

# Parks and Recreation Policy Framework

## Introduction

The City of Palmdale has embarked on a comprehensive update to its General Plan, called “Envision Palmdale 2045: A Complete Community,” to create a forward-looking document that will serve as the blueprint for the City’s vision through the year 2045. The goals, policies, and actions in Palmdale 2045 will serve as a compass for decision-makers and will shape future plans and actions of the City. This revised policy document will replace the 1993 General Plan.

This parks and recreation policy framework is an interim step in the General Plan Update process prior to drafting the elements (or chapters). This framework highlights key outcomes and performance metrics related to parks and recreation and includes a draft policy framework that includes goals and policies. This policy framework was developed by compiling feedback from City departments, community members, General Plan Advisory Committee members, Planning Commission, and City Council. This framework synthesizes critical issues and policy approaches by describing key strengths and opportunities, challenges, and threats, and what we heard from the community.

## Where We Are Now

Previous steps in the planning process have identified community strengths and opportunities, and challenges and threats related to parks and recreation. Those are summarized below.

### *Strengths and Opportunities*

- **Palmdale currently has 360 acres of existing parkland and operates 12 Cultural and Recreation Facilities.** Cultural and Recreation Facilities include recreation centers, pools, skate parks, a library, Legacy Commons for Active Seniors, Best of the West Softball Complex, Palmdale Amphitheatre, and DryTown® Waterpark. These facilities provide opportunities to facilitate an active and healthy community. Expanding a network of parkland and open space would provide opportunities to meet the City’s established park goals. See Figure 1.

- **Palmdale partnered with the Antelope Valley Partners for Health (AVPH) to offer various neighborhood targeted community programs for residents, known as the Neighborhood House Program.** Palmdale currently has four neighborhood houses that offer a range of services that include drop-in afternoon activities for children, meeting space, and serve as a resource center under the Neighborhood Improvement Strategy. These programs facilitate opportunities to engage youth and families in a manner that best utilizes existing cultural and recreation facilities.
- **Palmdale continually provides upkeep and upgrades for park facilities.** For example, the 2019-2020 fiscal year Capital Improvement Budget allocates \$4.7 million to these improvements, which include: refurbishment of DryTown Water Park facilities, McAdam Park restroom upgrades, Sports Field renovations, and \$2.5 million towards Oasis Park improvements.
- **Palmdale 2018-28 10-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) contains 53 million dollars for funding new facilities, improvements to existing parks and other recreation facilities.** Potential future parks identified in this CIP include the development of sports fields in the drainage basin at Oasis Park and improvements at DryTown and Courson Park.
- **An opportunity to establish shared-use agreements with schools.** Joint use agreements with schools can offer access to their sports fields and make their playgrounds accessible to neighbors if the campus can be secured after hours. This can help address the gaps in park access around Avenue Q, Avenue R, and Pearblossom Highway.

### ***Challenges and Threats***

- **Palmdale needs to increase park space by approximately 55% to be compliant with the existing parkland-to-population ratio within the 1993 General Plan.** Palmdale has an established parkland-to-population requirement of 5.0 acres of parkland per 1,000 persons. The City has a current population of 158,605, which means the City would need to increase park space by 433 acres to meet its current parkland-to population ratio target. Goals, policies, and programs will need to be created to identify locations, funding sources, and specific strategies to develop this substantial amount of parkland.
- While existing parks and recreation facilities are enjoyable, disinvestments and inequitable access to parks and recreation still affects some Palmdale residents. The City lacks funding for ongoing maintenance of and/or development of new parks. Though vacant land is available citywide, certain neighborhoods with low park access may not have vacant land available for acquisition, redesignation, and development of parks. See Figure 2.

## What We Heard About This Topic

Throughout the General Plan Update process, community input was collected and used to inform the policy framework. The following parks, recreation, and public facilities priorities, concerns, and ideas were identified throughout the community engagement process.

- Desire for more quality public spaces like parks, libraries, community spaces, and bicycle and pedestrian connectivity
- Expand recreational activities and amenities for youth, recreational spaces, and park improvements including connectivity to parks
- Expand after-school services for students and recreation programs for youth
- Consider shared use agreements with schools to offer community access to sports fields and playgrounds after school hours
- Provide new family-friendly activities across the city; such as like DryTown, Joe Davies Heritage Park, and at Marie Kerr Park
- Desire for an eco-friendly city with public gathering places like a downtown or plaza, family activities, and pedestrian amenities
- Create open spaces that provide incentive to walk and bike
- Add more trees and green spaces across Palmdale
- Preserve the desert atmosphere and natural attractions

## Where we want to be in the future

### Applicable Vision themes and Guiding Principles

Through the first phase of community engagement, the General Plan team explored how individuals envision the future of Palmdale, what makes it unique and special, and what things residents and businesses would like to change. Summarized into a stand-alone document, the General Plan Vision and Guiding Principles illustrate the future of Palmdale, capturing key values and aspirations, and providing a framework for future decision-making.

The list below represents vision themes and guiding principles that are most relevant to parks and recreation. Visit the Palmdale 2045 website at <https://www.palmdale2045.org/resources> for the complete vision and guiding principles document.

***Active and vibrant downtown***

- Provide space for community gathering and events
- Increase opportunities for entertainment and/or shopping

***Safe, healthy place to live and work***

- Improve access to parks and open space
- Prioritize walking, biking, and access to local and regional transit

***Palmdale's beautiful natural setting***

- Expand and improve public parks and to meet the needs of current and future residents

## **Top 3 key outcomes (related to topic)**

- **Connectivity:** Connect new and existing parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities.
- **New Parkland:** Identify and acquire land for new parks.
- **Partnerships:** Maintain and expand existing programs with AVPH and other similar organizations that provide recreational amenities.

## **Key performance indicators**

- **Key Performance Indicators:** Adequate park and recreation facilities to meet the needs of existing and future residents.
  - **Target:** 5.0 acres of parkland per 1,000 persons
- **Key Performance Indicators:** Equitable access to parks and recreational facilities.
  - **Target:** New parkland and recreational facilities shall be considered for acquisition based on proximity to communities outside a 20-minute walk to existing parks. See Figure 3.

## Draft Goals and Policies

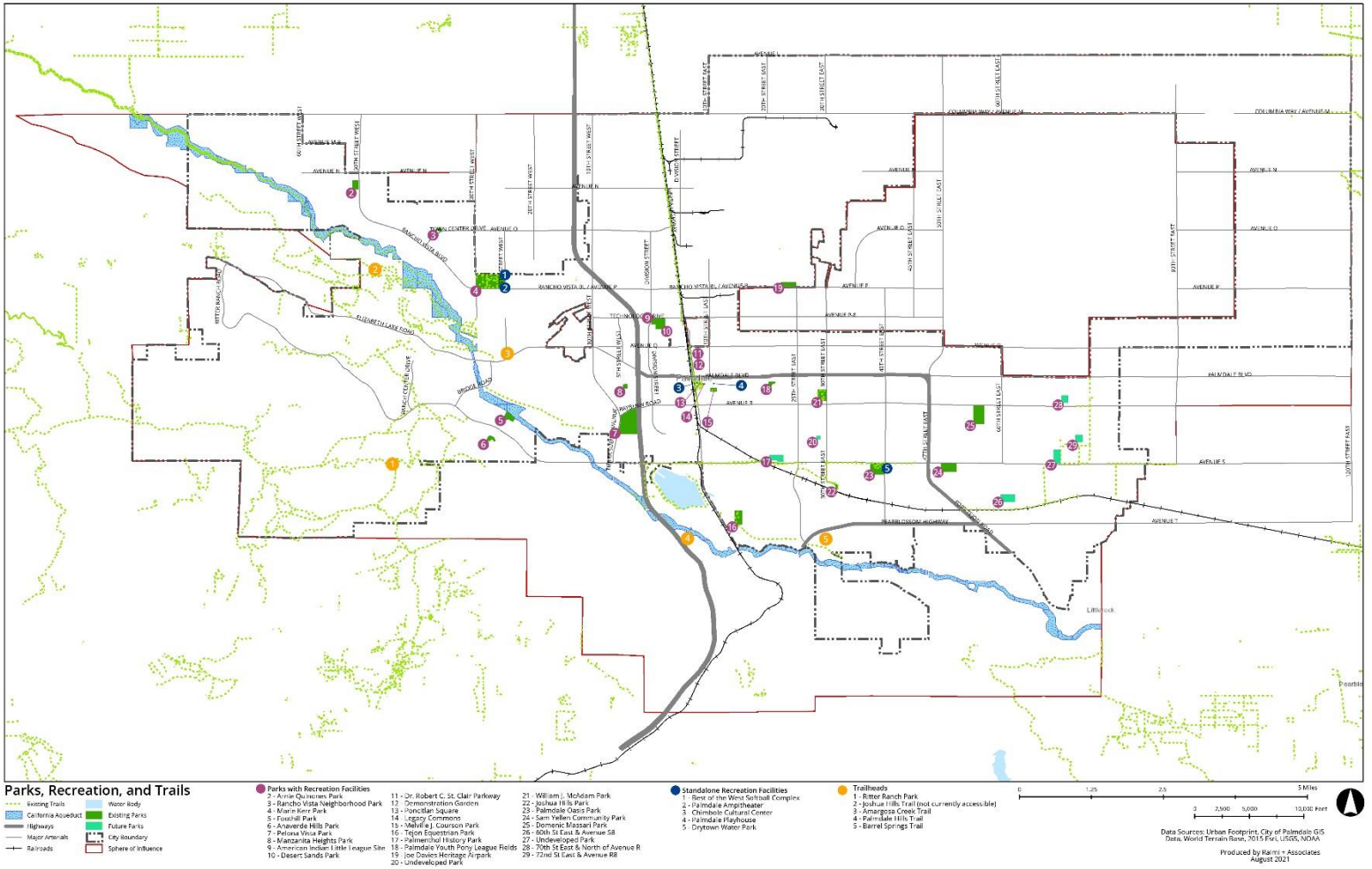
The following section includes draft parks and recreation goals and policies under consideration for the Palmdale General Plan Update. Many of the goals and policies from the 1993 General Plan have been retained, but in certain cases goals and policies have been reorganized, rephrased, and or simplified while the objectives from the current element have been reframed as either goals or policies.

- **Goal 1: Provision of adequate park and recreation facilities to meet the needs of all existing and future residents.**
  - Prepare a Parks Master Plan to address park conditions and needs, recreation programming and facilities and funding opportunities.
  - Ensure that park sites are located equitably, throughout the City, to maximize access to parks for all residents within a 20-minute walking distance.
  - Provide culturally sensitive programming at various recreation facilities.
  - Provide a variety of parks and recreational facilities accessible to all citizens throughout the City, including community and neighborhood parks, to meet the needs of youth, adults, and senior citizens.
  - Prioritize development of new parks and recreation facilities in underserved areas of Palmdale, encouraging access to free or low-cost recreation for all Palmdale residents.
  - Encourage expansion of amenities at existing public parks including but not limited to passive and active recreation, shade trees, water play areas for children, food and beverage stands, and youth programming.
  - As a part of a Parks Master Plan, evaluate adopted park standards, including designations for type of parks and guidelines for the facilities to be developed in future parks.
  - Incorporate all design features, required by the Americans with Disabilities Act, which improve access to parks and park facilities for citizens with different abilities and needs.
  - Co-locate schools and parks and partner with non-profit organizations, to provide recreational opportunities that benefit both students and the public.
  
- **Goal 2: Explore various means of acquiring parkland and seek creative and flexible techniques to accomplish City park goals.**
  - Wherever feasible, incorporate uses that increase the public benefit of park land, and are compatible with the goal of providing active recreation opportunities.

- Consider non-traditional types of parks to extend the range of recreational opportunities available within the City, including linear parks, pocket parks, and remodeling vacant buildings for indoor activities.
- Seek public input on locations for and amenities in all new neighborhood and community parks in Palmdale.
- Continue to work with public and private entities to provide opportunities for recreational, cultural, and artistic activities within the community.
- Account for physical, land use, and cost considerations when evaluating future park sites for acquisition or dedication.
- Provide sufficient funding for maintenance and improvements for all parks in the City.
- Explore options to acquire drainage basin areas to provide public access for recreation.
- **Goal 3: Evaluate the need for establishing a funding mechanism for parks development and the need for satellite services.**
  - Collect park fees and review this fee annually, to provide financing for improvement of parkland in Palmdale.
  - Consider formation of a Citywide public financing district to provide funding for design, acquisition, construction, and maintenance of parks throughout the City.
  - Continue to use the City's Capital Improvement Program as the mechanism for short-term planning for acquisition of park land and construction of park facilities.
  - Identify and pursue Quimby grant funding and other grant opportunities to fund remaining funding required to meet existing parkland goals.
  - To address current park inequities, consider prioritizing Citywide Park Development Impact Fees to park deficient communities, with at least a portion of that amount to be prioritized solely within disadvantaged communities for at least 5 years.
- **Goal 4: Provide a network of open space areas to provide for passive and active recreation opportunities, enhance the integrity of biological systems, and provide visual relief from the developed portions of the City.**
  - Develop an open space network through preservation of corridors along fault zones, natural drainage courses and in hillside areas to connect with the large areas of open space designated on the General Plan Land Use Map.
  - Encourage the use of open space areas for passive recreation with access points, multi-use trails, and interpretive information.

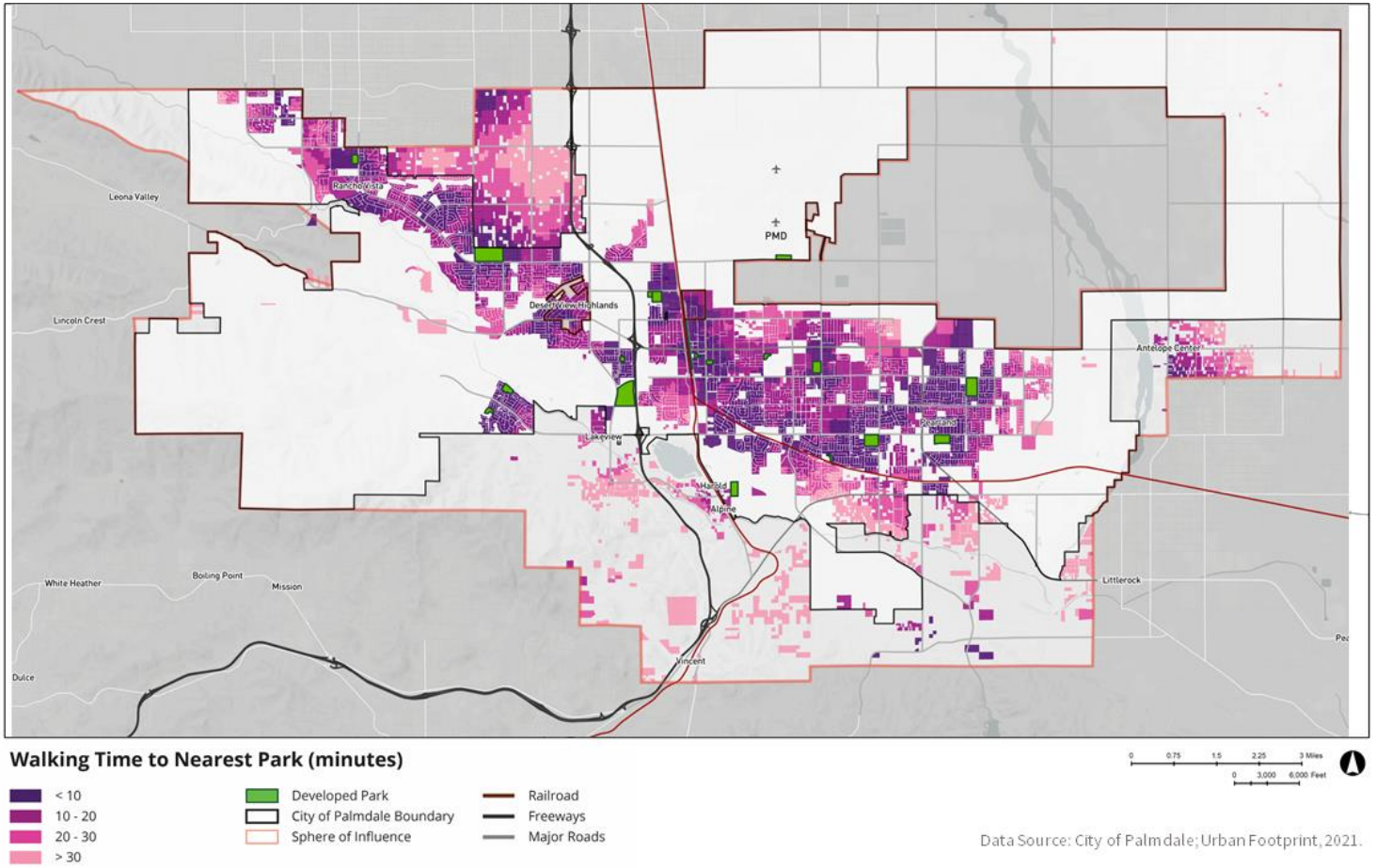
- **Goal 5: Maintain a system of multi-use trails that provide connections to regional trails systems.**
  - Provide and maintain multi-use trails, for use by pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians, connecting to existing or currently planned multi-use trails.
  - To the extent feasible, ensure that trails are accessible to all residents and incorporate design features, including trail head material that provide ADA access.
  - Prioritize multi-use trail connections to existing neighborhoods, public parks, and public facilities.
  - Provide trail support facilities, such as benches, trash cans and trail heads/staging areas, as needed throughout the multi-use trails network.
  - Explore various means of acquiring trail easements or rights-of-way and pursue all available funding sources to provide trail acquisition and construction.
  - To the extent feasible, use grant funding and private donations to finance trail construction.
- **Goal 6: Promote bicycling as an important mode of transportation and recreation in the City of Palmdale.**
  - Encourage bicycle use by developing a comprehensive bikeway network for the City.
  - Provide bikeways that meet access needs of all bicyclists.
  - Increase the level of public safety for all bicyclists.
  - Promote biking, walking, or taking public transit to public parks and recreation facilities. Ensure connecting sidewalks are well maintained.
- **Goal 7: Provide a broad range of recreational programs for all ages and activity levels to enrich the lives of Palmdale residents.**
  - Collaborate with community partners to expand healthy, and educational recreation programs and services for Palmdale youth and families.
  - Provide culturally sensitive programming at various recreation facilities to serve the city's diverse population.

Figure 1: Existing Palmdale Parks, Trails and Recreation





**Figure 2: Existing Parks Access based on Preferred Alternative**



**Figure 3: Future Parks and Trails Network**

