape Arbor Park has a pleasant character, the parking and circulation within the park is awkward. The original layout of the park included a large parking area, part of which has been converted to a basketball court. The park is in need of a redesign to address the circulation and design issues.

Although permanent restrooms are usually not recommended for a neighborhood park, it is recommended that the restrooms at Grape Arbor be maintained and upgraded due to the popular picnic area and the heavy use this park receives.

The following improvements are proposed at Grape Arbor Park:

- Redesign the park, to include:
 - * Replacement/significant upgrade to the restroom
 - * Adding barbeques near the picnic shelter
 - * Providing improved volleyball court, including edging
 - * Providing an improved basketball court, including better layout within the park
 - * Providing an improved parking layout
 - * Providing improved pathways in the park
 - * Providing fully accessible play areas, including replacement of the older play area
- Implement the park redesign, reusing salvageable equipment and facilities.
- Explore the possibility of expanding the park by an acre or two. This should occur prior to any redesign of the park.

Bay Laurel Elementary School Park (proposed) NP-4

Bay Laurel Elementary School is a Las Virgenes Unified School District facility located in eastern Calabasas. The neighborhood surrounding Bay Laurel School has no public park facilities. As previously discussed, much of the east side of Calabasas is not served by neighborhood park facilities. Since the residential areas are mostly built out, opportunities to provide new parks are limited.

It is recommended that the City of Calabasas seek an agreement with LVUSD to use the play areas and grounds at Bay Laurel and two other elementary school sites. Calabasas and LVUSD have a successful record of cooperation and joint use of facilities, and the two agencies have developed use agreements for other sites.

This concept calls for use agreements allowing public use of the facilities after school hours. This will help serve some of the need for neighborhood park facilities, although it doesn't address the need for neighborhood park facilities during school hours. If possible, signs should be provided that identify public use hours at each of the sites.

The following recommendations are proposed for this site:

- Negotiate a use agreement with LVUSD allowing public use of the school site after school hours. To make this attractive for the school district, the City could offer to help pay for future playground upgrades or to assist in the maintenance of the site. Also, the City should pay for any signs identifying public use hours.

Chaparral Elementary School Park (proposed) NP-5

See the recommendations for Bay Laurel Elementary School Park, site NP-4.

The Oaks/New Millennium Elementary School Park (proposed) NP-6

It is important to note there is some concern on the part of the community about the possibility of this school being located behind the gates of a private community. There was concern about public funds being used to fund park improvements on a site that may not be accessible to the public. It may be prudent for the City to wait until this site is developed to determine how the access arrangements work and whether there truly is public access to the site.

If the site issue can be addressed, this school site (if large enough) could perhaps offer an opportunity for a school park, where a portion of the school playground is upgraded with better irrigation and turf and additional recreation facilities, such as a better children's playground, picnic areas, a small picnic shelter, and a basketball court. Since the school playground is closed to the public during school hours, special fencing may be required to allow access to the public portion of the site.

The following recommendations are proposed for this site:

- Determine whether there will be public access to the school site.
- If there is public access, see the recommendations for Bay Laurel Elementary School Park, site NP-4.
- Alternatively, if the site permits and an agreement can be reached with LVUSD, design and develop neighborhood park facilities at this site. Facilities to include are:
 - * A children's playground
 - * A small shelter structure
 - * An open multi-use grass area
 - * Internal pathways
 - * An outdoor basketball court or half court, if space permits
 - * Site amenities (picnic tables, benches, bike racks, drinking fountains, trash receptacles, etc.)
 - * Fencing if needed to address access issues.

Juan Bautista De Anza Park

CP-7

De Anza Park is the signature park in Calabasas. Heavily used, this park accommodates a wide variety of community activities. It contains three large group picnic areas shaded by attractive arbor structures that seat 80 each. The park contains three separate age-specific play areas, and a small water feature suitable for young children. There is a community building containing restrooms and meeting spaces, as well as an administrative office. The park is used for organized basketball and roller hockey league play, and for City organized sport programs for very young children. A paved court area containing three basketball courts is also designed for use as a single roller hockey court, and court time is split between the two sports. De Anza also includes a multi-use backstop, which is used for T-ball. The path system at De Anza contains some interpretive signage and provides links to the hiking trails on surrounding natural open space lands. Due to the popularity of this park, the 40-space parking lot is frequently filled. Spillover parking occurs on-street.

Minor improvements are suggested to improve De Anza Park's function as a community park:

- Provide additional shade throughout park, especially over the play areas. Shade canopies should be considered for the play areas and additional large trees should be planted along pathways and sitting areas.
- Improve the multi-use field (turf and grade modifications) but don't provide foul line fencing and similar improvements that would impede the vistas across the park.
- Provide permanent storage building(s) that complement the building architecture. The location of these structures should be convenient for park maintenance personnel, but not in a highly visible location of the park. Consider relocating non-park storage uses to a less visible site, such as Creekside Park. The goal of providing additional storage should be removal of the shipping containers currently used for storage, and integration of storage facilities into the overall site plan.
- Provide modifications to the hillside trail heading north from the park to reduce erosion. This includes improved trail signage.

Gates Canyon Park

CP-8

Gates Canyon Park is a former Los Angeles County park located just outside of the current Calabasas city limits. The county transferred ownership of this park to the City of Calabasas in 2000. Although it was developed in 1993, this park was built as a neighborhood park and is therefore underdeveloped as a community park.

Gates Canyon Park has two lighted tennis courts, a lighted basketball court, a picnic shelter, a small play area, a fitness course, and a multi-use ball field. There is a large parking lot (for the uses currently at the site), as well as a long street frontage providing opportunities for on-street parking. Gates Canyon Park also contains the Home Garden Learning Center, an educational display and outdoor classroom about environmentally friendly home gardening run by Los Angeles County.

There may be an opportunity for expansion of the park to the north, which is quite level and very suitable for park development. This site appears to be part of the common area established for the Mountain View Planned Unit Development.

Additional facilities are needed at Gates Canyon Park to improve its function as a community park. A detailed master plan for the site should be prepared and should consider the improvements listed below. It should be noted that the master plan for the site

will need to prioritize these potential facilities and that all of the facilities may not be included in the final master plan.

- Explore acquiring additional land to the north.
- Gates Canyon is a gateway to the Upper Las Virgenes Canyon Open Space Preserve and should connect to the Ahmanson Preserve trail system, if possible. A trailhead should be considered, including interpretive signage.
- As part of design development for improvements to the park, complete a master plan for development of Gates Canyon Park that takes into account any potential land acquisitions, as well as potential linkages to the open space preserve. The master plan process should include additional community input into priorities for the site.
- Address the existing restroom, either by upgrading, replacing, or relocating it. This should not be accomplished until an overall development plan for the park is completed, because the restroom location may change.
- Consider providing aquatic facilities at this site. This could be a medium to large-sized water playground, a 25-yd pool, a leisure pool, or a combination of aquatic facilities. Aquatic facilities should include locker rooms, restrooms, and concessions and ample shaded areas on the decks. In addition, a reservable picnic area for birthday parties and other parties should be included in the design of the deck area. Additional discussion of aquatic facilities is contained in Section 7F.
- Provide play equipment for respective age categories with safety surfacing and curbing. New play equipment should be usable by children with disabilities, as well as children without disabilities.
- Gates Canyon Park is a potential site for an exciting children's play environment, which could be provided instead of standard play equipment as recommended above. See the discussion on special recreation facilities in Section 7E.
- Provide more picnic shelters.
- Due to the popularity of tennis in Calabasas, additional tennis courts could be considered for this park. A small tennis complex, as previously proposed by the Tennis & Swim Center tennis vendor, is an option that could be considered. If aquatic facilities are provided, the tennis complex could share its locker and restroom facilities. Additional tennis courts should be sited as part of the overall park design.
- Consider providing a roller hockey rink and/or basketball courts at this location, if the overall site design can accommodate it. This could be a facility dedicated to roller hockey or basketball, which would make the De Anza courts available for the other sport full-time, or it could be a

combined facility similar to the De Anza basketball/roller hockey facility.

- Consider providing space for community gardens at this park. The Home Garden Learning Center could be reworked to incorporate community garden plots nearby it.
- If the park can be expanded, the area to the north should be considered for sport fields, in particular soccer fields, if space permits.
- Gates Canyon is potentially an alternative location for a permanent, in-ground skate park. See the discussion on special recreation facilities in Section 7.E.

East Side Community Park (proposed)

CP-9

As previously discussed, the east side of Calabasas lacks park facilities, and the proposed school/parks will not be sufficient to serve the entire area. One community park in the vicinity of Old Topanga Canyon Road and Mulholland Highway would provide community park service to the entire east portion of Calabasas.

Much of eastern Calabasas is already developed, steeply sloped, or otherwise protected as open space. Finding a parcel with enough level ground may be a challenge, but should be a priority for the City due to the lack of park services in this part of the community. Due to land constraints, the site for the east side community park site may need to be smaller than the two other community parks in Calabasas.

If the equestrian facility fronting on Mulholland Highway on the west side of Old Topanga Road ever became available, it would be an ideal location for a community park and should be a priority for acquisition. The City should consider discussing with the owner their interest in purchasing this property if the owner were ever interested in selling. Acquisition, planning, and development are needed for the east side community park:

- Identify and acquire a park site in the vicinity of Old Topanga Canyon Rd. and Mulholland Highway. The site should be a minimum of 5 acres, with at least 2 to 3 acres fairly level. More acreage would be better if it were available.
- At a minimum, this park should include:
 - * Play areas for respective age groups
 - * Open multi-use grass area
 - * Rest rooms
 - * Picnic areas (at least 3)
 - * Picnic shelter (to accommodate groups of at least 30)
 - * Internal pathways
 - * Outdoor basketball courts

- * Site amenities (picnic tables, benches, bike racks, drinking fountains, trash receptacles, etc.)
- * Parking appropriately sized for facilities included.
- If enough land could be acquired, this park should also include sport fields (unlighted). Soccer and baseball fields are needed.
- Space permitting, the East Side Community Park is a potential site for an exciting children's play environment if it is not provided elsewhere, as described under Gates Canyon Park, Site CP-8.
- Other facilities that could be included if a large enough site were acquired are sand or grass volleyball courts, more extensive play areas and specialized facilities, such as a teen center or a skate park.

Agoura Hills/Calabasas Community Center

SU-10

This facility was built through a partnership between the cities of Calabasas and Agoura Hills, and is managed by a joint powers authority composed of representatives from both cities. The facility is intended to become self-supporting, but currently is subsidized by both cities. The staff at the facility are City of Agoura Hills employees, but are paid through the Community Center budget, which is managed by the joint powers authority. Fitness memberships are available, but a cap on memberships went into effect in September 2001 because the fitness facilities were at capacity during peak hours. There is a waiting list. Drop-in use is available at any time, but is more expensive than the membership rate.

The Community Center is a 30,000-square foot structure built in 1999. It includes an aerobics room, outdoor courts, a 40' climbing wall, a senior citizen lounge, a 5,000-square foot meeting room, a 10,000-square foot gymnasium with a full-sized basketball and volleyball courts, and a fitness center.

Since the Community Center is operated by a joint powers authority, any proposals to make changes will have to be brought through the authority. Minor changes to this facility are recommended:

- Expand fitness facilities, if possible. If the fitness facilities could be expanded, additional memberships could be provided. Consider converting the meeting room to an exercise and fitness room, particularly if the rental or program revenue generated by the room is not significant. If the City of Calabasas provides a senior center (as discussed in Section

7.E), the senior lounge could be converted to an exercise and fitness room.

- Move the reception area closer to the front door to allow better tracking of facility use.
- Provide additional basketball courts (outdoors), if possible

Bark Park

SU-11

Bark Park is a small, heavily used dog off-leash area located on a portion of Las Virgenes Municipal Water District's composting facility site off Las Virgenes Road. It is adjacent to a parking area that accommodates 35 cars. LVMWD built this lot as overflow parking for their main office building in order to meet parking code requirements. The City of Calabasas leases the fenced dog area from LVMWD for \$1 per year. LVMWD staff has indicated the District would be unwilling to allow the City to expand either the off-leash area or the parking lot.

Bark Park is a fully fenced off-leash area, with lights that operate on a user-initiated timer. There is a portable restroom and a dog watering facility. However, due to the heavy use, the turf is very worn and very little grass remains. As a result, the Bark Park can become very muddy during rainy periods or after the irrigation turns on.

It is recommended the City consider adding a second off-leash area at another park site, preferably in eastern Calabasas. If implemented, as discussed in Section 7.E, this may alleviate some of the use at Bark Park. A separate area for smaller dogs should be provided either at Bark Park or at the proposed new off-leash area.

Additional recommendations for Bark Park include:

- Paving the entrance gate areas, which are the most heavily traveled areas, to reduce wear and tear and cut down on muddiness on the site
- Consider replacing some of the turf with decomposed granite, sand, or another similar material (or even porous paving) to hold up to the dog traffic at the site
- Provide landscaping and lighting improvements.
- In a year or two, revisit the discussion of expanding the fenced area at Bark Park with LVMWD staff, because even a small increase in off-leash area would help disperse the use.

Creekside Park**SU-12**

Creekside Park is an 11.8 acre park in a canyon off Old Topanga Canyon Road, with an access from Dry Canyon Cold Creek Road. The site contains a building with two multi-purpose rooms, a children's play area, an outdoor basketball court, and a very small youth baseball field. There is a large parking area, given the facilities at the site.

The City purchased this property from a Pre-School operator and continued the licensed Pre-School program at the site. The program is popular and the City offers very flexible accommodations to Pre-School customers in terms of scheduling. Due to the current conditions of the state-licensed Pre-School program, access to this park is limited during the day.

Even though there is a shortage of sport fields in Calabasas, the Creekside field does not appear to get much use. This may be a result of a variety of factors, such as access limitations to the site, the size and condition of the field, or the lack of visibility. Creekside's field is undersized and not suitable for play much beyond T-ball. Although turf condition could be improved, there is a very limited area for field expansion. Also, spectator areas are very limited, and the site is inefficient for games because there is only one field. There is no field lighting, and none is recommended because of the limited usability of the field and the preference for dark skies in the community. In addition, the site access issues make scheduling games or practices challenging.

Although Creekside Park includes the most acreage of any park site (other than natural open space sites) in Calabasas, it has less usable acreage than either De Anza Park or Gates Canyon Park. Due to its somewhat hidden location and the configuration of the site, it is not suitable to serve as a community park. It is recommended that Creekside Park be mainly used as a Pre-School site, and that the Pre-School operation be expanded if there is a market. Compatible special use activities could also occur at this site, such as children's arts programming.

Minor improvements are recommended for this site:

- Expand the Pre-School, including adding classrooms if necessary, if there is a market. A market feasibility study should be conducted before expansion occurs.
- Consider locating a fenced off-leash area on what is currently the ball field at Creekside Park. There appears to be a need for more off-leash space in Calabasas. Because the existing Bark Park is in western Calabasas, it is recommended a second site be established in eastern Calabasas to serve residents on that side of the community. Since off-leash areas tend to be

destinations, an off-leash area at Creekside Park would likely generate use even though the site has been challenging for other park uses. Off-leash areas tend to be most heavily used before and after work, which would concentrate use at times when the Pre-School is not in operation. If an off-leash area is established, it should be set up similar to Bark Park with fencing and low level lighting on timers.

- Consider adding children’s arts and cultural programming to this site during times when the Pre-School is not in session.

Calabasas Tennis & Swim Center

SU-13

The Tennis & Swim Center (TSC) is a former private club purchased by the City in 1994. The facility contains 16 tennis courts: 15 hard courts and 1 clay court. It also contains an 8-lane, 25-meter outdoor pool, three fitness rooms, an aerobics/dance room, two social/meeting rooms, and locker rooms. The TSC offers seasonal food service, a playground, and drop-in childcare.

The pool at the TSC is the only public pool in Calabasas. It is open year-round, and is heavily used, particularly in summer when the City’s camps are in session. The TSC is run as an enterprise fund, which means it pays for its own operational costs, including the pool, through the revenue it generates. The TSC can be visited on a drop-in basis, but tennis and health memberships are also available. The facility is so popular there is a cap on memberships, with a waiting list of more than 500. To help address the waiting list, the TSC created an “off-peak” membership option that offers a reduced membership rate for limitation on the hours of use. Memberships are open to non-residents, which has been a source of minor conflict. However, according to City officials, the facility was purchased using grant funds that do not permit limiting memberships to city residents only.

The TSC fronts on Calabasas Lake, a privately owned lake with a perimeter walking path. The surrounding homeowners associations have put fencing in place across the TSC frontage that limits access to the walking path for TSC patrons.

There are plans for improvements to the TSC, including a therapeutic/teaching pool, to be completed in Fall 2004. It is anticipated that TSC staff will continue to identify improvements and upgrades to the facility over the coming years. This plan does not attempt to identify all of the routine facility maintenance the TSC requires, or the equipment purchases or facility adjustments required to maintain TSC’s market share.

Minor improvements are recommended for this site, in addition to the previously mentioned planned improvements:

- Improve parking lot and landscaping areas.
- Seek to accommodate the waiting list demand for this site, either by expanding facilities here or providing them at other sites. One option for expanding tennis facilities off-site is to explore a use agreement with LVUSD for improvement and use of the tennis courts at Calabasas High School.
- Add more fitness and weight room space, if feasible given the site constraints.
- Consider adding an outdoor shower to the pool deck area.
- Add a running path around the site perimeter if an agreement cannot be reached with surrounding homeowners associations to allow use of the lake path by TSC members.

Wild Walnut Park

SU-14

Wild Walnut Park is a new park located on the west side of the intersection of Old Topanga Canyon Road and Mulholland Highway. This park is part of a larger open space parcel owned by the City. A master plan for this park was completed concurrent with the Park and Recreation Master Plan. The community vision for Wild Walnut Park is depicted in the master plan, which calls for a more passive park featuring a looped nature trail, interpretive signage, and a picnic area, with connections to the regional trail system.

The first phase of the Wild Walnut Park master plan received grant funding in the summer of 2003, with construction completed in December 2003. Implementation of Phase II is expected by 2005 or 2006. Implementation of Phase III is partly dependent on cost and the development of the Mountains Restoration Trust interpretive center located across Mulholland Highway from Wild Walnut.

The recommendation for Wild Walnut Park is implementation of the master plan.

West Side Park Site

SU-15

A master plan for this as-yet unnamed park was begun during the Park and Recreation Master Plan effort. The site contains 1.8 acres at the intersection of Lost Hills Road and Las Virgenes

Road, separated from De Anza Park by the Las Virgenes Creek corridor.

Options for this site were being reviewed when the Park and Recreation Master Plan was prepared. It is recommended the master plan for the site be implemented once it is completed and adopted.

E. Recreation Facilities

Calabasas has four special use facilities: The Agoura Hills/Calabasas Community Center, the Calabasas Tennis & Swim Center, Bark Park, and Creekside Park. Based on the survey results and input received at the community meetings, there is interest in additional specialized recreation facilities to serve the community's needs.

Calabasas residents are highly educated and sophisticated in their recreational activities and needs. The City's four existing special use facilities: Agoura Hills/Calabasas Community Center, the Calabasas Tennis & Swim Center, Bark Park, and Creekside Park, reflect this sophistication. It is also not surprising that Calabasans have identified a need for additional specialized recreation facilities to serve the community.

Many of the specialized facilities identified during the planning process could be provided either in conjunction with other facilities, or as a stand-alone facility. Specific locations have been identified for some of the facilities. For others, site selection criteria are provided. The City has been successful at taking advantage of opportunities to acquire park land and facilities when they have arisen in the past. Due to land constraints in Calabasas, it is recommended the City continue on the same course, and be prepared to act on opportunities when they are presented.

Westside Pre-School

A westside Pre-School was one of the needs identified during the planning process. There is a waiting list at the Creekside Pre-School, and that location is not convenient for west side residents. The City has also discussed the need for convenient Pre-School facilities with some of the businesses located in Calabasas. A westside Pre-School could meet the needs of those who work in Calabasas, too.

No specific location has been identified for the westside Pre-School, and there is no suitable site already City-owned. It is not recommended that the City locate a Pre-School operation on any of its existing neighborhood or community parks.

The City should work with state licensing representatives to determine the requirements for a new facility, in terms of square footage and recreation space. The conditions placed on the Creekside facility are not necessarily applicable to a new facility at a different, more urban location.

As a general siting guideline, a westside Pre-School should be located on an arterial or collector street in a location with enough space to establish and operate a licensed Pre-School operation. The Pre-School could be located in an existing building, or in new construction. The City could seek a stand-alone facility, and may find space along Las Virgenes Road either north or south of Highway 101. However, any site in this corridor is likely to be expensive if the City plans to acquire it. A location that may be suitable is the former kindergarten building at A. E. Wright Middle School, if an agreement can be reached with LVUSD.

Another option may be to seek a cooperative venture with one of the local employers, where the employer provides or leases space to the Pre-School, which the City operates, potentially giving preference to employees. A third option to consider is keeping some of the space at the current City Hall for use as a Pre-School facility once City Hall offices move to the proposed Civic Center. This would only be workable if the existing City Hall space could be redesigned to comply with state regulations.

LVUSD has expressed interest in a collaborative venture. The City should continue to discuss the possibilities for collaboration.

Teen Center

A teen center was identified as a need by a broad spectrum of Calabasans. It is recommended a free-standing teen center be established in Calabasas. No suitable location for a teen center is available at any of Calabasas' existing park sites. If possible, the facility should be centrally located so youth from the two middle schools and the high school can conveniently access it. An eastside location is preferable to a westside location because two schools are located on the eastside, as well as the major commercial area. Frontage or convenient freeway access is not necessary, although the location should be convenient to both east and west Calabasas.

One ideal site for a teen center is a former driving range located on a hillside on the south side of Highway 101. According to the Community Development Department, a private developer has apparently been discussing development ideas for this vacant site, but if the development proposal does not go forward, the City

should explore the possibility of acquiring this site for a teen center. Another option for a teen center could be to develop the facility in a space at one of the local shopping centers. This may be cost prohibitive, however.

The most important thing to keep in mind when selecting a site is the “coolness” factor. For this reason, the Civic Center is not recommended as a location for the Teen Center. The teen council or an ad hoc teen center advisory group should be involved in the review of potential sites to ensure the selected site is attractive to teens. This group should also be asked to provide input on the facility design and programming, as well as to name the center.

As part of the development of a teen center, transportation should be considered. Particularly for middle school students who are not old enough to drive, transportation will be necessary between the schools and the center. This could be accomplished through use of the City’s existing trolley or shuttle services, or possibly through the use of LVUSD’s school bus service.

Excellent input on ideas for a teen center were put forth by middle school and high school students at the youth workshops in February 2003. Appendix D contains a more detailed summary of the youth workshops. In addition to being involved in siting the teen center, youth should be involved in the design of the facility and in naming it. Based on public input to date, the following facilities are suggested for inclusion in the Teen Center.

Facilities to Be Considered for the Teen Center:

- “Hangout” space. There should be separate spaces for younger and older teens
- Computer/Study room
- Game room (pool tables, air hockey, etc.)
- Classroom/Meeting room space
- Support facilities, including office space for staff, storage, rest rooms, etc.
- Vending or concessions, especially if the site is not near any restaurants or coffee shops
- Outdoor “hangout” space
- Outdoor basketball courts
- The skate park could be located at the teen center, if the site is suitable
- Parking and bicycle parking

Senior Center

The only senior facility currently provided in Calabasas is a senior lounge room at the Community Center. In general, the population in the United States is aging. Calabasas has a higher median age than the county or state, and several of the neighboring communities have a higher than typical percentage of seniors. Given these trends, it is likely the senior population in Calabasas will increase in the coming years. It is recommended that Calabasas provide a small senior center to meet the needs of the senior population.

A senior center could be incorporated into the planned civic complex, if space permits. The civic center would be a good senior center site because of its central location. In addition, there are efficiencies that can be realized by combining facilities. If space does not permit inclusion of a senior center in the civic center, it could be a stand-alone structure. A stand-alone senior center should also be centrally located, near an activity generator such as a commercial area. The list below includes the facilities that should be considered for a small Senior Center for the City of Calabasas

Facilities to Be Considered for a Senior Center:

- Two (2) classrooms/meeting rooms
- Lounge area
- Library area
- Fitness/exercise room
- Game room
- Support facilities, including reception area, office space for staff, storage, rest rooms, etc.
- Multi-purpose/dining room with kitchen facilities

Senior centers typically are busiest during the daytime hours. Senior center facilities, such as classrooms or a multi-purpose room could be used for other programming in the evenings, or when otherwise not used for senior activities.

Skate Park

In many communities, much attention is devoted to the need for a skate park. Based on input received from the community, from the youth, and from the Parks and Recreation Commission, it is recommended that the City develop a permanent in-ground skate park for its youth.

The City attempted a trial temporary skate facility at Gates Canyon Park. Although initial use of the facility was high, it dropped off after a few months. This was a novice skate facility and probably didn't offer enough challenges for those beyond

novice ability. Therefore, the lack of success should not necessarily be written off as a demonstration of the lack of interest in a skate park. The youth input and the general consensus of staff indicated that youth did not find the temporary site challenging. In addition, Gates Canyon Park is an out-of-way location for many youth, and is not convenient to either of the middle schools or the high school.

The skate park should be a permanent, in-ground facility designed with participation from local youth. In addition, the skate park location should be highly visible from surrounding streets for safety and security, and to attract youth. It should be near a center of activity. A skate park could be a stand-alone site, or it could be located as part of or adjacent to another facility, which would make visibility from streets important.

An excellent site for a skate park would be the small parcel adjacent to De Anza Park, at the intersection of Lost Hills Road and Calabasas Hills Road. Although the City does not currently have title to this site, City officials have indicated it was promised to be dedicated to Calabasas when the neighboring subdivision was established. If this information is correct, it may be possible for the City to acquire this parcel easily. Even if the development conditions did not reserve this parcel for public use, it may be possible for the City to purchase it. A skate park at this site would be highly visible, and take advantage of the facilities at De Anza Park (restrooms, vending, etc). Also, although the site is too small for most other uses, the flat area of the site is about the right size for a skate park. Finally, the site could offer the opportunity to build a unique in-ground facility that takes inspiration from the surrounding hilly topography, and perhaps even uses integrally colored concrete so the concrete blends into the local soil.

The proposed Teen Center would be another excellent location for a skate park, if the selected site were large enough to support a skate park as well.

School sites also offer potential sites for a skate park. Middle school sites or the high school would be most suitable, if an agreement could be reached with LVUSD.

Performing Arts Stage/Flexible Use Room with Stage

According the results of the community survey, there is a high degree of interest in cultural and performing arts in Calabasas, and in special events involving cultural and performing arts. A performing arts stage has previously been discussed as a possible element of the proposed Calabasas Civic Center. In addition, Calabasas High School is planning to construct a performing arts

center on its campus. Based on the results of the park and recreation master planning process, it is recommended that a performing arts stage or a flexible use room with a stage be included in the Civic Center, be constructed adjacent to it, or be provided in cooperation with Calabasas High School to meet community recreation needs. The City should review these alternatives further to determine which option would best meet its needs.

The benefit of a room designed for flexible use is that it could also be used for meetings, events, and rentals, in addition to meeting the need for cultural and performing arts space. A flexible space could also accommodate a variety of theater configurations, unlike a theater with fixed seating. A flexible use space could become a source of rental income, because there appears to be a need for private event space in Calabasas. Specialized folding theater seating is available and could be used in a flexible use room with a stage.

Cultural Arts Exhibit Space

Due to the high level of interest in cultural arts activities in Calabasas, cultural arts exhibit space should be provided at the new Civic Center or in another City-owned facility. This could be as simple as an exhibit area in the building lobby, or be as elaborate as a gallery.

Children's Play Environment

Calabasas provides standard playground equipment within its existing parks, and several of its parks have age-specific play equipment. While Calabasas provides higher quality playground equipment that generally meets ADA requirements, none of its playgrounds allow for interactive play for children of all abilities. Input received during the planning process identified a need for play equipment that can be used by children with disabilities. Public input also highlighted an interest in providing facilities for children, and an interest in providing educational opportunities about the local environment.

For these reasons, it is recommended that a special children's play environment be developed that contains a wide variety of play facilities accessible to children of all ages and abilities. This type of facility can serve as an educational resource, providing play and learning opportunities through direct contact with the natural world. A play environment of this type should be unique enough to warrant a drive across town to visit it, and large enough to hold a child's attention for several hours. It should also provide a

learning opportunity about local cultural history and the natural environment.

A small-scale play environment is being considered as an option for the undeveloped Lost Hills/Las Virgenes parcel. The scale of the Lost Hills/Las Virgenes site is such that it cannot support a larger play environment. If this proposal goes forward, the City should still consider providing a large play environment at another location. Gates Canyon Park or the proposed east side community park are two locations that could accommodate a facility of this type.

Community Gardens

There are currently no community garden plots in the City of Calabasas. Community input during the planning process suggested that there may be a need for community gardens in Calabasas. Community gardens require minimal infrastructure, just fencing, a water source, and ideally a small amount of storage space for tools. Residents then rent plots for a nominal annual fee and are responsible for planting and maintaining their own plots. Most community gardening programs include guidelines about pesticide use, etc.

The City should consider establishing a two to three year trial for community gardens. A community garden site with at least 10 to 15 plots should be developed and advertised to the public. If the initial garden site is a success, additional plots or sites can be added. If residents aren't interested, the community garden area can be re-established in turf at the end of the trial period.

Community gardens can be “messy” in appearance, because they are working garden sites. For this reason, prominent locations are not recommended. However, gardens need to be sited in locations with good exposure and access to water. Gates Canyon Park may be a good location, especially because of the Home Garden Learning Center already established there. With the exception of Gates Canyon, most of the existing City parks do not have sufficient space to support community gardens. Grape Arbor could potentially provide space, particularly if it can be expanded somewhat.

Sport Fields

There is a shortage of sport fields in Calabasas, and soccer fields in particular are needed. A few new fields have recently become available to the public at A.C. Stelle Middle School through Calabasas' use agreement with LVUSD, but additional fields are still needed to meet the City's needs. The challenge in attempting

to meet the sports field need in Calabasas is the lack of relatively level land, and the lack of larger parcels. In addition, the City has a number of scenic areas and overlay zones that are not conducive to night-time lighting, which can help provide more game time when the number of fields is limited.

Due to challenges that terrain and parcelization present in Calabasas, it is unlikely the City will be able to meet field needs in the short-term. The following recommendations address maintaining the existing sports field inventory and suggest ways of providing more fields where possible, but will not fully meet the City's sports field needs:

- Community Services should consider taking over the scheduling of all LVUSD fields within Calabasas city limits. If this occurs, specific policies on field use and priority will need to be adopted.
- Community Services should work with LVUSD and the baseball league to secure the fields at Lupin Hill Elementary School for continuing local baseball league use. These fields are currently used by the league and no changes are anticipated. However, if the local leagues lost their field time at Lupin Hill, this would have a major impact on recreation activities for Calabasas youth because these constitute the bulk of the baseball field inventory in Calabasas. For this reason, it is recommended the City be proactive in ensuring that these fields remain available for local public use.
- If space for fields becomes available, it is recommended that soccer and baseball fields be the top priorities. Although there are limited softball fields available in Calabasas, it appears local league needs are being satisfied at Hughes Adult School, which is outside of the City of Calabasas.
- If the site selected for the east side community park is large enough and contains enough relatively level acreage, additional fields could potentially be provided.
- If Gates Canyon Park can be expanded to the north, additional fields could be located there, because the area is generally level.
- When LVUSD constructs the planned new elementary school near the New Millennium (The Oaks) development, there may be an opportunity to provide additional sport fields, depending on the site selected. If space is available for fields, the City should discuss a partnership with LVUSD where the City pays for upgraded fields in exchange for public use.

- Other school sites may offer opportunities for partnerships where the City upgrades fields in exchange for public use.
- Although there is a need for fields and a high level of community interest in a sports complex, there is no topographically suitable location large enough for a field complex within the existing Calabasas limits. Long term, the Calabasas landfill offers the best opportunity for a large park and sports complex. However, the landfill is not scheduled for closure for many years and might not be usable for recreation purposes for years after that. Despite the drawbacks of the landfill site, it is a large site convenient to Calabasas and that has the potential to be developed into an attractive recreational facility that could include sport fields. It is recommended that the City continue to monitor the status of the landfill and seek to be involved with decisions regarding the future use of the site.

For planning purposes, the City should budget \$50,000 to upgrade an existing school field; \$175,000 to provide a new baseball field including foul line fencing; and \$125,000 to provide a new soccer field (in 2004 dollars).

F. Aquatic Facilities

The hot summers in Calabasas make swimming a popular activity. The only public pool in Calabasas is at the Tennis & Swim Center. There is a pool at Calabasas High School, but it is currently not available for public use. A number of private homeowners associations in Calabasas have pools, but these are typically small pools similar to what one might find in a private yard.

TSC Pool

The TSC pool is an 8-lane, 25-yard outdoor pool. It is heavily used by TSC members and drop-ins, and is the site of the City's popular swim instruction and swim team programs. Aquatic exercise also occurs in the pool. In addition, the TSC pool is used by the City's day camps in the summer time, which adds to the volume. The swim lessons program is extremely popular, and generates quite a bit of revenue. Since the TSC is an enterprise fund, revenues generated from the facility completely cover the cost of operations, including the cost of operating the pool.

The TSC is adding a therapeutic/teaching pool in the fall of 2004 to complement the existing 25-yard pool, and is planning to add a water playground on the pool deck area in the future. No additional changes are proposed to the TSC pool.

Calabasas High School Pool

The City should consider discussing the possibility of a joint use agreement for the pool at Calabasas High School with LVUSD. A use agreement should also include the use of locker rooms. The high school pool could help alleviate crowding at the TSC pool, and would be particularly useful when the City's popular day camps are in session, but school is not.

Potential New Aquatic Facilities

New aquatic facilities should be considered in western Calabasas. This could be a standard 25-yard pool, a leisure pool with a zero depth entry, a medium- to large-sized water playground, or a combination of aquatic facilities. Land availability, the availability of funding for this type of capital project, and operations funding should be major factors in the decision of whether to add new aquatic facilities and which type to add. A detailed cost/revenue study should be completed prior to providing additional aquatic facilities to ensure that the City is able to support the ongoing operations and maintenance costs.

If a second pool is desired, it should have more of a focus on leisure and recreational swimming than the TSC pool, but with some lap swimming times and aquatic exercise classes offered. Swim lessons should also be offered at a second pool and, depending on the projected demand for lessons, a small teaching pool may be warranted. The day camps would go to this site for swimming, not to the TSC. If a second pool is constructed, it should include small locker room facilities, a refreshment stand, and plenty of shade on the deck area. A reservable area for birthday parties and private parties should also be included on the pool deck. The cost/revenue study may also identify other facilities that could generate revenue to offset operating costs.

A large water playground, either a stand-alone facility or located adjacent to a pool would provide additional aquatics options for Calabasas residents. This type of facility is very popular with children and provides more of a play environment than a traditional pool. Leisure pools have also become very popular in recent years and provide a different type of aquatics experience than a traditional 6-lane pool. These tend to be costly, but revenues can be higher than for a traditional pool.

The ideal site for new aquatics facilities is Gates Canyon Park. The concept for community parks in Calabasas is to provide at least one unique facility at each of the community parks. Gates Canyon is underdeveloped, has adequate space for a pool, and has the capacity for adequate parking as well as opportunities for on-street parking. However, there are a number of competing

priorities for this site and there may not be sufficient space to accommodate them. It may not be feasible to locate a pool at Gates Canyon due to land constraints or results of a cost/revenue study.

De Anza Park is another potential location for new aquatics facilities. Although De Anza would be a convenient location for use by day camps and the group picnic area, there are serious parking issues at this site. De Anza is the most developed City park and has the most special facilities (including a picnic area that can accommodate up to 240), but its parking lot can only accommodate about 40 cars. The addition of another special facility such as a pool that attracts even more use to the site should only be considered if the parking issue can be addressed or if some of the existing special facilities can be relocated to a different community park site to reduce demand.

G. Natural Open Space

Natural Open Space Areas/Greenways are defined as undeveloped lands primarily left in their natural environment with recreation uses as a secondary objective. These are usually owned or managed by a governmental agency and may or may not have public access. This type of land often includes habitat corridors, wetlands, steep hillsides or other similar spaces. Environmentally sensitive areas can be acquired for open space and can include wildlife habitats, stream and creek corridors, or unique and/or endangered plant species.

The City of Calabasas owns approximately 287.6 acres of open space. Open space sites include:

- * Micor properties – 33.4 Acres
- * De Anza Open Space – 180.7 Acres
- * Wild Walnut Open Space – 25 Acres
- * Civic Center Open Space – 20 Acres
- * Dorothy Road properties – 23.5 Acres
- * Dry Canyon Cold Creek Open Space – 5 Acres

In addition to the open space acreage owned by Calabasas, there are hundreds of acres of open space within city limits owned by other agencies or non-profits. There are also many large open space areas near the City, such as Malibu Creek State Park and the many open spaces affiliated with the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. Calabasas has developed very successful partnerships with groups, such as the Mountains Restoration Trust and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, which has resulted in the protection of additional open space not necessarily owned by the City. A number of the homeowners

associations (HOA's) in Calabasas also own open space areas established when the subdivisions were platted. These areas are typically maintained as part of the HOA's maintenance district, which is paid for by the homeowners.

According to the input received during the planning process, citizens in Calabasas place a high value on open space and a very high percentage think the City should be aggressive in acquiring additional open space. Calabasas residents also value natural area trails. As a minimum standard for open space protection, it is recommended the city maintain a similar ratio of open space land inventory to what it has now, which is about 15 acres per 1,000 population. This includes City-owned open space only and does not include open space owned by non-profits, HOA's, and other agencies. To maintain the current standard of open space protection as the City's population grows, it is projected that at least 123 additional acres of open space will be needed by the year 2020. This should be considered a minimum, given the overwhelming interest among community members in open space protection.

Open Space Responsibility

Currently, no single department at the City of Calabasas is assigned responsibility for open space and natural areas. The open space identified above was acquired by the City in recent years, and with the high level of interest among citizens and elected officials, a continued commitment to open space protection is likely. In addition, the City is responsible for the maintenance of open space areas owned by HOAs through its management of the maintenance districts and their associated landscape maintenance contracts.

A Natural Resources Manager position needs to be established, with responsibility for the City's open space areas and natural area trails. In the course of preparing the Park and Recreation Master Plan, it became apparent there was a need for this role, because it was difficult even to get information about the open space in the City's inventory.

For a city the size of Calabasas, establishing a separate Natural Resources (or Open Space) Department doesn't seem necessary. However, because open space is a specialized area, a separate Natural Resources Division should be established within another department. At first, this division may only consist of one person. If needed, additional positions can be added in the future. The most logical place for the Open Space Division in Calabasas would be either within the Community Development Department or within the Community Services Department.

Within the Community Services Department, a Natural Resources Division would be established with the Natural Resources Manager responsible to the Community Services Director. Within the Community Development Department, a Natural Resources Division would be established with the Natural Resources Manager responsible to the Community Development Director.

The responsibilities of the Natural Resources Manager would include overseeing the management of all natural open space areas; seeking grant funding for trails; habitat improvements and land acquisition; and coordinating with local non-profits, among others. The Natural Resources Manager would need to coordinate closely with both the Planning Division and the Community Services Department, as well as some coordination with other departments such as Parks Maintenance.

Creating a division within Community Services has a number of advantages. First, it would ensure there is a high level of communication between the open space and parks staff. It would also set up a framework for better coordination of park facilities, such as trailheads, and the natural open space trails system. This option would also facilitate the development of programming on natural resources, such as naturalist-led hikes. Finally, responsibility for all parks and natural open space areas would fall to one department, allowing for better tracking of costs.

Creating a division within Community Development also has advantages. There would be a high level of communication between planning and open space staff, facilitating planning for the open space network, land acquisition and trail development. There would also be opportunities for coordination on grant applications for open space projects, which has been handled by the Planning Division in the past.

Another alternative is to consider using a contracted employee to provide Natural Resources Management services. Rather than taking on a new employee, the City could use contracted services at least initially. After an initial trial period, the City could evaluate the workload and make a determination whether it is more cost-effective to continue with contracted services or to bring the position in-house.

Open Space Management

In an urban environment, natural open space requires a certain amount of maintenance and care. Such issues as fire prevention, safety, control of invasive vegetation, tree removal, native vegetation replacement, and wildlife management are just a few of the areas to address. As previously discussed, a person with a

background in natural resources management is needed to oversee the City's natural resources, including establishing management policies and guidelines.

Initial recommendations on open space are identified below. It is expected these will be modified or changed once a Natural Resources Manager is hired.

- The following criteria are proposed for prioritizing open space acquisition to expand the open space network in the City of Calabasas:
 - *Continuous wildlife habitat:* Urban development typically separates habitat areas and creates barriers that prevent wildlife from migrating between areas. Providing continuous habitat corridors improves wildlife habitat and reduces conflicts between wildlife and development.
 - *Connecting existing open space:* One of the goals is to form an interconnected network of open space, and obtaining connecting open space parcels is a key to this concept.
 - *Protection of viewsheds:* The Santa Monica Mountains region is very scenic, and people place a high value on the viewsheds. The open space network can help protect key viewsheds.
 - *Interpretation/education:* Open space sites can offer opportunities to provide interpretation or education about the local environment.
 - *Trail corridors:* Trail corridors developed concurrently with the City's open space network can provide safe and enjoyable routes for off-street trails, identified as important by community members.
- Natural open space areas should be primarily used for natural resource protection. Where appropriate, passive and trail-related activities can be provided.
- Management plans should be established for each open space area. This may require coordination with partner groups, such as the Mountains Restoration Trust and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy.
- Some open space areas may be able to support development of trails, viewpoints, interpretive sites, etc. In such cases, policies on the type and scope of improvements should be adopted to ensure appropriate development and mitigate negative impacts. The following policies are proposed:
 - Encourage passive recreation use compatible with the preservation of the natural areas. Where feasible, public access and use of these areas via trails should be

permitted, but sensitive areas should be protected from degradation and overuse.

- Improvements should be kept to a minimum, with the natural environment, interpretive, and educational features emphasized. Such improvements should generally be limited to pathways, seating, informational/directional signs, and viewing areas. Some sites may permit more intensive development.
- Erosion control should be a priority in design of facilities in natural open space areas.
- Preserve, protect, and enhance the diversity of plant communities and wildlife habitat potential.
- Remove non-native species and re-introduce native indigenous species in developed areas, where possible. Take steps to eliminate the potential for non-native invasions.

Trails in Natural Areas

During the planning process, community members identified additional trails as one of the top recreation needs in Calabasas. In addition, trail-related activities accounted for six of the top ten preferred recreation activities. Unpaved hiking and walking trails were the most favored type of trail, with trails in natural areas and long distance (5+ mile) trails being the most desired trail functions. Based on this input, there appears to be a strong desire from community members for recreational trails through the City's many open space areas.

During preparation of the Park and Recreation Master Plan, Calabasas was in the process of preparing a trails master plan. The trails plan will provide guidelines for trail development, maintenance, and management. The Park and Recreation Master Plan does not address trail recommendations, but rather makes reference to the Trails Plan and its recommendations.

However, accessibility and public awareness of trails are important from a recreation perspective. The recommendations below focus on increasing opportunities for access to natural area trails:

- *Trailheads:* Calabasas does not currently have any trailheads. Access to trails is possible from some of the City's existing parks, but there are limited trail maps or markers provided at these parks. The development of Wild Walnut Park will provide a trailhead, and will eventually provide a connection

to the Henry Ridge and Summit-to-Summit Trails. Additional trailhead facilities are needed to make it easy and convenient for residents to make use of the local trail and open space network. In particular, access is needed to the Ahmanson Ranch property. Trailheads could be developed through cooperative ventures with other agencies.

- *Connections between path systems in developed parks and trails in natural open space areas:* Linkages between the paved path systems in developed parks and the trails in natural open space areas should be strengthened. Many of Calabasas' park areas are adjacent to open space areas with trails, and some natural area trails begin in a developed park, such as at De Anza. These connections need to be strengthened to improve access to the natural area trails. A connection is needed between Gates Canyon Park and the Ahmanson Ranch property, which will become a significant nature preserve.
- *Trail maps and signage:* The City should consider printing a map of the local trails to increase public awareness of the trail opportunities in Calabasas. Trail signs, including kiosks with trail maps, are also needed so people are aware of trail entrances and routes.

H. Recreation Programs

The City of Calabasas offers an extensive variety of recreation programming and special events, and there is a relatively high rate of participation among residents in programs. Of all park and recreation services, recreation programs provide the most benefit for the money spent because they reach many participants and generate revenue from the service provided. In most communities a good recreation program may only operate at a 25-50% deficit rate, whereas park services (maintaining and providing facilities) most often have a 97% deficit rate. Revenues account for 55% of the total Community Services operating budget, which is a good rate of return. As previously mentioned, the Tennis & Swim Center is operated as an enterprise fund and revenues cover 100% of the expenses.

City staff has developed a successful means for developing programming that is popular with the public and a very effective parks brochure to publicize the available programs. More than half of survey respondents found out about recreation programs through the Quarterly Parks Brochure. This is very high compared to other communities, where typically about 25% to 30% find out about programs through the brochure.

Generally, Community Services staff should continue on the same course in developing and publicizing programming because their methods have been very effective. Community Services staff should aggressively search for new and interesting programs that will continue to attract wide use.

Below are several suggestions for increased or new program areas derived from input received during the planning process.

- Community Services staff should look for opportunities to increase and expand the already extensive special events and cultural arts offerings because of the high level of interest indicated in the survey.
- There appears to be a very high level of interest in trail-related activities, since six of the top ten preferred recreation activities in the community survey were trail-related. Community Services staff should explore the possibility of partnering with other organizations to offer more nature walk, hiking, equestrian, mountain biking, and other trail-related programming.
- There appears to be demand for additional fitness programming, if facilities can be found to accommodate the need.
- There appears to be interest in additional programming in the following three areas:
 - Yoga
 - Horseback riding
 - Golf (both playing and driving range)
- Community Services should continue to track costs and participation levels to assist in program evaluation.
- *Staffing Needs:* New facilities will increase staffing needs. If a Senior Center is established, at least a part-time Senior Center Coordinator will be needed. A Teen Center will require staffing during the hours of operation. Also at that time, a specific Teen Coordinator position may be warranted, depending on the workload of the Special Events Coordinator, who currently coordinates the Teen Activities Council and teen events.
- *Cultural Arts Staff:* Currently, several major cultural arts events are put on in Calabasas. The current cultural art activities are highly valued by residents, based on the results of the survey. Also, the Arts Festival generates revenue.

I. Management and Operations

However, there is no staff devoted specifically to cultural arts activities. There is a need for at least part-time staff to provide assistance to the Arts Council and help put on the highly successful Arts Festival. The City is relying on volunteers to accomplish these popular activities, and the volunteers will eventually get burned out from the level of work if no assistance is provided.

- *Art in Parks and Public Places:* As discussed above, Calabasas citizens value cultural arts. Calabasas has developed some very attractive medians, streetscapes, and beautification areas in the City. Interest has been expressed in expanding the City's efforts in beautification to include more art in public places. This would include not only parks, but also public rights-of-way and other visible locations.

Community services staff is currently working with the Planning department to revamp the Art in Public Places program, and reinstate the Art in Public Places Advisory Committee to oversee the program.

- *Landscape Maintenance Division:* The Parks Maintenance portion of the Landscape Maintenance Division budget should be returned to the Community Services Department budget. Combining parks maintenance with recreation services under one department would allow for more streamlined funding allocations and better cost of service accounting.
- *Cost Recovery Goals:* The City of Calabasas has a good cost recovery rate on its park and recreation services (about 55%); despite the lack of a formal cost recovery policy. There is a general awareness of cost recovery. For example, it has been a goal that the Creekside Pre-School operation recover 100% of its costs, and the Tennis & Swim Center must recover 100% of its operating costs as an enterprise fund.

It is recommended that annually evaluated cost recovery goals be set as a department policy. It is important to note that a cost recovery goal for a program area means that overall, the program area should hit the targeted cost recovery level. However, within that program area, certain programs could have higher or lower subsidies.

- *Tracking Costs:* Community Services currently tracks costs for various program areas. Costs that should be attributed to each program area include direct costs (supplies, etc.), program staff costs, fees for contractors who provide the programs, room rentals and facility/field maintenance.

To better track the actual cost of providing recreation services, Community Services should consider assigning a share of the costs of administration, finance, and other general costs to each program area, depending on its size.

- *Transportation:* The Calabasas trolley currently stops at park sites and other major destinations. Community Services should work with the trolley/shuttle organizer to coordinate the transit service with activities at the park and recreation facilities. This will be particularly important when a Teen and/or Senior Center is established, to ensure that participants have transportation from school/home to the center.
- *Web Site:* When the Community Survey was conducted in Spring 2003, the City's website was infrequently used as a means for finding out about recreation programs. There is significant potential for expansion of use of the City website. Within the past year, Calabasas has instituted on-line registration as an option for program registration, which may result in an increase in website use. Recreation staff should explore ways of publicizing the website as another means of informing the public about available recreation options. The website especially may offer an opportunity for targeted outreach to teens, who have indicated they don't find out about programs through the Recreation Brochure or through the flyers passed out in school.

J. Maintenance

People in Calabasas seem to be very satisfied with the level of maintenance in the community's parks. Overall, the maintenance procedures currently in place seem to be effective.

- *Contracted Maintenance Services:* Contractors should continue to do the mowing and general grounds-keeping in the parks. This has been a cost-effective means of accomplishing the general grounds-keeping in Calabasas parks. The proposed new parks and facilities will not warrant bringing the maintenance function or the associated cost of equipment in-house.
- *Increase Staffing:* The existing part-time maintenance assistant position should be made into a permanent full-time position, because there is a need for at least two full-time staff to meet the current workload. In addition, the workload should be evaluated to determine if there is a need for seasonal maintenance staff during the busy summer months to keep up with trash removal and cleaning tasks.

- *Evaluation of Maintenance Needs:* When Gates Canyon Park is upgraded with new facilities, maintenance staffing needs should be evaluated because there may be a need for additional staff, whether full-time, part-time, or seasonal. Each time additional parks and recreation facilities are brought on line, maintenance staffing should be considered.
- *Pool Maintenance:* If additional aquatic facilities are added, pool maintenance will need to be considered. This can be done by the parks maintenance staff, or by contract services.
- *Organization of Maintenance Staff:* Currently, most of the parks are concentrated on the west side, which means Community Services maintenance staff spends the bulk of their time on the west side. This is very efficient, because unproductive travel time is limited. When the east side community park is brought on line, the Community Services Director should evaluate whether maintenance staff should be organized into geographic areas (i.e., responsible for certain parks).
- *Future Budget Allocations:* As new facilities are brought on line, additional maintenance dollars will need to be budgeted to maintain the new parks and facilities. The costs will be reflected in terms of additional staff, supplies, and new maintenance equipment. In addition, the maintenance of specialized facilities can be expensive. Since Calabasas has plans for several specialized facilities, maintenance costs should be considered in the initial design and construction.
- *Storage:* Adequate storage facilities for maintenance should be incorporated into the design of new parks and facilities. Coordination with maintenance staff should occur to ensure that storage needs are addressed.

K. Park Planning and Development Guidelines

The following recommendations are intended to help guide the planning, design and use of existing and future park sites in the City. These guidelines follow the basic concepts for the park system as described in Section 7C.

Mini- Parks

Definition:

Mini-parks, tot lots and children's playgrounds are small single-purpose play lots designed primarily for small children's usage. Facilities are usually limited to a small open grass area, a children's playground and a picnic site.

General Development and Use Guidelines:

- Mini-parks should only be added to the City's park inventory if they meet the following policies:

- The site should be in an area not already served by a park.
- The site should be accessible to the general public and have frontage on a public street. It should not be located within a gated or otherwise limited access neighborhood.
- Appropriate facilities include:
 - Children's playground
 - Open grass play area
 - Picnic sites
 - Site amenities (picnic tables, benches, bike racks, drinking fountains, trash receptacles, etc.)
- Public sites should be visible from adjoining streets and have at least 100-150 feet of street frontage.

Neighborhood Parks

Definition:

Neighborhood parks are a combination playground and park designed primarily for non-supervised, non-organized recreation activities. They are generally small in size and serve an area of approximately one-half mile radius. Typically, facilities found in a neighborhood park include a children's playground, picnic areas, trails, open grass areas for passive use, outdoor basketball courts and multi-use sport fields for soccer, and youth baseball.

General Development and Use Guidelines:

- Due to constraints on land availability, it is unlikely that many new neighborhood parks can be developed, other three recommended elementary school sites. Neighborhood parks should be no smaller than about 3 acres, with the optimum size being 5 acres. For dedicated neighborhood park facilities located on school sites (such as New Millennium Elementary School), optimum park size may be reduced to as little as 0.5-acre for dedicated public park facilities, depending on land availability and the facilities provided.
- The site should be central to the neighborhood it is intended to serve. If possible, walking/bicycling distance should not exceed one-half mile for the area it serves. Access should minimize physical barriers, and crossing of major arterials.
- The site should be visible from adjoining streets. Access to the site should be via a local residential street. The park should have at least 200 feet of frontage along the street. If located on a busy street, buffers and/or barriers necessary to reduce vehicular hazards should be incorporated.
- At least 50% of the site should be flat and usable, and provide space for both active and passive uses.

- Appropriate facilities include:
 - Unstructured open play areas
 - Children's playground (tot and youth)
 - Picnic areas
 - Shelter building (small)
 - Trails and/or pathways
 - Natural open space
 - Site amenities (picnic tables, benches, bike racks, drinking fountains, trash receptacles, etc.)
 - Basketball court
- Parking: For stand-alone neighborhood parks, a minimum of three spaces/acre of usable active park area should be required. If on-street parking is available, this standard can be reduced by one car for every 25 feet of available street frontage. Design should encourage access by foot or bicycle.
- Active and noise producing facilities, such as tennis and basketball courts, should be located away from homes.
- Permanent restrooms are generally not appropriate for neighborhood parks, except in special circumstances. Portable restrooms may be appropriate for seasonal use.

Community Parks

Definition:

A community park is planned primarily to provide active and structured recreation opportunities. Community park facilities are designed for organized activities and sports, although individual and family activities are encouraged. Community parks serve a larger area and offer more facilities, but require support facilities, such as parking, restrooms, and covered play areas. Community parks usually have sport fields or similar facilities as the central focus of the park. Their service area is roughly a one-two-mile radius.

General Development and Use Guidelines:

- While 10 to 20 acres is the optimum size for a community park, Calabasas community parks may have only 6 to 8 acres due to the land constraints. Two-thirds of the site should be available for active recreation and adequate buffers of natural open space should separate active use areas from homes.
- If possible, walking or bicycling distance should not exceed one mile for the area it serves.
- The site should be highly visible from adjoining streets.
- Access to the site should be via a collector or arterial street.

- Appropriate facilities include:
 - Special recreation facilities
 - Tennis courts
 - Sand or grass volleyball courts
 - Open multi-use grass area
 - Children's playground (tot and youth)
 - Restrooms
 - Picnic areas
 - Trails and pathway
 - Outdoor basketball courts
 - Site amenities (picnic tables, benches, bike racks, drinking fountains, trash receptacles, etc.)
 - Designated sport fields - softball, baseball, soccer, etc.
- Parking requirements depend on facilities. Generally, provide 5 spaces/acre of active use area and 50 spaces/ball field.
- Permanent restrooms are appropriate for this type of park but should be located in visible areas and near public streets.

Special Use Areas

Definition:

Special use areas are miscellaneous public recreation areas or land occupied by a specialized facility. Some of the uses falling into this classification include single purpose sites used for field sports or other activities and sites occupied by recreation buildings.

General Development and Use Guidelines:

- Prior to the addition of any special use area, the City should prepare a detailed feasibility and cost/benefit analysis for each proposed site considered.
- Size and location of facility will depend on the function of the facility being considered.
- Design criteria will depend upon the facilities and activities proposed.
- Parking requirements: Depends on the activities offered.

Open Space

Definition:

Natural open space is defined as undeveloped land primarily left in its natural environment with recreation uses as a secondary objective. It is usually owned or managed by a governmental agency and may or may not have public access. This type of land often includes wetlands, steep hillsides or other similar spaces. In some cases, environmentally sensitive areas are considered as open space and can include wildlife habitats, stream and creek corridors, or unique and/or endangered plant species.

General Development and Use Guidelines:

- When open space is acquired, a determination should be made on the level of recreation use permitted. In some cases, public access may not be desired due to environmental sensitivity or other concerns. Other open space areas may be appropriate for trails, viewpoints, or interpretive activities.
- Where feasible, public access and use of these areas should be encouraged through trails and other features, with environmentally sensitive areas protected from overuse.
- Within open space areas with public access, improvements should be kept to a minimum, with the natural environment, interpretive and educational features emphasized.
- Natural open space areas with public access should be designed and managed for a sense of solitude, separation, or environmental protection.
- If public access is to be allowed, parking and overall use should be limited to the numbers and types of visitors the area can accommodate, while retaining its resource value, natural character, and the intended level of solitude.

Pathways and Trails

Definition:

Trails and pathways are designed to provide walking, bicycling, and other non-motorized recreational opportunities. By providing linkages to other areas and facilities, they can provide non-vehicular options for travel throughout the community. Trails can be designed for a single use or for multiple types of users. The trails and pathways emphasized here are those that are recreational and multiple use in nature. Bike routes with more emphasis on transportation are not included in this definition.

Trails may be either unsurfaced or treated with a variety of hard surfacing materials including concrete, asphalt or granite chips. Unsurfaced trails may be left in their natural condition or supplemented with decomposed granite, gravel, bark chips, sand or other material. Surfacing will depend on the soil type, slopes, type of use and amount of use.

General Development and Use Guidelines:

- Developers should be encouraged to provide pathways within their developments to link with the City's overall trail system.
- The primary purpose of recreation trails is to provide a recreation experience. Transportation to other parts of the community should be a secondary objective.
- Whenever possible, recreation pathways and trails should be separated from the roadway.
- Multi-use trails are the preferred to provide opportunities for a broad range of uses for walkers, hikers, runners, equestrian users and bikers. Trails should be multi-use except where environmental or other constraints preclude this goal.
- Recreation trails should be interesting to the user and maximize the number and diversity of enjoyable viewing opportunities.
- Trails should be looped and interconnected to provide a variety of trail lengths and destinations. They should link various parts of the community, as well as existing park sites.
- Where routes use streets, the pathway should be designed to minimize conflicts between motorists and trail users. If possible, crossings should occur at signalized intersections.
- Trails should be planned, sized, and designed for multiple uses.
- Trails should be lighted and with open landscaping where personal security is of concern.