

PARKS, RECREATION, OPEN SPACE PLAN

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PARKS, RECREATION, OPEN SPACE PLAN

INTRODUCTION:

The ability to sustain a community's quality of life requires a balanced, healthy urban environment and the inclusion of ample open space, parks and opportunities for a wide range of indoor and outdoor leisure and recreational activities. The Parks, Recreation and Open Space Component is intended to provide the framework from which the City of Elko can plan and coordinate the development of a comprehensive program to serve existing residents as well as responding to the demands of anticipated social change, community growth and newly emerging neighborhoods.

A characteristic of contemporary society is that the average working hours of the labor force have generally declined, resulting in an increase in leisure time and the ensuing problem of occupying that time in a satisfying and productive manner. A corollary trend is the increased mobility of the general population. People can now travel long distances in a relatively short period of time. Thus, new recreational opportunities have surfaced, resulting in an increase in tourism and potential economic benefit to a community while at the same time adding stress to existing parks and recreational facilities.

The dynamics of recent population and social change have also affected how a system of parks and recreation programs are efficiently utilized and managed. The elderly population has increased dramatically and is expected to rise in the near future. Additionally, a high percentage of households feature both parents being employed resulting in increased unsupervised time for community youth, particularly school age children. Consequently, additional burdens are being placed on recreational programs and facilities to serve the needs of senior citizens, young adults and children of the community.

Also, a significant trend is that the original purpose and intent of many of the City's facilities is being challenged due to the dynamics of growth and community expansion. This is particularly evident in the case of Elko Main Park which over the years has transformed from a community park to an active campus and special event center associated with Elko Convention Center, Northeastern Nevada Museum, Chamber of Commerce facility, Elko City Hall and County Fairgrounds.

GOAL:

To provide for a comprehensive long range plan for parks, recreation and open space that builds upon existing facilities, assets and amenities, and addresses the need for park sites, facilities, programs and activities to meet community needs of the future.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To develop a comprehensive park system to include special purpose parks, neighborhood parks and community parks, including open space areas, that are easily and safely accessible.
2. To continue to improve, renovate and expand the parks, recreation and open space system in relation to population growth, population composition and user demand.
3. To reserve and acquire park land and open space area as early as possible prior to or during the development of emerging neighborhoods in order to eliminate or reduce property acquisition costs.
4. To utilize flood plains, storm water retention areas, creeks, ravines and other topographic and physical features of the community to enhance open space areas and increase park and recreational opportunity.
5. To utilize the Humboldt River, Eight Mile Creek and other prominent water features as focal points for parks, greenways and recreational activity.
6. To develop year round recreational activities and programs for all age and interest groups.
7. To promote and encourage the support of community groups and private sector partnership in the development and management of the existing park system and the provision of a comprehensive program of recreational services and activities.
8. To explore a variety of funding options for the acquisition, development and maintenance of park, recreation and open space land.
9. To continue to work cooperatively with the Elko County School District in developing parks adjacent to and in connection with new school construction.
10. To use as a guideline the National Recreation and Park Association standards by attempting to provide a minimum of 10 acres of neighborhood and special park land per 1,000 residents.
11. To correlate development of the park system with population growth.
12. To adhere to the neighborhood plan model within the Land Use Component of the City's Master Plan when identifying park needs and prioritizing park improvements.

PLAN FEATURES:

1. SPECIAL PURPOSE PARKS

Special purpose parks are intended to provide or commemorate a unique recreational, cultural or historic amenity within the community, and may consist of open spaces, passive park areas, public gathering spaces, greenways, or formal landscaped areas that interrupt and soften the continuous pattern of urban development.

LOCATION: Location can be widespread throughout the city depending upon purpose, need and special circumstance.

SIZE: Normally, size can be up to three (3) acres depending on location and function.

2. NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Neighborhood parks are intended to be the most localized features of the park system, convenient and accessible to residents within one of the City's designated neighborhoods, and may consist of improved or grassed open space, tot lots, playground equipment, playfields, basketball courts, tennis courts, picnic areas and other recreation features determined to serve the needs of the local neighborhood.

LOCATION: Location central and convenient to the neighborhood and within one of the City's designated neighborhoods.

SIZE: Normally, size is between (3) acres and (10) acres, depending on location and function.

3. COMMUNITY PARKS

Community Parks are intended to serve a broader representation of the general public, centrally located and accessible by a variety of public transportation routes, and may consist of swimming pools, athletic fields, community recreational centers, and a complex of indoor and/or outdoor recreational facilities and activity areas that have community wide orientation.

LOCATION: Location central and convenient to the community or accessed by a classified collector or arterial roadway.

SIZE: Normally, minimum size is ten (10) acres, depending on location and function.

4. RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Recreational facilities are intended to accommodate a wide variety of recreational, athletic and educational pursuits and consist of swimming pools, golf courses, playfields, basketball and tennis courts and similar type facilities.

LOCATION: Location distributed throughout the entire City.

SIZE: Size may vary depending upon the specifications of the recreation purpose or activity being provided.

5. OPEN SPACE

Open space areas are intended to set aside lands for preservation of natural resources, remnant landscapes and to preserve natural settings that are unsuitable for development such as steep slopes, unstable soils, floodways, wetlands or similar physical features for active and passive recreation opportunity. Such open space areas can provide passive recreational opportunity and contribute to the quality of life of the community by protecting views, vistas and panoramas; by protecting air, water, soil, plant and wildlife habitat; by protecting against natural hazards related to floodways and flooding, unstable soils or areas of geological instability; and by protecting airport approach and takeoff areas.

LOCATION: Widely distributed throughout the City.

SIZE: Size may vary considerably depending upon purpose, function and physical characteristics.

THE EXISTING PARK SYSTEM:

The accompanying table and map identifies existing park and recreational facilities throughout the City of Elko, their features, characteristics and extent of improvements. This existing system, based upon application of National Recreation and Park Association Standards, represents approximately 50% of the desired quantity of park land needed to serve the growth and service demands of the community.

1. RECREATION PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

The City's Parks and Recreation Department provides a wide variety of wholesome activities and recreation programs to meet the demands and needs of the area. These programs offer leisure and recreational opportunities for the residents of Elko County as well as the City of Elko and includes recreation, arts, crafts and special interest classes, outdoor recreation, youth and adult sports leagues, aquatics programs, golf programs, "Fun Factory" latchkey after school programs, and "Fun Factory" summer recreational programs.

The City's recreation and activity program relies heavily on shared use of resources and facilities such as:

- Elko County School District Facilities

- Odd Fellows Enrichment Learning Center
- Elko Municipal Swimming Pool
- Other public, quasi-public buildings and facilities

2. RECREATION FACILITIES

Some of the major recreation facilities within the City of Elko include the following:

- ➔ Ruby View Golf Course
Championship 7,000 yard 18 hole layout, driving range, putting green, pro shop, clubhouse, food and beverage facilities.
- ➔ Elko Municipal Swimming Pool
Indoor, 6 lane, 25 yard pool
Outdoor, 6 lane, 25 meter pool
Wading pool and support facilities
- ➔ Numerous athletic fields for football, baseball and soccer.

3. REGIONAL RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

The City of Elko is also fortunate to have other park, open space opportunities in close proximity to its corporate boundaries. These include:

- ➔ Hundred of acres of public lands under the ownership of the Bureau of Land Management adjacent to the City and which afford a wide range of recreational opportunity and experience.
- ➔ Snobowl Ski and Winter Recreational Area, located 6 miles north of Elko, provides opportunity for alpine skiing, cross country skiing, sleding, tubing, and snowmobiling.
- ➔ South Fork State Recreation Area and Reservoir, located 16 miles southwest of Elko, provides opportunity for boating, fishing, water skiing, swimming and camping.
- ➔ Lamoille Canyon Recreational Area, located 26 miles southeast of Elko, provides opportunities for hiking, mountain biking, back packing, picnicking, snowmobiling and cross country skiing.

THE PROPOSED PARK SYSTEM:

An important element of any parks, open space and recreation plan is the establishment of goals and standards for identifying future needs as well as criteria for size, location, and methods of park development. National Recreation and Park Association standards should serve and provide the basic guidelines for park and recreational facility planning

and development. However, such standards should not be viewed as absolute and must be tempered by local needs and interests as well as the City's ability to support the financial obligations associated with park land acquisition, development and long term maintenance.

In 1997, an inventory of City-owned land was conducted. A significant portion of land was placed in reserve for future park, open space and recreational facility development. The accompanying table and map identifies these future sites. It is important to note that with the addition of this raw acreage into the park system, future community needs and demands for parks, open space and recreational facilities as recommended by National Recreation and Park Association standards, that is, 10 acres of neighborhood and special park area per 1000 residents can be achieved. Furthermore, this park land reserve can meet the demands of anticipated population growth through the year 2010 and beyond.

PARK MAINTENANCE:

Operation and maintenance is an essential element of the overall planning program for the City's parks system. A successful managed system must not only budget and expend funds for park land acquisition, design and construction but also for operations and maintenance.

Maintenance and operation funds differ from capital construction funds which are "one-time" expenditures. Maintenance and operation funds are "continuing expenses" and must be budgeted and allocated from the City's General Fund and consequently must compete with police protection, fire protection and a full range of urban services.

1. CURRENT TRENDS

- Park operation and maintenance demands occur between the months of May and October.
- Currently, the equivalent of 5 full-time employees are allocated for parks maintenance and operation which includes temporary, seasonal help. Given current park acreage, this roughly translates, on a per capita basis, one maintenance employee for every 20 acres of park area.
- Volunteer help comprised of community groups and organizations is utilized frequently, particularly for the construction and development of new park facilities.
- The Nevada Division of Forestry Conservation Corps. is utilized for maintenance purposes, particularly for weed abatement, trash control and snow removal.

2. FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

- Maintain acceptable ratio of park maintenance personnel and equipment to park land area as overall park system grows and expands.
- Emphasize part-time seasonal help to coincide with peak use periods.
- Future park development and design should reflect ease of maintenance and water conservation.

- Encourage open space, retention of natural vegetation, passive design features to reduce operation and maintenance cost.
- Develop a program for effluent water reuse and secondary water systems as a source of irrigation for formally improved and landscaped park area.
- Consider user fees to help fund ongoing maintenance activities.
- Consider reducing the number of future special parks and neighborhood parks in favor of larger parks to concentrate maintenance services and improve efficiency.
- Continue to make use of volunteers, community groups and organizations and other public agencies to assist in the development and maintenance of the park system. An “adopt a park” program would be a useful technique to assist the City in the ongoing burden and responsibility associated with park maintenance.

SPECIFIC PARK, OPEN SPACE AND RECREATIONAL FACILITY NEEDS:

A key aspect of the future park system is to be able to identify specific needs and to use such a list as a guideline to pursue from concept to implementation. These needs vary in type, scope and magnitude, should be re-evaluated periodically to ensure that they are timely and are listed as follows:

- Park land acquisition and development of a neighborhood park for the Northwest Neighborhood. The Highlands Development Master Plan designates an area for this purpose.
- Park land acquisition and development of a neighborhood park for the Northeast neighborhood. Property acquisition would be necessary to meet this need.
- Development of a neighborhood park for the Southeast neighborhood. City owned land south of Pinion Road and west of the City Landfill can fulfill this need.
- Park land acquisition and development of a community park for the northern sector of the community in response to growth pressures in this area and use and special event demands affecting the Main City Park. BLM land in this area could fulfill this objective.
- Development of a greenbelt and pathway system along the south of the Humboldt River commonly referred to as HARP (Humboldt Area River Project). City owned land on the south side of the river can serve such a purpose.

- Development of a greenbelt and pathway system along the 8 Mile Creek corridor north of Great Basin College. City owned land along the creek is available to meet this need.
- Development of new recreational facilities to include consideration of the following:
 - ✓ Swimming Pool
 - ✓ Ballfields, Game Courts
 - ✓ Ice Skating Facility
 - ✓ Recreational Center
 - ✓ Skateboard Center

POLICIES/ACTION STRATEGIES:

The following items represent basic strategies for implementation of the identified goals and objectives of the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan:

1. The City recognizes that a comprehensive plan for parks, recreation, open space and leisure time services is an integral part of the community's character and quality of life and will help to promote economic gain, reduce crime, social problems and social program dependency.
2. The City will develop, adopt and update a Master Plan to address long range projections for acquisition, development and maintenance of future parks and open spaces designed for public use and enjoyment.
3. The City will explore and develop a variety of funding mechanisms for park land acquisition, development and maintenance to include donations and community service, impact or development fees, user fees and general fund allocations.
4. The City will develop a Capital Improvement Program to assist with the systematic development of parks and recreational facilities and needs.
5. The City, with citizen input, will begin to develop an inventory of conceptual designs for neighborhood and community parks and recreational facilities.